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Representing Visual Foreshadowing in Audio Description

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages in
fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2020

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Acknowledgements

This thesis owes a great deal to a particularly short list of people, as a result of my natural hermit tendencies! Possibly the most important acknowledgement goes to my supervisor Prof. Dan McIntyre, who has been endlessly patient despite my aforementioned hermit behaviour. Thank you for always having a kind word to say, and for constantly reassuring me that I was doing okay, even if I felt like I wasn't – you were the best supervisor I could have asked for as a postgrad.

The second most important acknowledgement goes out to my parents, both of whom have supported me throughout this entire process – your help and your dedication to a thesis that is not related to X-ray crystallography, has been invaluable and I've been so grateful for all of your proof-reading, formatting and help with being able to afford junk food during the darker periods of this thesis!

To my Dungeons and Dragons crew, Amie, Rosalind, Maisie and Sam (Thort, Clerica, Yerik and Kverige): thank you for giving me a world to inhabit outside of my PhD! Huge thanks also go to my partner Silva who has cooked me countless meals and who deliberately avoided asking how my thesis was going whenever possible! It might sound counter-productive, but it made me feel better.

Along with these humans, I should also add a thank you to Athena, Midnight and Dodger – sorry that you guys are pets, and can't read this, but it would feel disingenuous to not mention you.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the way in which audio description for blind and partially sighted individuals represents instances of visual foreshadowing. Audio description is relatively under-researched, particularly when compared with other media accessibility options such as subtitling, and so this thesis represents further work in a still developing area of research.

By analysing six separate examples of foreshadowing events, this thesis found that audio description often relies on the successful deployment of foreshadowing across multiple modes in order to effectively represent foreshadowing in the audio description track. The case studies represented a mixture of genres and included examples of both fictional and non-fictional telecinematic programming. The case studies also represent a mixture of event foreshadowing, which directly ties the foreshadowing to a specific occurrence within the narrative, and character foreshadowing which allows audiences to make observations and inferences about the role and function of individual characters.

This work found that there had been little existing consideration for foreshadowing in audio description both on the part of academics studying audiovisual translation, and within the guidance directly provided to audio describers. Previous work relating to foreshadowing is concerned primarily with twist endings or mysteries, particularly those with buried information. This thesis argues that foreshadowing can also occur as a result of foregrounding as well, and that less attention has been paid to this particular approach.The case studies examined show a variety of techniques, with some deployed more successfully than others, as well as providing a good overview of the different restrictions and difficulties faced by audio describers.

Whilst current audio description guidelines are adequate, more work is required to marry the developing academic research with the actual implementation of such features by audio description providers, This thesis recommends further research and collaboration in this area that in order to develop better, codified guidance with real consideration for stylistic features.

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List of Acronyms

AD	Audio Description
ADLAB	Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind
Audetel	Audio Described Television
AVoD	Advertisement based Video on Demand
BVI	Blind and Vision Impaired
BVoD	Broadcaster Video on Demand
DRM	Digital Rights Management
ITC	Independent Television Commission
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NPR	National Public Radio (US)
Ofcom	Office of Communications
PDF	Portable Document Format
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People (UK)
SVoD	Subscription Video on Demand
TVoD	Transactional Video on Demand
VoD	Video on Demand
VPN	Virtual Private Network

Conventions used in this Thesis

For clarity, the following typographical conventions have been utilised:

- *Italic* script has been used to denote film, screen or narrative titles. It has also been used in the body of the text for the general purpose of emphasis within a given statement.

- Double quotation marks have been used to identify text or direct speech extracted from video content, written publications and academic literature,

- Single quotation marks have been used for a number of purposes including the identification of subjective informal terminologies and idiomatic phrases as well as the use of metaphorical language.

- Square brackets have been used to include additional words, beyond those given by an original writer or speaker, in order to clarify a given situation.

- Square brackets containing an ellipsis [...] are used to signify that original wording contained in a given quotation has been removed.

1 Introduction

This thesis uses stylistic analysis to investigate the ways in which foreshadowing is represented in audio description for blind and visually impaired (BVI) individuals. Audio description is a spoken narrative track which describes the visual content of something which may be otherwise inaccessible to a BVI audience. Although audio description can be used for works of art such as sculptures or paintings, museum exhibitions and theatre, this thesis deals specifically with audio description in telecinematic media. Equally, whilst foreshadowing is not unique to telecinematic programming, the narrative device of seeding clues about a later event in a story which become significant only after the event has occurred has been used throughout a variety of films and television programmes, and so will represent the narrative component of this thesis's investigation. Specifically, this thesis answers the question of how visual foreshadowing is represented within such kinds of spoken audio description tracks – whether this information is intentionally obfuscated or whether it is foregrounded in order to make it immediately accessible. This thesis also considers the roles played by the existing narrative, and the ways in which they can support, or sometimes hinder, the manner by which foreshadowing is provided to a BVI audience.

This thesis aims to lay the groundwork for establishing generally how it is that foreshadowing is represented and conveyed within audio description; as this is the first work that specifically addresses the intersection of foreshadowing and audio description, it was necessary to make sure that this thesis was broad enough to cover a variety of instances and types of foreshadowing that could then be discussed. Foreshadowing is a narrative method by which clues about the events of a story are placed throughout the narrative leading up to the foreshadowed outcome. Audio description is a descriptive track designed for BVI audiences allowing them to access visual elements in, in this context, telecinematic mediums. Although these research questions are explored in greater depth in section 1.4, they are laid out in this introduction for posterity:

- How, if at all, do the current audio description guidelines address foreshadowing?
- What is being foreshadowed in each of the case studies?
- At which point within the narrative model does the foreshadowing event take place?

- Are other instances of event foreshadowing outside of the examples identified in the case studies? (occurring either before or after the transcribed data)
- Are the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander used in the case study data?
  - If so, which are most frequently employed?
  - What are the circumstances in which burying strategies are utilised?
  - Is their use dependent on proximity to the narrative reveal?
- If Emmott and Alexander's strategies are *not* used, is the information foregrounded instead?
- Which stylistic features contribute to either the burying or foregrounding of the foreshadowing events?

Although this research represents the culmination of several years of *specific* study, it exists within a number of wider areas of my own interest – as a hard of hearing person, research into media accessibility plays a large role in both my day-to-day and academic life. My MA was structured around intralingual subtitling for deaf and hard of hearing viewers of the television show *Breaking Bad* – as a person who has used subtitles for much of my life, my MA provided a chance to really consider the way in which these features provided me with the experiences I had as an end-user, and the way in which they might be improved for future individuals. Through my research into subtitling, it became apparent that whilst the provision of subtitles was relatively well accepted and understood, other means of accessibility were neglected. Both signed content and audio described content were not only significantly less likely to be provided when compared with subtitles, but they were also less known to even exist amongst the general public.

This thesis uses linguistic stylistic research to explore fields frequently associated with both film and disability / accessibility studies, but which have had much less consideration from a linguistic perspective; this is not entirely novel as the topics of both audio description and foreshadowing have both been studied with respect to both linguistics in general, as well as stylistics more specifically, however these two concepts have not been considered collectively from a linguistic perspective. The idea of interdisciplinary work, I believe, is of great benefit

to research as it allows for a variety of differing perspectives on a single topic, approached in multiple different ways. It was for this reason that I felt it was important to also include research from outside of the purview of linguistics – disability studies provide a point of view with concern for the end-user and their experiences, and film studies provide a robust set of descriptions concerning the visual qualities of cinematic media. Overall, however, it is the linguistics used to both convey and execute these ideas with which this thesis concerns itself. The linguistic study of style provides explanation for *why* a certain linguistic choice generates an effect when translating filmic content to an audience with limited access to the content in question.

1.1   Stylistics and Audio Description

Modern day stylistics is commonly seen as a branch of applied linguistics, an area of research which has changed since its earliest inception in the late 1940s. Applied linguistics' modern form is primarily concerned with '[resolving] language-based problems [encountered] in the real world', regardless of who these problems are encountered by (Grabe, 2010). In the case of this research, the community in question is primarily comprised of individuals with some degree of visual impairment who require audio description tracks when viewing audiovisual media, and the 'problem' is concerned with how visual information can be reconfigured into these descriptions.

This thesis builds upon the ideas put forward by Widdowson (2005), who considers applied linguistics to be a mediatory field between the more theoretical ideas of linguistics and the application of such information to real world scenarios. Due to the nature of audiovisual entertainment (specifically films and television programming), a study considering *only* the linguistic elements of meaning would circumvent the nature of its research questions. In order to fully consider (and therefore *translate*) the meaning of a specific scene we must consider a number of different factors, as well as how these individual elements are provided collectively in order to create a particular meaning.

It is also pertinent to note that not all linguists view stylistics as a sub-branch of applied linguistics, but as its own distinct branch of linguistics more generally; in recent years, stylistics has generated its own sub-fields, including (amongst others) cognitive, computational and feminist stylistics (Wales 2001:401). The defining of stylistics is also complicated when one considers how to approach the concept of style – Carter (1997:192) provides two different

approaches: 'literary stylistics' and 'linguistic stylistics'. Literary stylistics is similar to literary criticism, in that it is concerned with a literary interpretation of the text and the way in which linguistic structures or frameworks are used to support these specific literary interpretations – primarily, literary stylistics is concerned with the general message of a particular text. By comparison, 'linguistic stylistics' views literary texts only as language data representative of a number of different textual phenomena which may represent a variety of features distinguished only by their contextual use – this includes the use of specifically *linguistic* terminology to explain these features, drawing on areas such as syntax, grammar, semantics etc.

It is clear that these two approaches to stylistics both contain a degree of value, however both seems to represent what the other side may lack – it is for this reason, that when used in *conjunction* with one another, literary and linguistic stylistics become a much more rounded assessment of a text – by considering the wider impressions discussed by literary stylistics (which may come from external sources to the actual text itself) one can then tailor the linguistic stylistic elements *within* that text in order to suggest which features might be choices made on the part of the text's author to convey such wider impressions. Wales touches on this newer approach, stating that describing the formal features of texts for "their own sake" is not the goal of most stylisticians, and that instead these features are described to show their functional significance when interpreting a text or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic 'causes'" (2001:149). Stylistic accounts for the tools used in this thesis to make assessments about the contents of case studies, however it is important too, to consider the context within which these stylistic tools will be utilized – in this case, examining style specifically pertaining to the language used in the spoken audio description track and the original audiovisual presentation, and examining the way in which the literary device of foreshadowing may be represented and modulated through this language.

As the name suggests, audiovisual programming creates meaning through two primary channels: audio and visual. Audio may include obvious things such as sound effects, or music, but also may be more subtle when discussing features such as accent or volume. This kind of information can be coded into subtitles or sign-language for hearing impaired audiences. Out of the two audio accessibility options, subtitles are seen much more frequently, whilst sign language is often far less integrated into typical broadcasts (Ofcom, 2017:4). By contrast the provision of audio description for audiences lacking access to certain visual information, is slightly better represented than sign language broadcasts: for broadcast television in the United

Kingdom with a large audience share, the target for audio described programming stands at 10%; whilst this is double the provision for signed television (5%), it is still eight times less than the target provided for same language subtitling (80%) (ibid).

This discrepancy may represent a number of things: cost is an obvious consideration, as audio description requires more staff than subtitling, often necessitating a voice actor, an individual in charge of the actual *creation* of the description itself, as well as any other technical requirements such as sound editing or mixing (Sauld, 2019); as well as this, there is typically less general awareness of audio description amongst the general public – Ofcom has conducted a number of awareness campaigns in recent years, resulting in a rise of audio description awareness amongst UK adults, from 37% in 2009, to 60% spontaneous awareness in 2012 (Ofcom, 2013). The discrepancies may be seen in Figure 1.1, which provides a breakdown of age and awareness following Ofcom's initiatives.

% spontaneously aware
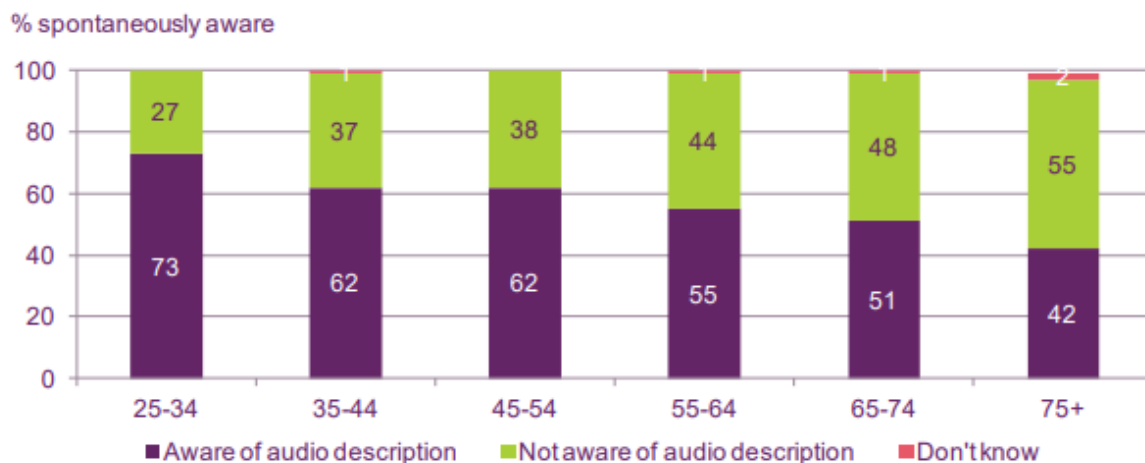
Source: Q1.Before today, were you aware that this feature was available on some TV?
Unweighted Base: All respondents. All UK adults (1,033); 25-34 (148); 35-44 (155); 45-54 (219); 55-64 (195); 65-74 (136); 75+ (104). *All subgroups with an unweighted base lower than 50 have not been charted.*

FIGURE 1-1: SPONTANEOUS AWARENESS OF AUDIO DESCRIPTION AMONGST UK ADULTS BY AGE (%), TAKEN FROM OFCOM (2013)

It is important, too, to consider the way in which individuals choose to access audiovisual media – the age group most aware of audio description is also, perhaps paradoxically, the same range of viewers who are less likely to watch traditional broadcast television. In the past decade, conventional television viewing by under 25s has halved (Hansard. House of Lords, 2019). Young adults are likely to split their viewing habits between live television, YouTube

and subscription video on demand services (SVoD), with live television viewing dropping whilst online platform content continues to rise (Ofcom, 2019:17).

Although not governed by the same requirements as broadcast television, video on demand services have increased their accessibility options immensely in recent years, including both SVoD services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime; transactional video on demand services (TVoD) including iTunes and Google Play; broadcaster video on demand services (BVoD) such as BBC iPlayer, which covers multiple BBC channels; and advertisement based video on demand services (AVoD) which are funded by advertisements at varying points throughout the content such as YouTube and Channel 4's All 4 service. Although there may be some overlap (for example, All 4 is an example of both a BVoD service as well as an AVoD one), generally speaking, streaming services can be easily grouped using these distinctions. Video on demand provide a number of specific benefits relating to the provision of alternate audio tracks (as well as subtitles), in that they may be switched on and off with relative ease – prior to this, the provision of audio description as an *alternative* to the original auditory presentation was intensely complicated, requiring a specific audio description decoder that would fade out parts of existing audio, and which required a separate live stream alongside the original broadcast (Tanton et al, 2004). The increased ease with which audio description may be provided has been bolstered by the development of technology associated with television and film: first via the development of DVDs, which unlike VHS tapes could contain multiple audio tracks and the option to switch between them, then once again through the development of watch-on-demand services, which allowed for media to be accessed and watched on numerous devices and hardware

 The still relatively novel dominance of streaming services in the contemporary telecinematic landscape presented one of the primary motivations behind investigating VoD services rather than traditional broadcast television. The skew of particularly younger generations towards such services alongside (or even instead of) broadcast television is also telling of the changing face of audiovisual programming, indicative that such services will continue to be utilised more and more in the near future and will continue to affect and influence the provision of media accessibility options. We also see the embracing of such services by even more traditional broadcasting companies, as seen in BVoD services such as BBC iPlayer and AVoD services like those employed by Channel 4 and ITV in the United Kingdom, telling of their commitment to the medium of streaming services.

Despite this thesis primarily focusing on VoD services, it is still important to bear in mind the development of audio description services over time – it is for this reason that the audio description guidelines created by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in the early 21ˢᵗ Century (ITC, 2000) have been included and evaluated alongside two other examples of more contemporary approaches to audio description guidance. Despite their age, the ITC guidelines are an example of one of the first attempts to create a codified standard concerning the provision and application of audio description, and provide a great deal of information. The ITC guidance has since informed numerous other guidelines that followed it, including the current Ofcom code regarding television access services, for which the ITC guidelines are given as recommended reference materials (2017:19), as well as helping to partly inform the ADLAB guidelines developed in 2015.

In order to evaluate the quality and recommendations provided by existing audio description guidance, this thesis provides an evaluation of three distinct guidelines: the ITC guidance, in order to establish a historical context and consider the foundation upon which later guidelines were constructed; the ADLAB guidelines, which are not only contemporary and in-depth, but which were developed as part of an interdisciplinary academic project aiming to create reliable and consistent guidelines informed by current research in linguistics and audiovisual translation (2015:5); finally, this thesis discusses Netflix's style guide which, whilst short, provides the guidance used for all of the audio description tracks investigated in this thesis, informing the audio description in question. Netflix's guidelines are also distinct, in that they are the only guidelines to explicitly mention the topic of foreshadowing and its relevance to the development of such audio description tracks.

The evaluation of these guidelines is designed to address the way in which foreshadowing is approached (in the case of Netflix), or the way in which similar narrative features are described *without* the title of foreshadowing, and how these features may then contribute to a greater understanding of how foreshadowing specifically is generally dealt with by individuals working under specific guidance, and how that may be applied more generally in the future.

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1.2 Stylistics and Foreshadowing

As stated, Netflix's guidance is the only formalised audio description guidance to mention foreshadowing directly; despite its comparatively laconic style guide, which contains less than 3,000 words (by comparison, the ITC guidelines contain approximately 14,000 words, whilst the collated ADLAB guidance contains over 30,000), Netflix describes foreshadowing as a plot device, and offers describers the tip that timing is the most important part of foreshadowing within the context of audio description. This suggestion, disappointingly, shows the emphasis that is often placed upon the functional, technical aspects of audio description, with little consideration for the actual method by which such description is employed; despite considering itself an audio description *style guide*, rather than simply audio description guidelines, Netflix's guidance leaves little room for actual discussion of stylistics.

The topic of stylistics is concerned with how language generates style and the literary and comprehension effects that arise from this; although stylistics, as with applied linguistics generally, is concerned primarily with the real-world effect of language choice on the understanding of texts, stylistics is often described as a 'tool-kit' to such a degree that the fondness for the metaphor is noted by Wales (2001: v) in her introduction to the second edition of *A Dictionary of Stylistics*; many of the concepts discussed in the area of stylistics, however, fit into this idea well. Netflix's 'style guide' does not appear to have been written with stylistics in mind, but could benefit from its consideration in the sense that stylistics addresses many concepts linguistically that overlap with the visual content of telecinematic narratives; this is especially pertinent when attempting to translate more symbolic visual features (such as using lighting or set designed to reflect a certain atmosphere; these features and their meaning must be conveyed entirely through spoken description).

When discussing 'telecinematic narratives', it is also important to clarify the way in which this thesis uses the term 'narrative' – the word narrative may represent a number of different nuances depending on its context and the subdiscipline with which it is associated. For the purposes of this thesis, a relatively broad definition of the term is adopted, similar to that given by Wales, who describes a narrative as "a story, of happenings or events, either real or imaginary, which the narrator considers interesting, important or therapeutic" (2001:282). Within this thesis a narrative may refer to either the story of a particular character within a larger story, or the larger story itself,These smaller individual narratives will reinforce or

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contribute the larger narratives, with different plotlines occurring simultaneously across several hours worth of content. In these case studies the distinction between larger narratives and character focused narratives will be conveyed as clearly as possible..

In this thesis, the linguistic components investigated stem from three primary sources: firstly, the spoken dialogue of characters in a scene, secondly any visual representations of language (such as a shot of a street sign or spatiotemporal information that is provided concerning setting or time period) and finally, the language used in the audio description track itself. It is, however, important to note that in this type of research, meaning is not restricted to the language features – in audiovisual presentations, the audio component and visual component complement one another; although some presentations may rely more on one mode than the other (a nature documentary for example, will generally rely more heavily on visuals than a panel show which necessitates a large amount of talking instead), within telecinematic media this balance remains an important factor when considering how a narrative is structured.

Audio description is required to adopt the role ordinarily played by visual information in a multimodal presentation – visual features must be translated into a spoken form in order to convey meaning effectively. Although on paper, this may seem like a relatively simple task, it is complicated by the idea of what is 'meant' by a particular visual component. Features of style exist within cinematic conventions as much as they do within the textual content of a film's script, whether this carries over from other visual mediums including painting and photography (for example the impact of darkness and shadow or the 'meaning' associated with a particular colour) or whether they exist as part of a larger context that relies on filmic knowledge (for example, shots undertaken in slow motion do not necessarily imply that the action is literally taking place in slow motion, but represent a method of showing an intense moment in which multiple things are taking place at once).

The more obvious physical description must also match up with the implied meaning of a particular shot or series of events in order to fully convey to blind or visually impaired audiences the full context of a scene. Visual foreshadowing, whilst not unique to cinematic or visual mediums, is an example of a narrative device in which the visual components of a scene have a greater meaning beyond their physical description, and therefore may require differing description. Not always visual, foreshadowing refers to the process of an author (or creator) providing hints or clues in advance of the direction in which a story will develop – these may

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be small, obvious hints (such as a character saying they are going to a particular place and then appearing at that place later on), or more abstract subtleties (such as particular motifs and associations that are reinforced throughout a text).

Foreshadowing exists across multiple modes which reinforce and support one another – for example, in Steven Spielberg's 1975 thriller *Jaws,* the antagonist, a man-eating shark, is killed when an oxygen tank in its mouth is shot, causing it to explode. This is foreshadowed at least twice, within two separate modes: firstly, the audience is provided with a close-up shot of a book about sharks being read by the protagonist (and eventual shark-killer) Brody, which shows a visual image of a shark with an item that looks very similar to an oxygen tank in its mouth in a book seen in Figure 1.2.
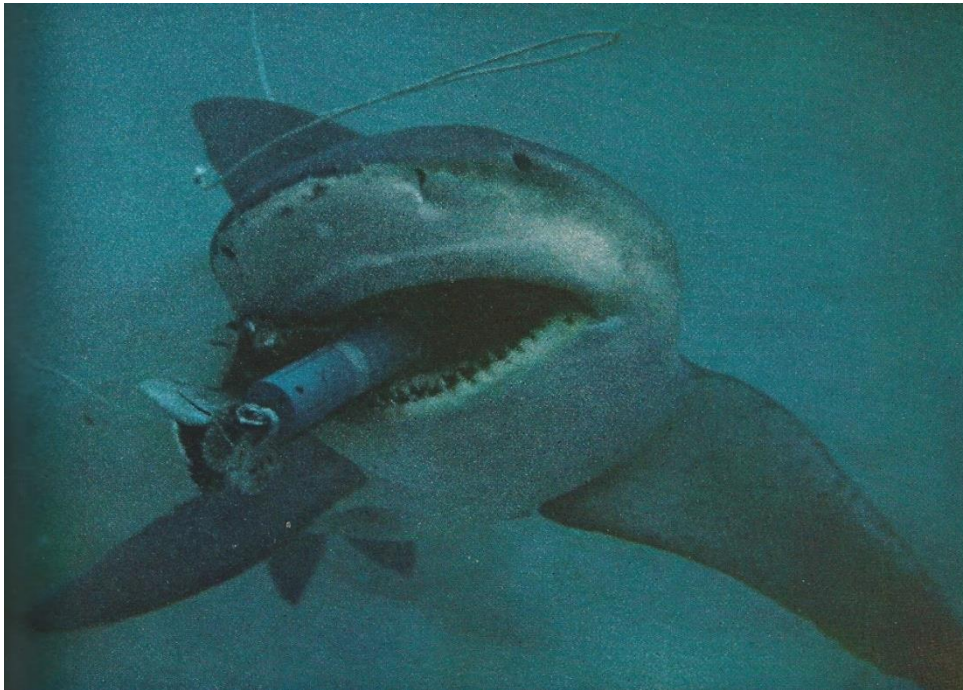
FIGURE 1-2: PHOTOGRAPH SEEN IN THE BOOK READ BY BRODY IN *JAWS* (1975)

This foreshadowing is then built upon, thanks to a comment made by other characters during a scene set out in the water whilst the protagonists are hunting the shark. The character Hooper, an academic researcher, is arguing with the grizzled sea captain, Quint, about the bottles of oxygen stored on the boat. Hooper makes the observation that "[if] you screw around with these tanks, […] they're gonna blow up", which is met with derision on the part of Quint who states that he "doesn't know what [the shark]'s gonna do with it," but that it "might eat it I

suppose". These scenes, upon first viewing, may not immediately lead a viewer to the conclusion of exactly *how* the shark will die – they act equally as scenes to show Brody's dedication to understanding and hunting down his quarry, or to display the combative and opposing natures of Quint and Hooper when contrasted with one another – but upon a rewatch of the film with *all* of the narrative information suddenly at their disposal, an audience is more likely to see these instances as confirmation that a particular plot point was guessable, or that the shark's death had been 'set-up' regardless of whether they recognised this during the initial viewing.

These foreshadowed elements prime an audience to experience a phenomenon known as hindsight bias, in which a particular solution to a problem or a narrative twist should seem, upon rewatching, to fit naturally with the information presented even if an audience did not guess a particular plot point at the time of watching (Tobin, 2009:168). Although, as stated, foreshadowing is not restricted to the visual mode of a particular presentation, it accounts for a very important component of this research: the method by which such kinds of foreshadowing are accounted for and conveyed in spoken audio description.

In order to investigate such features, it is necessary to be able to discuss foreshadowing within a stylistic context, as well as considering other psychological features which may affect the way in which audiences engage with the information presented to them. Within the field of linguistics, studies of foreshadowing are frequently limited to the discussion of specific *instances* of foreshadowing, rather than discussion of the mechanism itself, for example Sebo's work on foreshadowing and the conclusion of the epic poem *Beowulf* (2018), or Simpson's work on overarching themes of anti-speciesism and how this is foreshadowed in the work of J.R.R. Tolkein (2017); whilst such studies are of interest, and may contain some consideration of the stylistic mechanism of foreshadowing, they are less useful when attempting to develop more general observations about multiple unrelated texts.

This is not to imply that this study of the mechanism of foreshadowing is entirely novel to this research, as a number of studies have been undertaken with a more general view on foreshadowing. This thesis owes a great deal to both Tobin's work on cognitive linguistics and twist endings, as well as the stylistic concept of burying developed by Emmott and Alexander. Tobin's research is concerned with the cognitive science behind surprise in narratives, particularly those employed in narratives with twist endings; although surprise may not seem

immediately tied to foreshadowing, twist endings rely heavily on effectively employing hindsight bias and the idea that a narrative surprise was guessable (even if an audience did not *actually* guess the twist), thereby requiring foreshadowing to be deployed effectively in order to preserve the narrative element of surprise.

Emmott and Alexander's work considers the methods by which such information is hidden or downplayed within a text itself (2014). Whilst this may not initially seem this work relies on an understanding of the stylistic mechanism of foregrounding, which is the act of making a feature or element within a text *more* prominent, and then considering that there may then be an opposing method by which features may be obscured, namely, burying. Foreshadowing relies on a back-and-forth of foregrounding and burying, particularly when attempting to successfully employ hindsight bias in order to make a solution seem logical without making the solution itself too overt, thereby immediately guessable. It is important to note that the work of Emmott and Alexander is primarily concerned with written narratives, focusing on crime novels whilst Berberich and Dumrukcic (2015) have gone somewhat beyond this, attempting to adapt Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques to discuss the BBC drama *Sherlock*. Much of this work was still based on the presence of textual, in-world cues including textual representation of the Sherlock character's inner thoughts which appear on-screen as part of the original presentation. By contrast, the novelty of the current thesis lies predominantly with its consideration of visual elements that are by and large, *not* textual in their original form, but which must instead be converted or translated into a spoken, textual audio description track in order to preserve hindsight bias.

Audio Description must walk a narrow path between revealing too much information, thereby depriving an audience of the cognitive enrichment gained by attending to a narrative closely and restricting too much information to the point that a narrative becomes difficult to follow, eroding the effectiveness of hindsight bias. This thesis argues that stylistic tools such as foregrounding and burying provide a number of methods by which this path may be taken more confidently –this also requires an understanding of the way in which foreshadowing relates to a wider narrative in general, and as such employs both Tobin's (2018) work on twist endings and Bae et al's (2013) research into the way in which sentimental audiences access information to figure out such twists. Alongside this theoretical content, Emmott and Alexander's strategies for burying provide a practical assessment of methods which can be applied and tested in each of the case studies.

1.3 Introduction to the Methodology

Due to the nature of this thesis attempting to provide a more generalised view of foreshadowing, rather than focusing specifically on in-depth evaluation of foreshadowing in a single narrative, it was required to collate a variety of examples of foreshadowing across a number of different pieces of audiovisual content; despite this variety, certain restrictions were required in order to make sensible generalisations about the content. In order to account for this, as well as to control for the guidelines to which describers would be working and ensure some degree of conformity, it was decided that all of the case studies would be assembled from a single streaming service.

As previously stated, the decision to focus on video on demand services stemmed firstly from their rising prominence as vehicles for audiovisual content – contemporary streaming services show an increasing demand when contrasted with traditional broadcast media, with an upward tick amongst adults under 30. This, coupled with a similar level of audio description awareness amongst this audience age-range established that streaming services can provide an example of the most contemporary approaches to accessibility. When attempting to decide which particular video on demand service to draw the case studies from, a number of issues arose: most importantly, however, was the realisation that many streaming services will have limitations on how long a particular piece of programming will remain available and accessible; this is ordinarily based on licensing issues, but may also apply to the timing-out of certain serialised programming where only the most recent episode may be available.

Such kinds of limited release programming are especially common on BVoD services including BBC iPlayer, as well as AVoD services such as All 4, making it difficult ensure that programming and its description tracks would still be available during the latter half of this thesis for replicability and accountability purposes. In order to avoid this, whilst still attempting to preserve the contemporary nature of this study, it was instead determined that Netflix's SVoD service would provide the best resolution to these issues thanks to its emphasis on original programming and its easily accessible style guide provided specifically for audio describers (Netflix, 2019a).

Netflix's original programming is produced and owned exclusively by the Netflix brand, meaning that all of their programming that falls under this category will remain indefinitely on Netflix, and can be accessed by anyone with a subscription within any of the almost 200

countries in which the service is available (Stelter, 2016). This provides a much wider scope for access to raw data due to the lack of expiration date on the programming in question, as well as the much easier level of global accessibility when contrasted with the accessibility of traditional broadcast streaming services (such as the BBC and Channel 4, which are available only in the United Kingdom due to licensing restrictions).

Whilst gathering appropriate data was difficult – there exists no easy way to identify specific instances of foreshadowing – the introduction to each case study provides a summary of why a particular clip was chosen, and through the choice of only investigating Netflix original programming; this represents one of the wider issues within stylistics, and perhaps points to why so many studies relating to foreshadowing relate to specific narratives rather than a generalised evaluation. As established, studying stylistics in isolation is almost impossible; therefore, it is important to utilise multiple sources in order to ensure a more well-rounded evaluation of the stylistic content. Similarly, literary devices are often hard to discuss theoretically, and require some level of application in order to fully evaluate their impact and function. Visual foreshadowing cannot be searched for in the same way that textual elements may be, and often such foreshadowing occurs at multiple points throughout a narrative, requiring a full appreciation for not only the final event that is being foreshadowed, but also requiring the recognition of specific instances throughout a narrative that lead up to this event.

In order to appropriately take into account the multimodal nature of the data investigated in this thesis, multimodal transcription techniques were adapted from those developed by McIntyre for his stylistic analysis of Ian McKellen's *Richard III* (2008). McIntyre's original scheme was a development itself of one proposed by Qan Xian, showing its adaptability and versatility.

whilst McIntyre's investigation was purely based around the original presentation (without any accessibility features), his descriptive categories were flexible enough to be adapted appropriately; alongside the existing categories, an extra column was added to represent the spoken audio description (Figure 1.3). Multimodal transcription provides a versatile method of viewing individual components of an audiovisual narrative whilst still being able to conceptualise the presentation as a whole. Multimodal transcription provides a visual reference for modes even as they overlap one another; this is especially important when discussing audio

description as the timings of provided description must fit into the spaces provided by silences within the preexisting presentation.

Timecode	Shot Description	Linguistic Audio	Paralinguistic Visual	Paralinguistic Audio	Linguistic Visual	Audio Description	[Where available] Script Direction
0:00	Evaluative based on the physical, visible content of the scene; includes markers such as camera angles, colour choices etc.	Spoken language or dialogue	Visual elements which have some kind of 'content meaning' to them.	Non dialogue audio; includes elements such as diegetic / non diegetic music cues.	Written information: signs, written letters, spatiotemporal information.	Audio description transcript.	Description of same event as written by the original screenplay / script author.

FIGURE 1-3: MULTIMODAL TRANSCRIPTION CATEGORIES, ADAPTED FROM MCINTYTRE (2008)

By examining when and where such information occurs within a specific scene or extract, particularly the way differing multimodal categories may interact and supplement one another, we can also consider much more realistically both the effectiveness of its deployments and any limitations that may affect this – a case study with a large amount of dialogue will have much less space in which to provide audio description, potentially leading to shorter narration or narration at moments which might otherwise be considered inappropriate, whereas one with less dialogue may be afforded more space in which to make stylistic choices. In a similar sense, we must look more generally at where within a *narrative* a case study takes place – Bae et al point out that buried information is more likely to become explicit the closer to the 'reveal' that the information has been provided (2013), and so we must then consider whether the way in which such information is conveyed for blind or visually impaired audiences may be affected based on the proximity to the revealed information. In order to convey such information, Emmott and Alexander developed a model to account for burying (Figure 1.4), this model was adapted (Figure 1.5) to account for both implicit foreshadowing as a result of burying and explicit foreshadowing as a result of foregrounding.
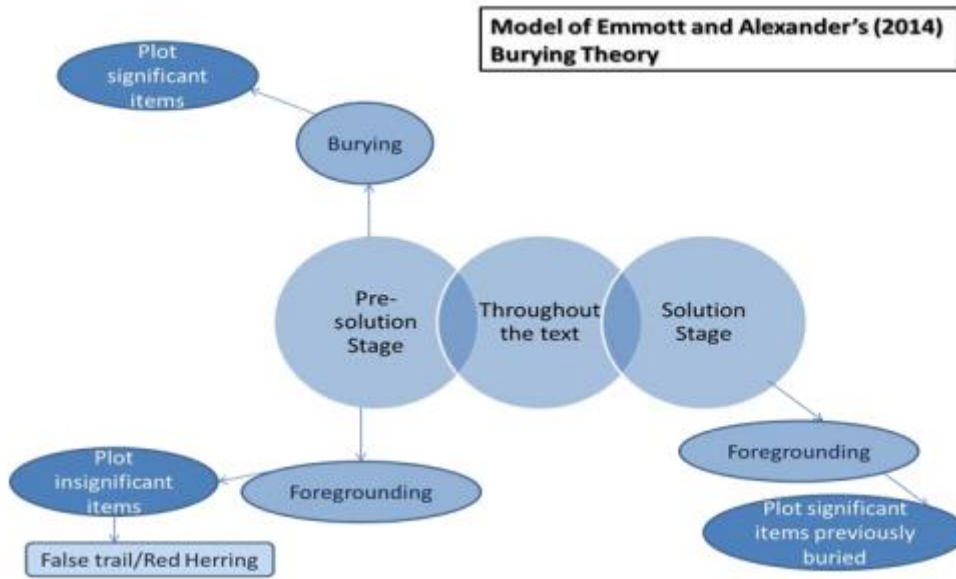
FIGURE 1-4: EMMOTT AND ALEXANDER'S (2014) THEORY OF BURYING
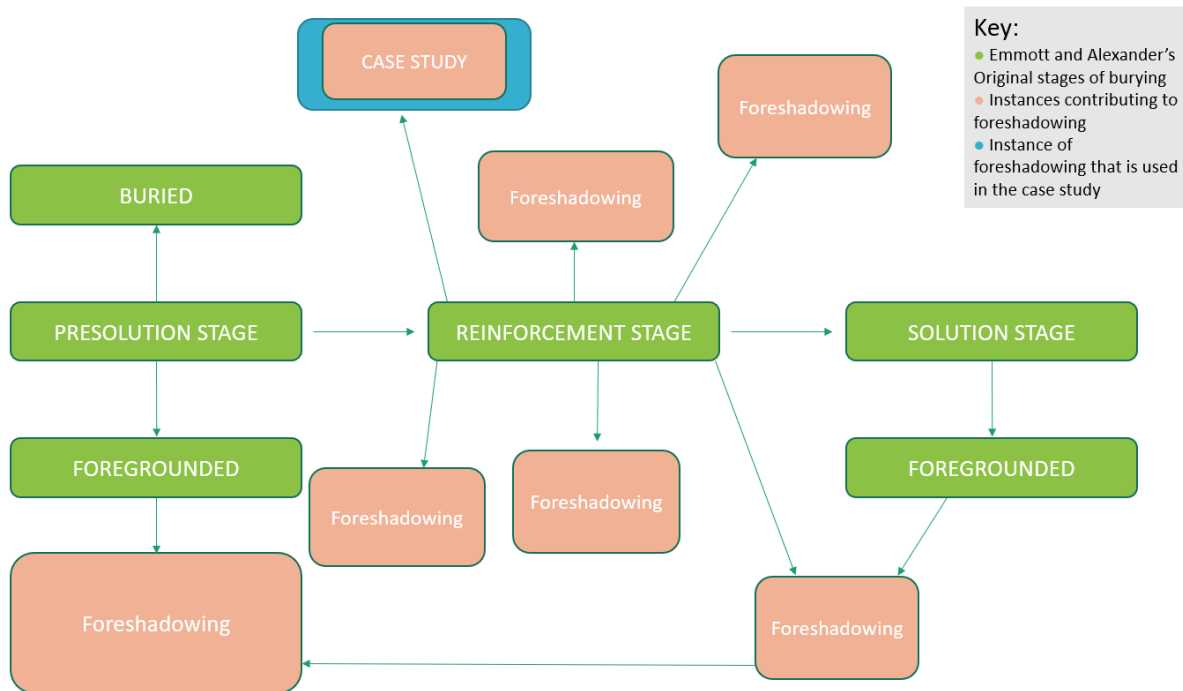
FIGURE 1-5: ADAPTED MODEL TO SHOW BOTH FOREGROUNDED AND BURIED FORESHADOWING THROUGHOUT A NARRATIVE

Within this thesis, the idea of explicit foreshadowing is discussed – ordinarily, discussions about foreshadowing centre on the more dramatic aspects of foreshadowing, such as the twist

endings studied by Tobin, or the murder mysteries investigated by Emmott and Alexander, in which a reveal is buried until the solution stage. In reality, foreshadowing does not always show this degree of surprise – Tobin's discussion of hindsight bias will still play a functional role even if the foreshadowed element seems more pedestrian in nature. An example might be, as used earlier, a character stating that they are going to visit a particular place – this will usually result in the character being in that place later on (unless, in the case of a twist, they are *not* there, in which case the foreshadowing is instead used to reinforce the idea that they *should* be there, but are not for whatever reason). Such kinds of foreshadowing may not be as memorable as instances that lead up to a surprise reveal, but these kinds of foreshadowing nevertheless play an important role in modulating an audience's understanding of a narrative; this thesis provides a novel consideration of such kinds of foreshadowing, likening them to indexical signs, in which we are provided with a non-arbitrary sign that is still connected in some way to the signifier, whether physically or causally (Short, 2007).

In order to ensure that each case study is analysed using similar methods, a number of areas must be considered based on the larger avenues of investigation outlined in more detail within the methodology section of this thesis. These considerations relate specifically to foreshadowing and the function of said foreshadowing in each distinct case study:

- To identify what is being foreshadowed in each of the case studies
- To identify at which point within the narrative model the foreshadowing event takes place
- To establish whether there are other instances of event foreshadowing outside of the examples identified in the case studies (occurring either before or after the transcribed data)
- To establish whether or not the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander are used in the case study data or whether the data is foregrounded
  - o If so, which strategies are most frequently employed?
  - o What are the circumstances in which strategies are utilised?
  - o Why is the information buried / foregrounded?
- How do the strategies achieve foregrounding / burying - which stylistic features contribute?

This requires consideration first of the case study's context within a wider narrative – whether or not preceding foreshadowing events have occurred, or if there are potentially more which follow. By considering the big picture initially, differences and similarities between the case studies may be seen more easily – these similarities and differences may then be investigated in greater depth using stylistic methods, including identifying strategies used to highlight or obfuscate information within both the original presentation and the audio description.

1.4 Aims and Research Questions

The methodology regarding case study analysis is broad-ranging thanks to the varied nature of the case studies and their narrative content. It is for this reason that a number of points must be addressed with each one individually based on the varying levels of analysis from big-picture consideration of the narratives themselves, to the stylistic analysis associated with each.

In order to ensure that each case study is analysed through similar methods, a number of considerations must be taken into account based on the larger avenues of investigation asserted throughout the methodology section. These considerations can be rendered into research questions directly pertaining to this study:

- How, if at all, do the current audio description guidelines address foreshadowing?
- What is being foreshadowed in each of the case studies?
- At which point within the narrative model does the foreshadowing event take place?
- Are other instances of event foreshadowing outside of the examples identified in the case studies? (occurring either before or after the transcribed data)
- Are the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander used in the case study data?
    - If so, which are most frequently employed?
    - What are the circumstances in which burying strategies are utilised?
    - Is their use dependent on proximity to the narrative reveal?
- If Emmott and Alexander's strategies are *not* used, is the information foregrounded instead?
- Which stylistic features contribute to either the burying or foregrounding of the foreshadowing events?

This thesis intends to answer the question of how visual foreshadowing can be conveyed within a context of audio description for blind and partially sighted individuals. Answering this question, however, requires breaking it down further several smaller, more focused questions – these questions, however, can be broadly divided into two areas of focus: foreshadowing and audio description.

It can be tempting to bisect these topics along the lines of abstract and practical, with discussion of foreshadowing relating primarily to areas of literary criticism or focused along the more specific lines discussing foreshadowing within one particular narrative (e.g. Palumbo, 1981; Arizti, 2014), whilst most audio description research relates to the more functional elements of its implementation (e.g. Peli et al, 1996; Benecke, 2004) rather than a stylistic analysis of the language in question.

To begin with, it is prudent to consider the definition of foreshadowing, including its relation to symbolism and leitmotif, and how foreshadowing exists within both a narrative and audiovisual context. We must use this definition to help identify relevant data to analyse – this leads us to the broader question of exactly how this thesis will define foreshadowing. Once this is established, the question must become more specific to the collected data, namely, how do these particular instances establish and identify foreshadowing?

Whilst this question seems straightforward, we must then consider the linguistic context of each individual example, including the function of the foreshadowing itself, as well as the practical constraints and limitations of the data itself. We must consider several questions in order to help us answer the larger over-all topic of this thesis, asking questions such as what function different lexical items may contain and more specifically, how individual describers have utilised the time provided to them (as well as how this 'enforced' timing of AD may affect the way in which describers choose to refer to particular instances of foreshadowing).

Once this thesis has considered specific examples of pre-existing AD, it is useful to then work with a piece of foreshadowing which does *not* have audio description. Whilst this may at first seem counterproductive, in fact this helps to consider the questions raised by the stylistic analysis of preexisting audio description tracks – namely, how can foreshadowing be made more or less obvious depending on the context required? Undescribed data also allows us to assemble a variety of different techniques without the reliance on extant information; in terms of this, the question becomes 'what are the stylistic effects of these different methods of

information-conveyance?', and then 'how can this change a viewer's experience of the audiovisual narrative?'

By asking these questions, the collected data may not only be refined, but can be contextualised in terms of its narrative significance, and the function of a particular piece of foreshadowing within a wider context.

1.5   Thesis Structure

This section is designed to introduce the way in which this thesis will be structured and the key concepts it addresses established. The study of style requires the consideration of how and why certain linguistic choices create the effects that they do, and therefore requires a clarity of purpose behind the areas chosen to investigate. In this case, the narrative device of foreshadowing was chosen, as it frequently relies on the interplay between both foregrounded and buried information, both of which have been investigated by stylisticians from a narrative perspective. By combining the study of foreshadowing with the translatory nature of audio description this thesis generates a novel consideration of visual foreshadowing and the way in which it is currently approached by audio description tracks.

Section 1 of the thesis provides an introduction and overview of the areas of interest relevant to this study within a much more generalised context than the information provided in the later literature review and methodology sections. Section 1 discusses some of the obstacles faced by audio description users and describers as well as some further explanation as to the motivation behind this study. In addition, stylistics and the concept of foreshadowing are laid out using a simple example without the context of audio description as seen in the detailed case studies set out in Section 4. Section 1 also includes an introduction to the methodological approach which has been adopted for this study and in particular the justification for the use of Netflix Video on Demand for the specific case studies investigated in Section 4.

Section 2 is an in depth literature review which encompasses four key areas. Initially an in-depth review of current Audio Description guidelines provided by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in 2000 and more contemporary guidelines published by the European ADLAB consortium in 2015 and Netflix in 2019. Secondly, the literature review also recognises the multimodality of the subject area encompassing both the filmic and audio visual nature of the study, and thirdly the impact of multimodality on narrative is considered. Finally,

the literature review considers the linguistic narrative device of foreshadowing and the concept of implicit and explicit foreshadowing.

Section 3 outlines the methodological approaches which have been adopted in this study. In particular, the reasoning behind the data selection choices and the associated challenges which have been encountered. The transcription methods utilised throughout the study are outlined and the approaches which have been taken to codify a series of analytical methods into a single framework. This single framework, derived from a combination of narrative evaluation methods of Bae et al (2013:50) for foreshadowing of events and Emmott and Alexander's approach to burying (2014) has been used to analyse each of the case studies presented in Section 4. The stylistic evaluation of the audio transcription linguistic content is also a key element of the methodological analysis of the data and the approaches are described in Section 3. Taking into consideration the overarching aim of this study, as well as insight and considerations from the literature review and methodology sections, the primary research questions are reiterated at the end of Section 3.

Section 4 presents the detailed data analysis of six case studies, transcriptions of which are provided in relevant appendices. Approaches outlined in Section 3 were used to analyse the selected case studies which ranged from simple and recognisable examples of burying (*The Discovery*) and foregrounding (*Stranger Things*) to more complex examples encompassing character foreshadowing (*The Umbrella Academy*) and narrative foreshadowing (*Arrested Development*). Fictional (*A Series of Unfortunate Events*) and non-fictional (*7 Days Out*) case studies including an additional narrator mode were included in the study. The inter-relationship of the case studies has been evaluated resulting in the culmination of both character and narrative foreshadowing in a single study (*The Umbrella Academy*) demonstrating the complexity of the AD process and importance of linguistic multimodal considerations.

Finally, Section 5 of the thesis presents conclusions arising from the data analysis and how original research questions have been fulfilled; these are loosely arranged into sections based around each of the previously mentioned research questions. The challenges and limitations of the study are discussed along with the implications of the findings for AD guidelines and potential academic, economic and societal impacts of this research are suggested.

A bibliography is presented in Section 6 and data transcription files for the case studies accompany the thesis in Section 7.

1.6 Conclusion

This section provides a general overview of the areas of interest relating to this study, as well as the main academic influences behind the research itself – I have attempted to lay out why such study is important both from a personal perspective, as well as within a wider purview. I feel that audio description merits greater investigation, and it is my hope that this work contributes to the general increase in both awareness and provision of audio description.

Stylistic studies of the mechanism of foreshadowing (rather than specific contextual examples) are still somewhat minimal, and the contributions of both Vera Tobin and Bae et al proved invaluable when attempting to understand the way in which narratives can account for foreshadowing events over a wider span of time; this research was complemented by Emmott and Alexander's work on burying which applies to many of the same twists discussed by Tobin and Bae et al, by contrast however, Emmott and Alexander provide specific *techniques* in order to support these dramatic narrative reveals.

The impact and deployment of these techniques is expanded upon and revisited in both the literature review and the methodology sections of this thesis – the literature review also contains analysis of current audio description practices, as well as the difficulties and methods of translating multimodal narratives into a single mode for accessibility purposes.

2 Style on screen: perspectives from stylistics and audiovisual translation

This chapter comprises an over-all evaluation of the existing literature in a number of relevant fields. The research itself is by nature interdisciplinary, however it is important to bear in mind that the content supplements a linguistics-focused approach to this information. Regardless of this, the nature of audiovisual translation is such that to exclude relevant data from fields such as film and disability studies would ultimately prove detrimental to the content of the thesis, and would provide only a fragmental understanding of the variety of research areas that overlap in the study of audio description.

The first part of this literature review is concerned primarily with the topic of audio description and contains a critical evaluation of three sets of audio description guidance: the Independent Television Commission's (ITC) guidelines developed throughout the late 1990s, the Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind (ADLAB) project's guidelines based on contemporary research across a variety of academic areas of study, and the Netflix style guide which informs the audio description provided in each of the case studies. Assessing the content of such guidelines provides a general overview of the current landscape of audio description, as well as the developments over a period of almost two decades-worth of application and provision. Both the ITC and ADLAB guidelines are much larger documents than that provided by Netflix, and as such, the evaluation of these longer examples is somewhat more limited in scope to areas concerned with the delivery of aspects of style – this is not to downplay the importance of the technical aspects of audio description (many aspects will inform the style choices in question), however a critical evaluation of such technological information does not have the same relevance beyond being mindful of its potential effects.

Following on from this, the literature review considers the role that multimodality plays, particularly in the sense that it provides a bridge between the discussion of audiovisual media and the topic of linguistics; the concept of audio description itself requires an understanding of multimodality, as well as the way in which audiovisual presentations may move between these modes, and the way in which audiences attend to them. Multimodality allows us to consider

which aspects of a presentation require translation, particularly when considering disabilities that result in difficulty accessing one mode or another.

The final topic which requires attention within the literature review is that of foreshadowing itself – through consideration of the requirements and restrictions associated with audio description, then filmic narratives, we may then begin to consider the representation of a particular narrative device within the restrictions imposed as a result of translation. Foreshadowing as a narrative technique has been afforded some attention by linguists, and although these studies are essentially somewhat disparate it is hoped that this literature review will provide a unified assessment of these theories in order to consolidate the research of both Vera Tobin and Emmott and Alexander into a broader consideration of foreshadowing.

2.1 Audio Description Guidelines

This section considers the existing guidance provided for audio describers in order to understand contemporary guidance regarding stylistic features, as well as the previous guidelines upon which they were developed. This section will discuss three specific sets of guidance and the way that they address or approach foreshadowing.

The guidelines evaluated in this thesis represent a small cross-section of those created for a variety of audio description purposes. As stated previously, only three sets of guidelines were chosen for in-depth assessment, however it is important to note that these are not the only examples of guidance provided for audio describers, and were instead chosen to represent a broad area of interests relating to this thesis. Guidelines differ in a variety of ways, some regional, such as the guidance provided by the American Council of the Blind (2003) or the Canadian company 3playmedia whose guidelines were developed with an additional focus on new, streamed media (3playmedia, 2020); as differing countries have varied laws regarding the provision of audio description, some of the guidance is tailored specifically to these geographic territories.

The guidelines chosen for evaluation in this study are comprised of those developed by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in the late 1990s and early 2000, which represent a historical perspective on the creation of audio description texts in order to contextualise more contemporary examples of audio description guidelines – the ITC guidelines have been used to inform and develop a number of contemporary directions, including the guidance developed

as a result of the Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind (ADLAB) project, a multinational research project aimed at creating more reliable and consistent audio description guidance through research-based collaboration (2015), which makes up the second set of guidelines evaluated in this Section. Finally, this thesis relies on the Netflix audio description style guide which was selected based upon the case study data, all of which is Netflix based. The evaluation of these guidelines cannot account for the entirety of their content, particularly for the ITC and ADLAB guidance, both of which are extensive, comprising over 40,000 words in total. In these cases, greater attention will be paid to the specific guidance within the texts relating to style and literary devices; whilst technical restrictions play a large role in terms of the actual provision and application of audio description, these restrictions will be present in all cases and will create the same difficulties for describers regardless of which guidance they are working from. Because of this, the technical limitations will be discussed collectively, before moving towards a more individualistic evaluation of each set of guidelines.

2.1.1 Technical Limitations of Audio Description

The nature of audio description means that it must be provided almost exclusively within the silences provided by an existing narrative – this is called "spotting" (ADLAB, 2015), in which describers are required to measure such gaps to make sure any descriptions will fit into the pauses in the original audio. The ITC guidance states that 'some programmes are too fast moving for a description to be helpful to the viewer' (2000:8), and offers the examples of quiz programmes, gameshows and news programmes, which it states are unsuitable due to their 'almost continuous scripts' (ibid). In cases such as these, with little space to provide description, the ITC seems to imply that no attempt should be made in terms of description provision. Whilst this is not stated explicitly, the guidance reinforces multiple times that such programming is 'unsuitable' and that in some cases its inclusion may result in 'more of a hindrance than a help' (ibid). Netflix's audio description style guide falls within Netflix's larger 'Audio Style Guide', which is extended to also include information relating to dubbed content and music and effects – in this sense, Netflix's style guide is representative of its wider series of values, including its dedication to providing content in a variety of languages, however this also means that its approach to guidance provision is somewhat disparate, with its technical information provided as part of a wider selection of documentation related to the mixing of sound and audio content – it is for this reason that this thesis focuses on the content of Netflix's audio description style guide, which is concerned primarily with the stylistic features attributed

to telecinematic programming. Although the issue of time-constraints is briefly addressed, Netflix does not seem to share the ITC's rigidity with regards to the genre of described media and provides no examples of 'difficult' description or genres to exclude from describing; this may be in part, due to Netflix's more general commitment to the provision of audio description particularly on *all* of its Netflix original programming.

The guideline evaluations in the following sections are addressed chronologically, beginning with the earliest set of guidance developed by the Independent Television Commission in 2000 up to Netflix's contemporary style guide and its content.

2.1.2 Independent Television Commission (ITC) Guidelines (2000)

The inclusion of the ITC guidelines in this literature review was primarily motivated by their historical significance. The guidance and standards provided by the ITC represent one of the first attempts at codifying guidelines relating to television accessibility services for blind and visually impaired individuals. Released in May 2000, the ITC guidelines were developed based on a number of studies undertaken by the European Audetel (Audio Described Television) consortium between 1992 and 1995 (ITC, 2000:3). For the purpose of this research, the ITC guidelines are important, as they are not only one of the earliest examples of guidance for audio describers, but the guidelines themselves are often referred to by contemporary literature and serve as a foundational structure from which a number of later guidance has been developed.

These guidelines were developed prior to the large-scale introduction of digital storage devices; whilst DVDs are mentioned (2000:8), primarily the guidelines refer to VHS tapes and traditional broadcast television. In contrast to say, the Netflix guidelines, the ITC guidance is heavily concerned with audio description as it relates to the structure of traditional television broadcasts, for example stating that reading every name on a cast list would be unlikely as 'airtime is too valuable' (2000:23), unlike the freedom afforded by modern video on demand style programming. This focus is primarily a historical one, reflecting the nature of traditional broadcast programming and its significance during the end of the 20th century. This restrictiveness is partly a result of the temporal constraints of 24 hour broadcasting: audio describers are encouraged to consider the scheduling strategies employed by television which

required timed 'blocks' of content, occasionally including blocks between or within shows for advertisements (Eastman and Ferguson, 2013).

Of the guidelines studied in this thesis, those provided by the ITC contained the most individual genre-focused recommendations (unlike the ADLAB guidance, which discusses the concept of genre more broadly), identifying twelve different 'programme categories', although offering no obvious motivation for the selection process of these genres; genres outside of television programming are also relegated to a two paragraph category titled 'feature films', which asserts only that different films may take different lengths of time to audio describe (2000:24). The link between genre and quality of audio descriptions is a vague one, although one to which attention has occasionally drawn by blind viewers in the ITC's own research which states that certain genres (including quiz shows) do not lend themselves to being described, whilst others may be too rapid to successfully structure a description track around (2000:08). Fryer supports this position, and states that audio description is often felt to be 'inappropriate for programming which already relies heavily on aural cues' (2016:102), however this distinction is considered far less in later guidelines, which attempt a more general method of addressing different programming.

Although the ITC guidelines do not mention foreshadowing specifically, they appear to address the idea of what has been titled in this thesis 'symbolic foreshadowing', the idea that certain visual choices have a meaning which primes an audience to expect certain things. The example discussed in the guidelines themselves pertains to the describing of colour; the guidance firstly addresses the myth that blind audiences have never seen colours and therefore they are unimportant to describe. The guidelines are quick to point out that a large number of visually impaired people have experienced colour at some point and will either retain a visual memory of the colour in question, or will have some understanding of the connotations or significance of certain colours. The ITC guidelines state that '[someone] may not 'see' green, but the colour of flower stalks, leaves and grass, which people can touch and smell does mean something' (2000:21). Within this section of the guidance, assembled beneath the group heading of 'colours/ethnic origins', the ITC guidelines also appear to inadvertently touch upon the idea of signposting significance through word choice. When describing an individual character's ethnicity, the guidelines advise describers to '[mention it] at an early stage, but [that] if repeated too often, viewers might be misled into thinking that the racial type is more significant than it actually is' (2000:21). This, in essence, describes the impact that (even accidental)

foregrounding can have on viewers' attempts to understand and follow a narrative in that a describer must be able to understand exactly what it is in a scene that an author has focalised and why. At various points, the guidance provides describers with ways of identifying such focal points, including the use of scripts, which can 'offer clues to sequences, which are perhaps not quite clear at first viewing' (2000:9); for older films, where a script was not available, the guidance recommends using 'background notes available from film reference books' (2000:24); finally, it suggests relying purely on the visuals provided, stating that for example, in a nature film 'if [animals in the background] were more than incidental to the sequence, they would have been filmed in close-up' (2000:22). This shows at least some consideration for the nature of visual storytelling, and the methods by which films utilise certain methods of filmic narration, however this information is spread across the report, only arising alongside specific examples.

Similarly, the guidelines touch upon the contextual difference between scenes which may, at face value contain similar situations. Using the example of *Basic Instinct* whilst discussing the describing of scenes with a sexual or violent component, the ITC guidelines state that ongoing description is unnecessary during a sex scene 'unless something extraordinary happens such as the production of a hidden weapon' (2000:32). The guidelines describe *Basic Instinct* as an 'aggressively sexual film' (ibid), by contrast to *Pretty Woman* in which the sex scenes are much gentler and affectionate in nature. During this explanation, however, the guidelines touch upon the idea of what it is a sighted viewer knows *before* a scene occurs, and the impact that this may have on the interpretation of a scene. During the infamous 'crossed legs' scene in *Basic Instinct*, a sighted viewer is aware that Catherine, the suspect, is naked beneath her dress and deliberately uncrosses her legs to reveal this to a police investigator. The ITC guidelines state that this information is 'essential [so that] a visually impaired knows what is going on', and that in order to do this a describer must assert the information early on in order for the scene to make sense visually:

> *"'She slips on a sleeveless dress,* would not be sufficient information, without *over her naked body'."* (2000:32, emphasis added)

Although not the original intention of this particular section of the guidance, the importance of what an audience *should* know at specific parts of the film is key to understanding the way in which foreshadowing operates both generally, and within a context of audio description. A second scene is then described, in which the guidelines draw attention to parallels that will be

apparent to sighted viewers: 'Half way through the [sex scene] Catherine seems to be mirroring the activities of the mystery blond murderess in the first scene of the film, so that aspect needs to be described in precise detail' (2000:33), this parallel occurs deliberately in order to make an audience question whether or not Catherine is going to murder her partner. Although the suggestion that this aspect of the scene requires 'precise detail' is not untrue, it is vaguely written and offers no practical suggestions for the way in which this aspect may be fully realised in audio description.

As well as this lack of concrete guidance surrounding certain narratalogical elements, we see a certain outdatedness that is telling of the ITC guidelines' publication prior to the mass accessibility of the internet as a resource of information. The suggestion of using reference books for information pertaining to older films has been largely invalidated by the large scale discussion of film and media found upon the internet, providing both a wider scale of input (numerous authors both 'official' and 'unofficial' will discuss a variety of aspects), as well as a much faster and more specific method of searching for such aspects through the development of search engines. Although the internet is mentioned as a source for acquiring specialist vocabulary, it is included only after the suggestion of utilising 'reference books and pictorial dictionaries' (2000:9).

As we will see in both the ADLAB developed guidance and the Netflix style guide, in recent years more attention has been paid to informing describers of more 'abstract' elements of narrative and worldbuilding within a cinematic context (Remael et al, 2015:21), rather than the large-scale focus on the more technical aspects provided by the ITC guidelines. As well as this, in the later guidelines, provision of scripts appears to be a given rather than a suggestion of something an audio describer must *ask* to be provided with, as is suggested in the ITC guidance (2000:24). The guidance provided by the ITC is, at 38 pages, longer than Netflix's style guide, but much shorter than the guidance provided by the ADLAB project. Both ADLAB and the ITC provide a much larger focus than Netflix's style guide on the technical aspects of audio description production including the recording of narrators and other elements such as sound levels, however the ITC's guidance on less salient aspects of audio description development (such as those tied to narratology and the 'language' of films) is greatly lacking when contrasted with the detail provided in the ADLAB guidance.

2.1.3 Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind (ADLAB) Audio Description Guidelines (2015)

The ADLAB guidance is the result of a three-year, multinational research project operated across multiple EU countries, with the aim of both defining and creating reliable, consistent, research-based guidelines for the provision of audio description (2015:5). The guide itself is the longest of those studied for this research, with almost 100 pages divided into three primary sections: An introduction to audio description, guidance for writing audio description scripts, and information relating to the technical aspects of the audio description process.

Generally speaking, the ADLAB guidance contains the greatest depth and consideration of the intricacies of audio description; not only are the ADLAB guidelines more content-rich when compared to the other guidance, they also show a great deal more consideration towards the difficulties encountered by both the describers themselves and the target audience. As well as this, the ADLAB guidance follows many of the current standards of academic writing, including appropriate citations.By comparison to the ITC guidance, which contains only eight unique references (1999:36), the ADLAB guidance cites over six pages of references from research areas including linguistics, film studies and audiovisual translation. This academic accountability warrants a more in-depth discussion of the content of the ADLAB guidelines than either of the other chosen guidance - this will be reflected in the length of section accordingly.

When advising describers, the ADLAB guidance introduces early the concept of meaning, stating that the first task a describer must undertake is '[identifying] what story filmmakers want to tell, and what principles and techniques they use to [do so]' (2015:11). This statement identifies a key element of audio description: understanding the way in which filmmakers create stories and then how audiences then reassemble and reconstruct this information (2015:12).

One of the notable elements of the ADLAB guidance is its emphasis on understanding story creation before attempting to create an audio description track. Beginning with the abstract nature of plot creation, the ADLAB guidance identifies three general stages of plot creation:

1. Deciding the spatio-temporal setting of a story, which characters should be included and what actions they may perform.

2. Deciding the order in which events will be presented within a story (including plot devices such as flashbacks, the speed at which information is presented and narratological features such as parallel events occurring which may be designed to highlight similarities and differences between events.

3. How to present this information concretely.

(2015:12-13)

This is of course, the role of the filmmaker rather than that of the audio describer, however the ADLAB guidance suggests that the better an audio describer understands how a story has been told, the better equipped they will be to create an audio description track (2015:11). The differing nature of stages one and two compared to the third stage allows us to consider the language of film, and which elements are considered as 'concrete'. In the case of telecinematic media, we see different filmic techniques used to fully realise this information, what is shown and how it is realised. Primarily when discussing cinema, we talk about different camera angles or composition representing this 'concreteness', however we may also consider the way in which different shots relate to one another (for example, a flashback of an adult character to the same character as a child).

The guidance then continues, discussing the way in which story-reconstruction takes place on the part of the audience. It is in this section that the ADLAB guidance appears to touch upon the creation of, or noticing of, significance. When discussing frames, simple labels that allow an audience to contextualise information, the guidance uses the example of a character's office being a frame. In this example, the office represents the 'base level' of contextual knowledge and anything added beyond that builds upon this initial frame. In the office frame, if an audience is given a detailed description of a chair within this frame, they are more likely to consider whether or not the chair has some symbolic function or importance warranting its description beyond the standard frame (2015:14). This represents the way in which information itself may be foregrounded; this is not always linguistically, for example, the office frame may contain a lingering close-up shot of the office chair. In this sense, the office chair is foregrounded through purely cinematic language, but is made significant for whatever reason; a describer must then be able to understand this cinematic language in order to translate not only content, but meaning.

Whilst meaning is sometimes difficult to fully parse, the ADLAB guidance consistently reminds describers of its importance. Unlike earlier guidance, although ADLAB makes brief mention of the objectivity once strived for in audio description, it also stresses that there is no real heterogeneous, single way to view a film, so by the same reasoning, there is no reason that there can only be one objective description of its components. As well as this, the guidance argues that the rendering of images into spoken narration will often render visual information more or less explicitly based on the requirements of understanding a narrative (2015:16), thereby changing what could be considered at first as objective descriptions. The guidelines do not provide an example of when visual information would be required to be made less explicit, but for the purposes of this thesis, it could be argued that this is exactly the requirement for certain types of foreshadowing.

The ADLAB guidelines provide descriptions of a variety of strategies used for describing certain types of narrative events or features, aligning them along a scale with 'objectively describing what can be seen on the screen' (2015:17) at one end, and 'explaining what the visual element means' (ibid); in the centre of this spectrum is the idea of naming what can be seen more accurately. In order to demonstrate this, the guidance provides a number of examples from Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) to show different ways of describing a character's facial expression:

- "Shosanna's eyes are wide open. She's gasping for breath" (describe)
- "Shosanna is petrified" (Name the emotion)
- "Shosanna's eyes are wide open in terror" (describe and name the emotion)

(2015:23)

This variety of description is an invaluable tool for audio describers considering how to foreground or bury certain information. For example, in the description without the naming of an emotion, an audience must attempt to figure out what an expression means, which might be obvious, or may be interpreted differently. For example, without the naming of the emotion, an audience will most likely still guess that Shosanna is afraid - the simplest or most obvious explanation (in this case that she is afraid) will be the most likely to spring to mind - however, if Shosanna was revealed to suffer from asthma later on in the film, the scene may be recontextualised. Similarly, if an audience had been told beforehand that Shosanna is asthmatic, the anchoring effect (the idea that audiences lean too heavily on information initially provided) would make an audience more likely to assume that her gasping for breath might be linked to

this. The psychological effects of the anchoring effect and the way in which it can be used to manipulate audiences is discussed at greater length in Section 2.2.1.

The second chapter of the ADLAB guidance is designed for audio describers to go about source text analysis, that is, the consideration of how to go about watching a source text (i.e. the original, undescribed version of a film or television programme) prior to the creation of its description track (2015:10). This approach is particularly important, as the ADLAB guidance dedicates a much more significant piece of its document to discussing and considering narratological elements than either of the other guidelines discussed in this thesis. This, again, shows a matured appreciation for the way in which stories are told in multimodal, telecinematic media.

The section on source text analysis begins with consideration of what constitutes a character, and how audiences learn information about these characters. It highlights that we gain information about individuals through a variety of input channels: their 'physical appearance, actions and reactions as well as through what they say and how they say it' (2015:20), as well as this, the guidance identifies that the way in which other characters react to a certain character also provides us with a variety of character information. Whilst these input channels are perhaps those most readily considered, the guidelines also note that filmic techniques may be used such as a film containing 'patchy' editing to represent the mental state worsening of a character with dementia (ibid).

These features in themselves may be seen as a form of foreshadowing - although not necessarily related to a specific event The way in which characters are introduced primes an audience to expect or identify certain things about these characters, whether these are grounding the narrative in a certain time period (i.e. a character dressed in clothing from the 1970s), to showing the passing of time (a modern-day character is shown as a teenager wearing clothing from the 1970s in a flashback), or even serving a symbolic feature (a character is shown as the only one in a scene wearing 1970s clothing). In these instances, features such as this act as ideologically coded signs, with connotative meanings that may differ in the varied scenarios.

The guidance also advises describers to look beyond just the character themselves, using the example of how a character's environment may be used to reflect certain character traits; for example, rather than describing a woman's attractiveness, a describer may choose to describe

the way other characters respond to her attractiveness in order to demonstrate it, or an anally retentive character's home may be meticulously organised (2015:23).

This consideration of symbolic representation of certain traits or narrative elements continues, advising that certain settings may serve as simply a functional backdrop for the action, whilst others are implicitly symbolic in some way, such as a castle symbolising power, whilst a dilapidated castle potentially symbolises the opposite (2015:24). Again, the idea of implicit and explicit representation is discussed, in a spatiotemporal context this time: certain films may literally provide this information in the form of on-screen text identifying the date or location in which a particular narrative is set, whilst others will allow settings to be presented implicitly through visual elements such as architecture or styles of dress shown (2015:25).

Like the ITC guidance, the ADLAB guidance also makes reference to genre, however approaches it in a less quantifiable way, discussing the changing nature of genres and how it may be hard for modern films to fall neatly into one particular genre category. Certain genre elements are discussed such as iconographical elements, referred to as 'symbolic objects or settings and iconic items [which] can be used to strengthen the character of the image'. These items are elements or props which lend credence to a particular 'type' of film, i.e. the presence of military uniform and equipment in a war film, or as discussed previously, the inclusion of spatiotemporal elements such as clothing which may identify a period drama. Colours and camera angles are also mentioned in this section, with the idea that 'a specific mood can be rendered through the use of [...] colours' (2015:29), and that the way characters are presented may be representative of a film's genre as a whole; for example, a villain in a horror movie being shown in badly lit environments (ibid). The ADLAB discussion of genre seems to follow a similar pattern to its discussion of character, a general idea of symbolism and the idea that the inclusion of certain pieces of description will prompt audiences to examine the significance of any given information. The guidance however, advises avoidance of the explicit mention of genre, stating that 'except in cases of intertextuality', outright discussion of a film's genre is rarely encountered in audio description (2015:29).

The idea of cinematic storytelling is summarised in the ADLAB guidance relating to film language, defined as 'the accepted systems, methods or conventions through which a film's story comes to the audience' (2015:29), and is split into four different functional elements which may overlap throughout a narrative:

1. Denotative (showing what is important for the narrative)

2. Expressive (rendering a character's emotions or eliciting a mood or emotion in the audience)

3. Symbolic

4. Purely aesthetic

(2015:30-31)

These features are then considered in terms of meaning: denotative techniques may not always need describing, particularly if information they are provided is being given elsewhere (for example, period costumes may not require description in terms of spatiotemporal setting if this information has already been signalled through an on-screen display of the narrative's date) (2015:33); expressive function should consider whether the mood is supposed to be that of the character or the audience, and whether this emotive information may be rendered through other narrative information (for example dialogue or musical cues). The discussion of symbolic function follows a largely similar framework, asking describers to consider extant references to symbolic features, and considering whether to describe it in an explicit way that outlines the meaning and scope of the symbolism, or whether to describe it implicitly and allow audiences to make this connection themselves (2015:34). Finally it discusses the techniques used to describe certain cinematic languages, a - solution which appears to provide several satisfying methods of describing techniques within the describing → naming spectrum. The middle-ground technique of both describing the function and the meaning of a cinematic technique as well as its name allows the interplay of cinematic meaning, without assuming that an audience knows exactly what these kinds of shot are designed to represent, such as in the given example from Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938):

> "In a 30s movie, in black and white footage, a mountaintop view looks down over a village nestled in foothills"

> (2015:35)

Whilst this technique may not be applicable to all kinds of media (for example, fast paced narratives with little room available for describers to utilise their descriptions), it provides an example of the way in which the combination of techniques can in fact allow a film to be viewed by multiple individuals with differing levels of knowledge about why certain visual

techniques represent certain implicit information. These cinematic descriptions may vary too, based on 'the nature of [a] specific [source text]' (2015:48), with the use of more or less literary language dependent on the stylistic nature of an audiovisual presentation. Although this description is vague, it appears to mimic the earlier ADLAB discussion of genre, in that it is not necessarily easy to pigeonhole a source text by genre alone. Instead, the guidance seems to argue for a consideration of the tonal nature of a narrative, with a higher or more elaborate register representing more elaborate visual storytelling. The nature of syntax and lexis cannot be understated in creating a particular atmosphere, similes and metaphors may be utilised in order to further the feeling of symbolism within a narrative (2015:49).

The nature of the ADLAB guidance means that much of it deals with similar concepts or techniques across multiple modes. For the purposes of conciseness, its discussion of both the use of sound and the inclusion of intertextual references unfolds along similar parallels to its discussion of meaning and purpose within visual elements, as discussed previously. This repetition, whilst occasionally monotonous, highlights the inherently subjective nature of audio description; the idea is reinforced numerous times that a describer must be able to assess what is significant, and must choose the best technique dependent on either narrative or technical constraints. It is this balancing act that shows the difficult nature of an audio describer's job: the need for an attentiveness to storytelling techniques and strategies within the source text on one hand, and the limitations of time and audience knowledge on the other.

Alongside this balancing act, describers must also create a narrative that is cohesive. This is described in the guidance as 'a textual property that helps the receiver of a message to understand it with reasonable ease and find continuity of sense in it' (2015:50). Although different texts have different levels of cohesion, there must be at least some cohesion between events and actions within a narrative in order for it to fully make sense to an audience. This may be explicit or implicitly done, however the guidance advises that whilst explicitation may be appropriate when translating between modes, too much of it may become patronising to an audience and 'risks giving away too much information' (2015:52). Cohesion is often achieved simply by placing the subject of the sentence at the beginning of the description, however the guidance also advises that 'sometimes prominent information must appear at the end of the sentence [...] to be close to the ensuing dialogue line or sound event because it is the most important information that must remain in the listener's mind' (2015:53).

Generally speaking, the ADLAB guidelines provide an in-depth linguistic-led assessment of current audio description convention and the document benefits from its multiple contributors as well as its consideration of the meaning of filmic language and its importance when creating audio description tracks. Guidance provided by the ADLAB project shows the results of a semi-interdisciplinary study of audio description which although primarily written by linguists, also contains a large amount of consideration from both a film and media studies perspective, as well as the specific requirements and needs of a BVI audience.

2.1.4 Netflix Audio Description Style Guide (2019a)

Netflix's dedication to providing audio description for all of its original programming began as a result of the release of its series *Daredevil*, whose eponymous protagonist is a blind superhero; a number of fans, as well as disability activists, noted that Netflix's commitment to showcasing a visually impaired protagonist was pointless without the same consideration for its visually impaired audiences (Welch, 2015), leading to a petition requesting the inclusion of audio description for the series as well as a social media campaign represented by the 'Dare2Describe' hashtag (French, 2017); four days after the release of the online petition, Netflix issued a statement committing itself to the provision of audio description wherever possible in its programming, beginning with *Daredevil*. In the five years following *Daredevil*'s release, Netflix has striven to provide audio description for *all* of its original programming, as well as attempting to identify previously existing tracks for audiovisual content provided by external distributors. For example, whilst BBC programming is available on Netflix, its audio description will be the same as provided by the BBC itself. Netflix's commitment to audio description has been proven, with consistent provision across all newly released original content, as well as a rapid response to creating and providing description for existing Netflix originals – in the first year following Netflix's commitment, the number of audio described pieces of content rose from 87 to 152 (Pauls, 2016). Statistics relating to the current number are difficult to assert with confidence as following the initial excitement relating to audio description provision, discussion has somewhat slowed down; this in itself is not a bad thing, the American Foundation for the Blind suggests that actually this is evidence of Netflix 'keeping its commitments' rather than a lack of provision (ibid).

The Netflix guidance is unique in that it is specifically referred to as a 'style guide', recognising the differing requirements relating to stylistic features (particularly when contrasted with

Netflix's technical guidance, which is provided separately, and bundled with other technical aspects relating to sound and audio track provision). Whilst this may make certain information harder to find within Netflix's online specifications and guides, for the purpose of this thesis, the splitting of such information is helpful – not only does this mean that the style guide in its entirety may be evaluated, but also by separating such features, we may intimate that the importance of stylistic features is not understated within audio description; the idea of the importance of style is also present in the subtitling guidelines, which are similarly divided along stylistic and technical boundaries (Netflix, 2019b). Netflix is also notable in that it is the only guidance to mention foreshadowing as a consideration for audio describers; this, alongside its general consideration of style, provided part of the motivation to investigate specifically Netflix-based programming for this thesis.

For the purposes of academic writing, it is also important to note that the Netflix guidance is laid out across a single webpage, rather than an online PDF document like the ITC and ADLAB guidelines – this means that there are no page numbers to reference; as such, due to the compact nature of the Netflix style guide, its own numbering and headings system will be used to identify in which part of the guidance information may be found. This is divided into five sections, each with smaller, subtitled subdivisions.

The 'fundamentals' section of the Netflix guidance convers the basics of audio description; elements such as censorship and description consistency are afforded short paragraphs, however the bulk of this section is concerned with the description of actions. When deciding which actions have relevance to a story, the Netflix guidelines suggest the following headings: who, what, when / where and how. Even within these early basics, the guidance appears to consider the way in which narratives function on a narrative level. The second section of the Netflix guidance is dedicated to describing actions, with the section divided into who, what, when / where and how; within these questions, it is hard not to notice the absence of the 'why' of audio description is missing – ultimately, this may be because something as subjective as this may be hard to give guidance on: the 'why' of something occuring is not necessarily straightforward in terms of identification; as with many facets of style, the why of choosing a particular word or turn of phrase may be almost infinite, and will differ not only amongst different narratives, but also within a narrative itself. As a set of guidelines specifically referred to as a 'style guide' it seems unwise to exclude the connotations, particularly as the question of 'why' is one that describers of foreshadowing must ask themselves – why is a particular

element important? Why should a particular element be foregrounded or buried? Why does a character give the audience a certain impression or feeling?

This final question, however, is partly touched upon, classing this kind of character information within the 'who' category, which in this case refers to characters or actors within a series (rather than the audience themselves) – characters themselves are 'of decisive importance for the experience and the remembrance of films' (Eder, 2008:06), and so their impact generally on the narrative cannot be understated. Characters themselves may also provide vehicles for foreshadowing – the guidance touches upon one specific example of this in its guidance for when and how to *name* characters, stating that describers should 'not name characters if they are purposefully supposed to remain unknown' (2019). Whilst initially this guidance might not suggest foreshadowing per se, it shows an awareness about the need for restricting and revealing information at specific times in order to preserve the impact of a reveal such as the kind discussed by Tobin in her work on twist-endings.

Similarly, when considering the describing of spatiotemporal information in the 'when/where' section of the guidance, the topic of symbolism is also touched upon, urging describers to 'determine if a setting has a symbolic function […] and if it carries more plot-relevant information compared to other elements' (2019). What constitutes 'plot-relevant information' is not specified, but we may return to Chekhov's gun in an attempt to explain this kind of information – in this sense, the plot-relevant information within a wider setting would be the gun itself; in its first instance, the gun does not have significance *beyond* its appearance within the narrative world, however later on, its true significance is explicitly revealed.

The Netflix guidance, whilst short, displays at least some degree of thought – its description as a 'style guide' rather than a general set of guidelines reflects the dramatic shift brought about by the increase of streaming services towards the provision of the kinds of scripted narratives only previously seen on traditional broadcast services; as stated by Osur, "Netflix can't simply recreate what has worked for broadcast or cable networks" (2016:84) and must therefore, to an extent, lead the way in how online streaming services operate.

2.2 Multimodality and its Narrative Impact

When considering audio description in this thesis, it is important to remember that the data with which it is concerned is both filmic and audiovisual in nature, These types of narratives

are typically seen as films or television programmes and therefore it is these kinds of audiovisual presentations with which this thesis is concerned (we do however see other similar examples such as audio description for theatre or shorter internet videos). These kinds of narratives affect the provision of audio description immensely when compared with audio description for static presentations such as those provided within art galleries or museums.

Primarily, this difference is seen in the diegetic mode by which information is conveyed. Within filmic storytelling there is a natural and deliberate temporal flow, where information is provided across multiple channels simultaneously *and* successively with a defined end point. Whilst an audio description of a painting might have a limitation on how long the description can last, there is ample room to describe multiple features without interruption; by contrast, filmic audio description must weave itself into the gaps in the audio component of an audiovisual narrative.

Although classically, stylistics has concerned itself exclusively with the text or speech components of language, there has been more attention paid to multimodal features in recent years. Bordwell speaks of the 'poetics of cinema' (2007), and discusses the overlap between semiotics and the way in which viewers interpret filmic narratives. The information contained within filmic narratives will frequently map onto certain features noted by those interested in stylistic studies of performance. Mick Short divides these performance features into three categories: action, speech and appearance (1998; 2006:12). Out of these three categories, both action and appearance contain features we have seen throughout audio description guidelines. Whilespeech is an important feature, it has much less narrative involvement when discussing audio description, as it is concerned with a channel that is audial in nature rather than visual. Action is concerned with physical movements or changes throughout a text and the spatiotemporal context in which it is presented; this category also contains elements of physicality on the part of actants within a scene such as body language and facial expression, whilst appearance is less concerned with active participation, and may be seen as more passive examples of visual information. This category includes the physical appearance of individuals such as height, gender, race etc., but also includes choices such as clothing or accessories.

Whilst features highlighted in the appearance category may seem less impactful than more direct actions, it is important to remember that passive features are often used by viewers to contextualise settings and situations. For example, if we were to describe the content of the

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2016 film *Hidden Figures*, we might say that it focuses primarily on a group of African-American women working for NASA in the 1960s. Even from this single sentence description, we may begin to form schemata surrounding various elements of the film: we as viewers can relate these otherwise separate pieces of information to the context of the 1960s, the burgeoning civil rights movement in America, the position of women within a scientific arena etc. Even on a smaller scale, audiences are constantly updating and redefining schemata as new information is revealed; these schemata may even be unique to a particular narrative and viewers may have a very select schema which may only be utilised under very specific conditions.

These might also overlap: For example, in *Arrested Development* there are a series of running jokes associated with a specific doctor at a hospital, utilising not only our more general hospital schema (a place for ill people; doctors, nurses; clean; official), but then adding an extra element to create a specific *Arrested Development* hospital schema (the doctor will most likely say something misleading, such as after a character loses his left hand, the doctor states that he will be 'all right'). This is done through reinforcement and repetition of these schematic triggers - for example, the 'literal doctor' joke occurs on six separate occasions throughout Arrested Development all of which occur within the same hospital setting (NPR, 2013). Schemata are useful, particularly as a starting point for a viewer, although their schema may not map onto a situation entirely, there are usually a number of familiar enough elements that a viewer can latch onto in order to begin contextualising the contents of a particular narrative.

For example, when the audio description for *Arrested Development* states that 'Michael arrives at the penthouse', we are more generally primed to expect certain things from this, even if we have never seen an episode before:

- Association with wealth and privilege as the penthouse floor is more expensive than others
- The action takes place in an apartment block rather than a house
- There exists some kind of link between Michael and the Penthouse.It is not described as his home, but it is designated 'the' penthouse, rather than 'a' penthouse or 'Lucille's penthouse', implying that he is familiar with the apartment, and that it appears regularly enough in the narrative that its inclusion does not require explanation or extra context.

Although these features are not especially exciting on their own, they play a crucial role in signposting certain events or occurrences within a narrative, providing a viewer with a ready-made context to apply to a text rather than having to figure it out for themselves. If we return to the simplistic 'at the penthouse' descriptor, as a fan we are given slightly more information to work with alongside the generalised 'penthouse' schema, our knowledge that it is Lucille, the matriarch of the family, who lives in the penthouse primes a more familiar audience to then expect her presence; at one point another character is under house arrest and cannot physically *leave* the penthouse, which then becomes associated with the same location under specific circumstances; we know that Lucille has one other neighbour on the top floor, but that the story is most likely to revolve around the more familiar character and setting meaning that it is likely *her* penthouse we expect when the description states that action takes place at 'the' penthouse.

These schematic elements can be utilised by an audio describer to save time or space, particularly once specific schemas are established within a narrative. Saving time and space in an audio description track allows more flexibility. This is a valuable move on the part of a describer, who must constantly work with the mimetic nature of the programme. This can be seen in the ADLAB guidance on known settings, which states that if a setting is identical to a preceding setting it may be described 'briefly with one or two features used to describe it before'. Although the topic of burying is discussed in the proceeding section, it is important to note its relevance to multimodal narratives. Burying is a technique suggested by Emmott and Alexander that functions in opposition to the stylistic concept of foregrounding (making something *more* prominent in a text), by making the item instead seem unimportant.

Whilst multimodal studies of burying are rare, given burying's relative novelty as an area of research, Berberich and Dumrukcic have presented work relating to burying strategies in the BBC drama *Sherlock,* in which they consider the implications of burying across multiple modes of input, pointing out that plot significant items which are not present within the linguistic mode may still be given a large amount of input within the visual one (Berberich and Dumrukcic, 2015:9). Although Emmott and Alexander's work refers specifically to textual narratives (in this case, *Murder in The Mews*, by Agatha Christie), it is important to keep in mind that this thesis is concerned with the *translation* of plot significant visual information into a textual, spoken format. For this reason, both Emmott and Alexander's original work and Berberich and Dumrukcic's extension of this work into the types of audiovisual narratives relevant to this study are useful; the latter allows one to consider visual foreshadowing from

the perspective of a non-author, whilst the former provides tools for translating this visual input into a spoken format. There is, however, little research in the consideration of *why* an author may wish to bury an item beyond the obvious statement that it is to make it less visible. Emmott and Alexander do discuss the functional elements of foregrounding and identify them as 'highlighting specific key points, producing thematic meaning, prompting an emotional response, and yielding iconic effects' (2014:2); the role of burying may then be as similarly complex as those identified as functions of foreshadowing.

2.3 Narrative Functions and Cognitive Approaches to Foreshadowing

There has, at present, been little research into the narrative functions and methods of foreshadowing. Although traditionally, reference is often made to specific *individual* examples of foreshadowing within literature or other forms of narrative, the mechanical functions of foreshadowing themselves have been overlooked in a great deal of discussion. This section attempts to collate current research regarding the mechanical and functional role played by foreshadowing in narratives.

Foreshadowing is defined by Chatman as a collection of 'anticipatory satellites' from which 'kernel events' can then be anticipated (1978:55).Whilst satellites are defined as minor plot points which do not generate any further branching plotlines, kernel events are instead 'major plot events [serving] as branching points directing a main path in the story' (Bae et al, 2013:50). We may view these anticipatory satellites in a similar manner to the concept of 'indexical signs' found in semiotics. Indexical signs are described as 'indicat[ing] or attest[ing] to something' (Rosen, 2001:18), in that the presence of one thing suggests the presence of something else such as how the orientation of hands on a clock signify a particular time. Similarly, we may see foreshadowing in the way that characterisation is often approached, with features such as symbolic or significant names being used by audiences to make judgements about the future behaviours or actions of the character as well as their role within the larger narrative (Culpeper, 2001:231).

We may apply the idea of such indexical signs to foreshadowing in the sense that they may suggest a related event or occurrence, however often unlike indexical signs, these may not be apparent until after the event itself occurs and the audience realizes the significance of their inclusion. These type of significant items are often known as Chekhov's guns, named for the author Anton Chekhov who stated at multiple points throughout his career that that one must

never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn't going to be fired at a later point in the narrative (Goldberg, 1976:163). Whilst the idea that every visual component must be relevant may have been more achievable on sparsely populated theatre sets, or in novels in which elements may be excluded from a description, the invent and enduring success of cinema has changed the way acted narratives are most frequently absorbed and viewed. To add to this, during Chekhov's time, the realist movement had created scenery which whilst lavish and historically accurate, did not reflect more intangible qualities such as the mood of the play or the characters involved (Barker et al, 2015), unlike in modern cinema which often deliberately attempts to reinforce or develop these qualities through a number of audiovisual methods (Rogers and Kiss, 2014). As such, Chekhov's gun is now more closely related to the idea of the gun representing some kind of indexical sign that may help trigger comprehension or understanding of a greater narrative reveal. These kinds of narrative reveal are discussed in the work of Tobin (2018), whose work bridges gaps between pragmatic studies and those of cognitive psychology and who discusses the way in which twist endings are set up and deployed. In her work on surprise, she identifies the existence of mental blind spots which allow individuals to overlook certain key details, as well as forgetting *how* they have acquired such information (Vedantam, 2018). This unreliable nature may then be exploited by storytellers deliberately in order to draw attention away from a surprise ending, or to obfuscate a significant piece of information.

Tobin's work considers the way in which cognitive biases may be exploited by authors and storytellers, thereby allowing us to consider how these biases can interact with the portrayal of foreshadowing. Tobin's research relates to narrative reveals referred to as 'rugpullers', which are described as 'surprises [appearing] climactically at the end of a film, [overturning] everything that came before' (2018). She discusses the way in which readers are manipulated into processing provided narrative information in a particular manner which preserves the reveal, as well as identifying three existing cognitive processes which can be manipulated in order to facilitate such preservation:

- **Availability bias** - the idea that not only will elements which are familiar to viewers spring more readily to mind, they will be seen as more plausible than elements which do not.
- **The anchoring effect** - the idea that an initial piece of information an audience is provided will act as an 'anchor' and will influence any information that is learned afterwards

- **Hindsight bias** - 'the idea that individuals believe that an event is more predictable after it becomes known than it was before it became known' (Roese and Vohs, 2012)

If we consider the example of the 1999 thriller *The Sixth Sense*, we can see the way in which these processes play a role. In the initial scenes of the film, we see the protagonist Malcolm is shot by a former patient. The narrative then cuts to Malcolm sitting in a house interviewing a young boy, acting as his psychologist. By the end of the film, both the Malcolm and the audience will know that Malcolm has in fact been dead for almost the entirety of the film; when the initial scene is revisited with hindsight, an audience will realise that the patient shoots Malcolm dead, and everything that follows within the narrative occurs when Malcolm is a ghost. Upon first viewing, however, an audience's availability bias will most likely kick in, and we will assume (generally logically) that upon seeing Malcolm again, he has survived the attack and that the scene is occurring at some point in the future following his recovery. Assumptions on the part of an audience come about partly through the way in which narratives are conceptually tracked, a process Emmott (1997) splits into the concepts of binding and priming: binding to describe the way in which sequential or episodic links between indivuals are established in a text and priming to account for the way in which a specific contextual frame will become the primary focus of an audience. Emmott describes the way in which characters or events may be 'bound out' of a story temporarily, with the assumption on the part of the audience that these characters will "remain in place until [an audience] receives an explicit signal that they should be bound out" (Simpson, 2009:91-92). In this case, seeing Malcolm walking around after the accident would, in a conventional narrative, be an explicit signal that the character has survived; ordinarily, had Malcolm not survived, we would not see him again unless he was 'bound out' during a flashback or a funeral scene. This is also assisted by the way in which an audience will often align themselves with a particular point of view characters – as Malcolm is the protagonist, and at no point (until the reveal) does *he* believe himself to be dead, the audience will have to stray much further from the presented narrative in order to reach the truth (Tobin, 2009:159). That is not to say some audiences will not guess the twist – sentimental audiences like those described by Bae et al (2013) may consider such information more critically, however for the most part these cognitive biases are often enough to misdirect unsentimental viewers, thereby preserving the twist ending.

This availability bias also extends to the way in which audiences *understand* narratives, particularly mediums such as film with more specific spatiotemporal constraints. There may

not be a narrative reason to show what would may be a lengthy, mostly uninteresting recovery process, and as a result, audiences do not see its absence as untoward. Finally, the idea of a child psychologist will be a more logical assumption to make than a ghost, particularly without any other symbolism typically associated with ghosts to signpost this association - an audience will accept this information at face value if it reinforces their initial assumption.

Following this initial moment of false inference (that Malcolm is alive), the anchoring effect will continue. In this case, the anchor is the initial moment of inference between Malcolm being shot and Malcolm being seen moving around in the next scene. This moment will continue to be reinforced repeatedly through the staging of the narrative around Malcolm's point of view (he, like the audience, is not aware that he is dead), as he continues to engage in activities that an audience would expect from a living character. Tobin states that the more immersive a narrative is, the more an audience will tend to take an 'enactive viewpoint', meaning that their viewpoints will become more closely aligned to what is being presented by the narrative, leading them to be less likely to question a presented narrative.

Finally, hindsight bias is important in making an audience feel surprised by an event, but not cheated by its occurrence. Successfully manipulating this bias is an obvious function of foreshadowing; information must be provided in such a way that the narrative reveal does not occur too early, but must provide enough clues that a reveal does not feel like it comes out of nowhere. One of the more obvious moments of this occurs when Malcolm's child patient states that not only does he see dead people, "the dead people don't actually know they're dead", as well as other characters never actually interacting with Malcolm. Tobin describes this as constructing an 'insight experience' where rather than feeling blindsided by a reveal and confused afterwards, audiences instead recontextualise the information they have previously been given, and are provided instead with a feeling of clarity about how certain narrative elements now fit together.

Not all audiences will approach these narratives in the same way, however. As mentioned when discussing *The Sixth Sense*, most individuals may either notice nothing until the narrative reveal, or may notice a particular moment (or moments) that may have been foregrounded in some way without realising *why* this is the case. By comparison, Bae et al identify a particular subsection of an audience referred to as 'sentimental readers' (2013:2), identified as 'readers whose reading process is modified by an awareness of aesthetic narrative techniques, and who

are therefore able to grasp underlying story elements' (ibid), in other words, audiences made up of sentimental readers are more likely to consider superficial information at greater length.

In order to model this, Bae et al attempt to map the way sentimental readers will infer plot information when mapping story progression in the film *In Bruges* (2008). In the example in Figure 2.1, the character Harry states early on that he will commit suicide if he ever kills a child; as the narrative progresses, he kills a dwarf he mistakenly assumes is a child, leading to him killing himself over the misunderstanding. This kind of misunderstanding may be
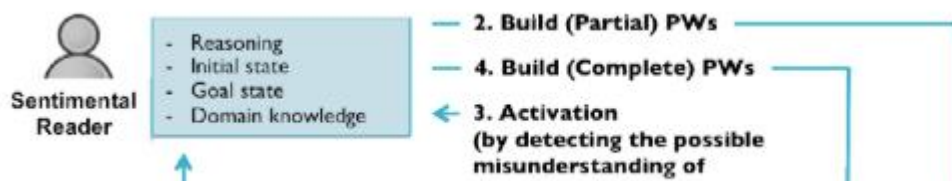
FIGURE 2-1: AN EXAMPLE OF THE WAY SENTIMENTAL READERS ACCESS FORESHADOWING
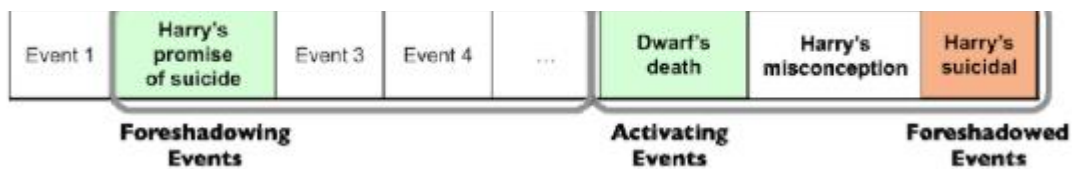
considered through the lense of discourse levels as described by Short (1996:169-172), which act as a method of mapping the exchange of information between those involved in a production of a dramatic story. Short's dramatic levels contain both addressers and addressees, which may be real (such as an audience watching a play) or fictional (a character within the play itself).

Addresser 1 (The Writers / Authors / Actors) → Addressee 1 (The audience / reader / viewer)

Addresser 2 (Character 1) → Addressee 2 (Character 2)

(Adapted from Short, 1996)

These addressers and addressees may go down multiple layers, with the 'real' world always on the top. This accounts for situations in which the audience knows more than the characters, or is given different and extra information to the information available to characters or actors within a narrative. Whilst the audience and the writers *know* that the dwarf that Harry kills in *In Bruges* is not a child, the character of Harry does not, and so will not make decisions based around this piece of information.

Bae et al draw a distinction between foreshadowing events, activating events and foreshadowed events, with potentially multiple instances of foreshadowing building to a single event that will activate and validate these prior instances of foreshadowing and lead to the inevitable foreshadowed events. Often the activating event will occur with the foreshadowed event following immediately afterwards, for example, at the end of the *Sixth Sense*, Malcolm finally remembers being shot at the same moment that a non-sentimental audience would also see the reveal.

This model works extremely well for mapping the narrative progression of foreshadowing, and the way in which it operates within the full purview of a storyline. We may also consider this useful for talking about which events are required to be explicit (the activating and foreshadowed events) and which benefit from being implicit, or buried. Although there may be some debate as to *how* implicit prior foreshadowing events should be, a strong reveal must be explicitly done in order to justify the preceding foreshadowing. Further discussion of implicit and explicit foreshadowing follows in Section 2.4.

2.4 Implicit and Explicit Foreshadowing

The idea of making an item explicit or implicit within a narrative is not unique to foreshadowing and the topic is discussed frequently in the area of stylistics. Whilst both foregrounding (making an item more prominent in a text) and burying (making an item less prominent) have been studied, burying has been discussed far less and is a relatively new concept despite serving as an antithesis to the more studied concept of foregrounding, This section will identify the differences between the two techniques, as well as considering this role in the generation of foreshadowing.

Foregrounding, within the wider purview of linguistics, relates to the idea of making a specific linguistic sign stand out against the language surrounding it. The foregrounding a particular word or phrase will draw attention to the word in question, marking it as either unusual or significant to readers. It is important to note that this function is by no means exclusive to foreshadowing, and is frequently employed in a variety of linguistic circumstances for a variety of reasons. With relation to foreshadowing, foregrounding may establish successful manipulation of the hindsight bias discussed in Section 2.3, particularly if an audience felt that a particular item was foregrounded in some way (despite not understanding the significance of *why*). It is however, also important to note that foregrounding may occur outside of a linguistic

scope, particularly in visual narratives such as film and television. Both Hollywood and art-house cinema have a history of "eliciting certain emotional responses from the viewer […] by foregrounding the style (or technique)" (Rogers and Kiss, 2014:50) to produce certain emotional effects in a viewer – foreshadowing is a deliberate effort to induce these effects as soon as possible and as explicitly as possible.

By comparison, the idea of burying was proposed by Emmott and Alexander, as a way of doing the opposite; instead of increasing the significance of a particular thing, burying relates to the obfuscation of such plot-significant items within a narrative. They identify that whilst burying may be discussed in a broader context, much like foregrounding, their interest specifically relates to how 'information [...] used to solve a puzzle is hidden until it is revealed at the end [...] as a solution' (2014:5). This is tied closely to the method by which sentimental audiences may try and solve such puzzles addressed by Bae et al, and at what point they may successfully do so.

Emmott and Alexander consider the way in which the clues are linguistically coded in order to reduce their prominence, making it harder for sentimental audiences to ascertain which features are relative to the over-all comprehension of such kinds of narratives. Emmott and Alexander offer eleven techniques for burying plot significant items within a text:

i. Mentioning the item as little as possible.

ii. Using linguistic structures which have been shown empirically to reduce prominence (e.g. embed a mention of the item within a subordinate clause).

iii. Under-specifying the item, describing it in a way that is sufficiently imprecise that it draws little attention to it or detracts from features of the item that are relevant to the plot.

iv. Placing the item next to an item that is more prominent, so that the focus is on the more prominent item. Hence, when foregrounding is used it may have an automatic effect of downplaying nearby items, like a spotlight that makes items around the light less noticeable.

v. Making the item apparently unimportant in the narrative world (even though it is actually significant).

vi. Making it difficult for the reader to make inferences by splitting up information needed to make the inferences

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vii.   Placing information in positions where a reader is distracted or not yet interested.

viii. Stressing one specific aspect of the item so that another aspect (which will eventually be important for the solution) becomes less prominent. This may also be done after the original description. Psychology research shows that inferences can be more short-lived if attention is subsequently directed elsewhere (e.g. Keefe and McDaniel, 1993).

ix.   Give the item a false significance, so that the real significance is buried.

x.   Get the narrator or characters in the story to say that the item is uninteresting.

xi.   Discredit the characters reporting certain information, thereby making them appear unreliable and giving less salience to the information they report.

(Emmott and Alexander, 2014:5-7)

These techniques relate specifically to written novels, and the suggestions are provided with the implication that they will be utilised by an individual (such as an author) who is in full control of the narrative direction. When discussing audio description, however, we must consider that describers must work around an existing narrative rather than developing the narrative from scratch, thereby rendering certain burying techniques either difficult or impossible to employ in audio description tracks. For example, if a describer were to use techniques (ix), (x) and (xi), rather than burying this information by utilising these techniques, a describer would be much more likely to *foreground* the information they wish to bury due to the specific nature of audio description. Although the suggested qualities of an audio description track's content have moved somewhat further away from the earlier guidance promoting strict objectivity, the level of subjectivity allowed in audio description tracks is not enough to allow for a describer to state outright that a character is unreliable as this would immediately seem unusual to individuals, thereby *foregrounding* the item rather than burying it; similarly, an audio describer would be discouraged from providing an item with false significance, unless the false significance was inserted specifically by the original author. In these cases, we see that it is the functional form and conventions of audio description that guides which of Emmott and Alexander's suggestions will be appropriate

A number of the techniques suggested are manual manipulations of specific biases as discussed in section 2.3 - for example, the second technique suggested requires a specific grammatical structure (a subordinate clause) to generate foreshadowing effectively, which in turn is based

on psychological research into systemic choices may affect how noticeable a particular piece of information may be.

A subordinate clause requires a main clause in order to make sense and cannot act as a standalone clause. These may be deployed in a number of ways: firstly, through the use of a subordinating conjunction:

Michael walks into the penthouse *where* his mother is waiting.

Subordinate clauses may also occur before the main clause; however, they still do not make sense alone:

As his mother waits, Michael walks into the penthouse.

In this example, the connective word 'as' moves to the start of the main clause, but plays a similar role to the word 'where' in the first example, providing a cognitive link between the two clauses. In this way, ideas may be simultaneously linked to one another, but the relevance of one part of this information can be downplayed merely through the embedding of it in a subordinate clause.

In the case of burying, we see the secondary function of these subordinate clauses being manipulated. Although these kinds of clauses provide cognitive links between ideas, they also encourage a reader to identify one clause as being of greater importance than another, regardless of the true nature of the information contained within the subordinate clause. Bybee describes these clauses as being 'fully manipulable for the purposes of foregrounding and backgrounding' (2002:2), and it is important to note that whilst this thesis considers these clauses as a stylistic choice, the psychological effects of placing information in a subordinate clause is not unique to intentional deployment, and that these cognitive biases exist even within casual speech (Bybee, 2002:1).

These biases extend beyond the grammatical structure of the provided information and many of the strategies suggested by Emmott and Alexander also employ a variety of other input areas. Alongside grammatical manipulation, this thesis divides Emmott and Alexander's techniques into subcategories in order to better understand and explain their deployment when working with an existing target text, as well as discount techniques difficult to apply within a context of audio description.

Lexical manipulation refers to the words chosen to describe an item - this is seen most directly in techniques (iii) and (viii), the first of which encourages the deployment of a description that is 'sufficiently imprecise' when describing a plot significant item (2014:6), although no examples are given as to what kind of language would generate this vagueness. Technique (viii) requires a describer to focus on one specific aspect of an item, thereby drawing attention away from a different aspect or quality which is eventually revealed to be plot significant.

Focal manipulation requires a describer to manipulate the audience's focus, either by primarily avoiding mentions of the plot-significant item (such as in technique (i)), or by instead forcing an audience to focalise on a different item instead. Focalisation is, of course, an important consideration with *any* audio description, however this specifically refers to deliberate focus upon a less relevant area of the scene as a method of foregrounding non-relevant information, and drawing attention away from information which will contribute to the eventual foreshadowed event.

Finally, we can consider temporal manipulation. This category encompasses both (vi) and (vii), and considers when and where to reveal plot-relevant information, either by splitting up this information (thereby making it harder for audiences to link them together), or by deliberately choosing to place this information at a point at which an audience is either uninterested, or distracted. Technique (vii) suggests '[placing] information in positions where a reader is distracted or not yet interested' (2014:6), but offers no guidance as to exactly what makes an audience uninterested or distracted. This does not establish exactly what makes this particular suggestion different from technique (iv), which offers an example of *how* to distract a reader (by foregrounding a non-relevant piece of information to distract from the relevant).

2.5 Conclusion

The contents of this literature review are representative of the difficulty of such interdisciplinary work – in terms of foreshadowing, the most valuable contributions came in the form of both Tobin's work on rugpullers and the mechanisms of surprise, as well as Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques. Such research, written by linguists, proved invaluable for contextualizing the concept of foreshadowing within a larger narrative framework without straying too far outside of the core area of study associated with this thesis.

The realization that much of the work on foreshadowing related specifically to the mystery or twist-ending styles of narrative was unsurprising, however the lack of research into more mundane continuity features drove me to include examples of how foregrounding may *also* be used for foreshadowing purposes outside of narratives that require some element of surprise..

From an accessibility perspective, it was heartening to see the increased consideration for the provision and application of audio description – the Adlab guidance acts as a testament to the thought and effort implemented by its contributors, both on the behalf of end-users and through the attribution and consideration of extant academic research into a variety of different facets of audio description. Despite this, the topic of foreshadowing itself is rarely actively discussed in audio description guidance, despite indirect references to the way in which similar features (such as symbolism) are relevant. It is for this reason that I feel that this thesis provides some kind of novel contribution in its attempt to discuss specific types of foreshadowing within the context of audio description and how these may be reinforced or supported by both the existing narrative and the language used by its describer.

Netflix's description, although much shorter proves much easier to cross-reference with the studied data, all of which must conform directly to such guidance by merit of being entirely transcribed from Netflix's own programming. Ultimately, this thesis' conclusion will include suggestions for audio describers themselves based in part on the existing guidance, as well as the findings of the study itself and so it felt important to fully consider how much the existing guidelines conform to current knowledge surrounding foreshadowing and its construction.

In the methodology section which follows, I attempt to construct a working model to apply that may be applied more generally to different instances of audio described foreshadowing – this takes inspiration primarily from both Emmott and Alexander's methods of burying, as well as their diagrammatic depiction of such methods.

3 Methodology

In order to consider this thesis's research questions, we must also then consider the analytical methods required to answer them. The topic of audio description is still one that, at least within the field of linguistics, is underdeveloped, meaning that an accepted set of traditional research methods developed specifically to study AD simply do not exist within the current academic landscape. This makes the task of developing a methodological approach based on preexisting or similar methodologies more difficult as none were specifically tailored to the kinds of stylistic study of audio description that this thesis hopes to achieve.

It is for this reason, then, that the gathering and analyzing of physical data is an important factor at the core of this research.

The primary difficulty associated with studying AD is finding enough relevant data. Although we have seen a rapid increase in the visibility and public-awareness surrounding AD over the past decade (Ofcom, 2013), AD tracks themselves can be difficult to identify. Prior to the rise of streaming television sites (such as iPlayer, Netflix), AD could be found almost exclusively on DVDs, although that is not to say that every release was always audio described – in fact, we see a huge discrepancy in Amazon.co.uk's categorisation of audio described titles: very few films with an original release date prior to the release of DVDs were not being retrospectively described, even in newer releases of these narratives. Finding data is also problematic, due to the nature of the data required: foreshadowing is a complex topic, and identifying specific examples of it within an AD track can feel overwhelming. There is no obvious academic solution to this – there are no convenient lists of visually foreshadowed information alongside whether or not an AD track is available. It is for this reason that the process of finding data required multiple steps:

Firstly, the website TVTropes, which catalogues recurrent plot devices or conventions, provides a community based assemblance of data within its article on the topic of foreshadowing (TV Tropes, 2018). Although the wiki-like nature of the site does not necessarily benefit it in terms of provenance, it provides easily the largest assembled collection of identified elements of foreshadowing across multiple genres, as well as multiple media-types (including audiovisual sections for animation, video games, television, film etc.). By sifting

through different examples, data was written down and returned to later in order to identify which of the chosen examples might have audio description provided. Many did not, which proved frustrating, particularly when attempting to assemble a dataset without cherry-picking specific examples.

One way to avoid the ordinarily anonymous nature of an AD's choices, is to utilise a dataset which follows particular guidelines. The lack of provided credit to individual AD track authors or performers also provides a problem for analyzing data: we cannot regulate, or speculate on, the way in which a particular describer has chosen to phrase a particular piece of description – although we can identify the way in which *one specific* describer has approached the foreshadowed event, we cannot then say that this is necessarily a good example of the way in which *all* describers would make a particular choice.

Although this will be a reoccurring issue when attempting to discuss AD, our data may be refined by returning to the previously mentioned video on demand services – online streaming services such as Netflix have taken a number of steps to include accessibility options to their original programming, either regulated by their own particular set of guidelines (Netflix, 2018); or by governmental guidelines, such as those established by Ofcom which govern services such as BBC iPlayer which relate more closely to actual broadcast television. By using these particular services as a framework, we may at least remove *some* of the ambiguity created by individual describer choices. For this research, the AD data collected is collated from Netflix material – this is due to a number of reasons: the aforementioned commitment to audio describing *all* of its existing and upcoming 'Netflix Originals' programming means that one can be certain that the description will exist, but also that it will remain accessible. Although the BBC commit to broadcasting at least the 10% of programming required by Ofcom for audio description purposes, it is more difficult to maintain a stable data-set, due to the nature of broadcast television meaning that programmes may appear or disappear depending on a variety of reasons including copyright issues and broadcast dates. Netflix, by comparison, exists solely as an online company – their original programming is not limited by the same constraints as regularly broadcast television, and contains both episodic style 'television' programming, as well as films.

3.1 Data Selection and Reasoning

Data selection for this thesis was hindered by a number of different issues; this section will outline these difficulties and provide justification for the selected case studies. The primary issue affecting data collection on a broad scale involved the relative novelty of audio description. Unlike subtitles, which are comparatively cost effective, audio description requires a number of extra steps in order to effectively apply the techniques required for accessibility. Plaza identifies that the lack of discussion about such cost effectiveness has limited the number of producers willing to implement the service beyond mandatory requirements provided by individual regulatory bodies (Plaza, 2017: 3480).

As a result, a large amount of audio described content comes primarily from broadcasters willing to implement audio description requirements across a broader scale than simply the minimum required by regulatory bodies as part of an equality and diversity agenda.;Despite this, there are a number of problems when it comes to the practicalities of transcribing broadcast television with regards to replicability and accountability in a research context;attempting to transcribe a programme live is almost impossible due to the in-depth nature of multimodal transcription (this is discussed further in section 3.2), and the speed at which the information is presented. As well as this, the nature of foreshadowing means that it is not always immediately obvious upon first viewing, and may require multiple watches in order to fully appreciate the foreshadowing events leading up to the eventual 'reveal'.

Whilst these difficulties may appear to make viewing these broadcasting services' online streaming equivalents (broadcaster-led video on demand) the desirable choice for this data, there are still difficulties arising from these video on demand services. Not only is a great deal of content region-locked, requiring a British address and television license to access, but much of the BBC's programming is also available only for thirty days after its original broadcast, after which it disappears and is unable to be streamed again unless rebroadcast (BBC, 2019). This creates difficulties for other researchers attempting to access the same audio description tracks discussed in this work, and would therefore be undesirable from a research perspective.

In order to provide data with the greatest degree of transparency available, a number of requirements were created to broadly encapsulate requirements for the transcribed data:

1. The raw data (that is, the original presentation with its audio description) must be easily accessible to relevant parties for the foreseeable future
2. The different audio description tracks must come from the same source and be bound by the same guidance in order to minimise the effects of individual description styles on the content
3. The data should, for the most part not be region-locked, or should be easily accessed from multiple places.

Broadcast television, as stated previously, does not follow requirements one or three despite being bound by the requirements implemented by Ofcom and whilst the BBC iPlayer is hindered by the length of time programming is available, other video on demand services are not necessarily limited by this.

Netflix is not tied to original broadcast dates in the same way that broadcaster-led streaming services are. The RNIB provides a list of the ten key audio description providers in the UK in which seven providers are broadcaster-led, meaning their programming will not remain available indefinitely, and which will not be accessible outside of the United Kingdom without resorting to the use of a virtual private network (VPN) and spoofing the location of the viewer.

For this reason, this thesis then turns its attention to the independent VoD services listed by the RNIB: Netflix, Amazon Video and iTunes. Out of the three listed, only Amazon Video and Netflix provide original programming which cannot removed from the service due to licensing expirations or conflicts. According to David Wells, the chief financial officer of Netflix, the service provides approximately 700 pieces of programming under the banner of 'Netflix Originals' (Spangler, 2018), whilst Amazon lists only 187 pieces of programming that are audio described as of July 2019 (Amazon, 2019) - this list also contains multiple instances of the same programme with different streaming quality, so the number itself may in fact be significantly lower. This original programming provides the broadest access when taking into consideration the three requirements listed above, as the programming has no time-limit, and instead remains on the service as long as the service is active.

Requirements one and three are also covered by the nature of original programming. As original programming is owned by the streaming service, it be accessible in any country in

which the streaming service is available. Amazon prime is available in seventeen countries, whilst Netflix is available in 190 - this is most likely due to Netflix's focus entirely on streaming media meaning almost all of its content is specifically online, whilst Amazon's prime membership also encapsulates non audiovisual features, such as the purchase and delivery of physical items.

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, Netflix also provides a style guide that can be viewed by individuals outside of the company itself, whilst amazon does not provide information about its audio description guidelines (if they exist) in any publically accessible location. The inclusion of a style guide assists with requirement number two - although it is impossible to entirely remove an audio description track from its author, the implementation of certain stylistic requirements allows a level of consistency to be maintained throughout the programming even if the description tracks are written by different authors. As well as this, as stated in Section 2.1.3, Netflix is the only piece of guidance specifically mentioning foreshadowing in its content guidelines.

It is for these reasons that the data for this thesis comes exclusively from Netflix Original programming. The proceeding sections consider the way in which this data will be collated and evaluated with a focus on multimodal transcription as well as the way in which this thesis approaches narrative and stylistic analysis more generally. The choice of each *individual* case study is discussed at greater length in the data analysis section of this thesis, with reasoning each narrative's inclusion provided in the introduction to each individual case study.

3.2 Transcription Methods

This section introduces the methodological methods applied to the data and the reasoning behind a number of analytical choices made within this thesis. One of the most notable difficulties with this thesis involved attempting to codify all the analytical methods utilised into one framework. In this section, this framework will be introduced and each of the stages explained. Firstly, however, It is important to establish exactly *what* this thesis hopes to analyse in order to better understand each stage of its methodology. The nature of this thesis draws from three important, yet distinct areas of study: linguistics, specifically the study of stylistics; film studies and the nature of visual storytelling; and finally, media accessibility and the way in which BVI audiences interact with media designed specifically for their use. Although these

three disciplines overlap frequently, when discussing audio description, each one has a distinct, important role.

Research from film and media studies allows us to fully consider the impact of the visual side of audiovisual translation. John Ellis argues that the development of audiovisual media has allowed viewers to become 'witnesses' to other times or places , and that televisual media 'makes an aesthetic promise that [the media itself] is live, even though that promise is indifferently fulfilled' (Ellis, 2002:09). This perspective seems to touch upon the semi-tangible nature of cinematic media and its intersection with the spatiotemporal limits associated with the production of an audio description track as discussed in the literature review. 'Live action' style cinematography is used to define media involving real people or animals rather than computer generated imagery or hand-drawn animation and accounts for most of the accompanying case studies.

Due to the broad nature of this study and its associated case studies, the methodology for this work was difficult to fit into a 'one size fits all' framework. As a result, slight adaptations of existing methodological guidance have been used at different stages of analysis. Firstly, data transcription was based initially on McIntyre's (2008) multimodal analysis of *Richard III*, although not originally developed with audio description in mind, McIntyre offers a number of useful categories through which multimodal features may be viewed independently. These categories can be seen in Figure 3.1 below:

Shot no.	Time (minutes and seconds into film)	Shot description	Linguistic audio (OS = out of shot)	Paralinguistic visual	Paralinguistic audio	Non-linguistic visual
					Audio-visual transcript of linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic performance features of the soliloquy from *Richard III* (1995)	
1	8.38	Close-up of Richard's finger tapping a microphone.	–	–	Applause from audience.	–
2	8.40	Medium close-up on Richard at microphone.	–	–	Applause from audience.	–
3	8.42	Medium close-up on Duchess of York.	–	–	Applause from audience.	–
4	8.45	Medium close-up on Richard at microphone.	**Richard:** Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this	Richard extends his hand.	Applause dies down.	–
5	8.55	Long shot of Edward and Elizabeth	**Richard:** (OS) son of York	Edward waves graciously.	Laughter from Edward and applause and laughter from audience.	–
6	8.59	Medium close-up on Richard at microphone.	**Richard:** And all the clouds that loured upon our house/In the deep bosom of the ocean buried./Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;	Richard shakes fist.	–	–

FIGURE 3-1: MCINTYRE'S MULTIMODAL TRANSCRIPTION CATEGORIES (2008:330)

This style of transcription is offered as one tailored specifically to stylistic, multimodal analysis, rather than say, the analysis of a researcher concerned with film studies, which is more likely to rely on macro analysis: considering the 'big picture' when it comes to an audiovisual presentation. Although film studies provide an important perspective when discussing cinematic language (for example the 'meaning' of certain camera angles), this thesis is specifically concerned with stylistic, linguistic analysis. As McIntyre states in his work on multimodal transcription, this is not a comment on the value of one analysis style over another, simply that the priorities of stylisticians are inevitably concerned with micro-analysis of much smaller pieces of data, rather than a larger macro-analysis favoured by film critics (McIntyre, 2008:312).

McIntyre's transcription method provides a number of multimodal channels and has the benefit of showing these categories even as they overlap with one another, a ubiquitous feature of multimodal presentation. However, this thesis is concerned as well with audio description and its specific effects. It is for this reason that it is necessary to adapt McIntyre's categories in order to account for the additional audial information. In order to successfully adapt this

framework, three extra categories were included: audio description, non-linguistic audio and linguistic visual. The audio description category, whilst mostly obvious, contains the spoken descriptive content provided by a describer to supplement the existing visual information, its transcription allows for the analysis of audio description alongside the temporal context at which it was presented to an audience - we may then examine where this description is provided compared to the point at which visuals occur. Non-linguistic audio encompasses elements such as score and sound effects; it was felt to be important to allow for this distinction despite the categories of linguistic and paralinguistic audio; although it could be argued that these non-linguistic features may constitute paralinguistic ones, this is based on the assumption that film itself is a paralanguage and that the audience will inherently understand the 'meanings' of such features. When considering this from the perspective of a sighted audience, this distinction is less important - content such as the sound of a boot hitting the floor will for the most part be attributed to a visual of the boot making contact with the ground without the need for further evaluation, however when considering this from the perspective of a visually impaired audience, these connections may be harder to make. The implication for a number of these additional categories already exists in McIntyre's work - the inclusion of 'non-linguistic visual' but not 'non-linguistic audio' or the distinction between paralinguistic visuals and non-linguistic visuals implying that there may be an unmentioned 'linguistic visual' category. It is for this reason I refer to these categories as expansions upon McIntyre's existing divisions - their expansion is *required* when discussing accessibility, in order to fully account for the distinct elements that must be described. The linguistic visual category, whilst not necessarily explicitly linked to audio description is important to consider, and can be divided further into two subcategories: diegetic linguistic visual and non diegetic linguistic visual.

FIGURE 3-2: EXAMPLES OF DIEGETIC AND NON DIEGETIC LINGUISTIC VISUAL CHANNELS IN *RUSHMORE*

The examples in Figure 3.2 come from Wes Anderson's 1998 film *Rushmore* and represent the difference between diegetic and non diegetic text - in the first picture, the words 'bombardment society founder' appear in a montage depicting the numerous high school societies that the character has founded - this text is not implied to exist in-world, but is instead provided as a guide for the audience to provide information that would otherwise seem intrusive to attempt to convey (such as through dialogue) - rather than attempting to provide the large degree of information (in this case the numerous clubs and societies founded), they are condensed through the use of montage and non-diegetic visual information. Linguistic visuals are also important within the context of audio description as they frequently contain spatiotemporal, schematic information that assists with the contextualisation (For example a scene-setting title card: 'Hawkins, Indiana - 1985'). This information must be read aloud by audio describers in almost all cases unless the same information is conveyed through other channels such as dialogue at a moment in time close enough to the presentation of on-screen text (Matamala and Orero, 2014) - this urgency of information delivery does not appear to extend to the diegetic

linguistic category, despite the occasional functional overlap of these elements (for example, seeing a shot with the school's name or a banner mentioning the date) within narratives.

In order to fully account for these categories, a sample of the data from Appendix 7.4 is provided - this data is revisited for analytical purposes in Section 4.1.4, the case study for *The Wide Window*.

	25:42:00	25:41:00	25:40:00	25:39:00	25:38:00	25:37:00	25:36:00	25:35:00	25:34:00	25:33:00	25:32:00	25:31:00	25:30:00	25:29:00	25:28:00
Audio Description	On Shore, the children walk toward Curdled Cave. Near a recreational watercraft and discarded life jacket, Josephine sits on the sand														Klaus backs away
Diegetic Sound	Wailing woman														
Non-diegetic Sound												Rustling			
Dialogue									Aunt Josephine?		Are you...		Okay?		
Paralinguistic Audio												Josephine Screams			
Linguistic Visual															
Camera Angle															
Nonlinguistic Visual															

FIGURE 3-3: EXAMPLE OF MCINTYRE'S MULTIMODAL TRANSCRIPTION CATEGORIES MODIFIED TO INCLUDE THOSE BASED ON AN AUDIO DESCRIPTION PERSPECTIVE

This is an example of a modified transcription style based on McIntyre's original categories, with the extra channels added alongside these headings; the transcript's timing numbers move backwards as a result of the way in which Netflix displays its timings, showing how much of a program remains rather than how much has actually been watched; whilst this was not ideal, Netflix's technical restrictions make it difficult to capture video and screenshots, and so it was necessary to display the timings as they corresponded with the screen itself to avoid mistranscription. In order to account for the length of the transcription, as well as the added categories, the this transcription framework will be used for each of the case studies investigated within this thesis. This concludes the transcription element of the methodology - in order to fully account for the data, each clip will be transcribed multimodally before moving on to the second stage of data analysis: the consideration of the stylistic features and implications.

3.3 Narrative Evaluation

When considering foreshadowing, it has already been established that certain narrative conventions exist in order to successfully map out foreshadowing events in such a way that a narrative maintains cohesion, but preserves mystery up to a certain point. The diagrammatic features outlined in this section have been discussed functionally in Section 2.3 which is

concerned primarily with the narrative functions of foreshadowing and the cognitive biases that make such foreshadowing possible. As highlighted in the preceding section, there is a notable difference in approach between stylisticians and academics within film studies, namely the focus on micro vs macro analysis of the content. Although this thesis is predominantly concerned with the stylistic features of the texts included, it is important to consider what this macro information can mean for those attempting to work on a micro level. In this case, we must consider the role and function of an audio describer as well as the experiences of the visually impaired end-users paramount to this research.

Due to the constraints arising from the creation of an audio description track, a describer must consider when information has been provided as well as whether or not information has previously been conveyed or if it is entirely novel - as stated in the preceding section, sometimes this may occur even within a single scene, however this section considers these instances on a broader narrative scale. Bae and et al state that there may be multiple instances of foreshadowing (foreshadowing events) prior to the activating event and the final reveal of the foreshadowed event; if we approach this idea with a focus on audio description, we may then consider the idea that not every single foreshadowing event may need describing. An audience requires enough information to be revealed prior to the activating event that an their hindsight bias (the idea that a plot *could* have been worked out, even if an audience did not actually do this) will be supported afterwards. For this reason, it is important to consider whether multiple references to the foreshadowed events exist prior to the reveal, and which multimodal channels may contain such information. Although not all of these instances will be transcribed due to time constraints, by considering whether or not they occur at all not only can we consider the case studies within a slightly wider narrative context, but we can mimic the information provided to an audio describer (who *must* consider the narrative on both a macro and micro level).

In order to evaluate each case study on a macro level, Bae et al's model of foreshadowing is provided at the beginning of each case study. This helps to contextualise a clear frame of reference for narrative events at various points throughout the foreshadowing process; each case study's position on the scale of progress will be discussed, as well as any events which occur before or after those included in the case studies. Alongside this, however, we must also consider Emmott and Alexander's burying strategies - although the specificities of the stylistic features is discussed in the next section of this Section, the progressive layout of *when* these

burying events occur provides a useful overview about *where* information is revealed within a narrative.

As stated in the literature review, although Bae et al's framework cannot necessarily be mapped onto every narrative flawlessly, it provides a structured way of considering the full narrative process behind foreshadowing and the way in which it may be reinforced through multiple moments of inference. It is also important to keep in mind that Bae et al's idea of foreshadowing events being followed by detection on the part of the audience prior to an activating event requires a specific kind of reader described in their methodology as a 'sentimental reader' who approaches a narrative with the intent to put effort into understanding and predicting the occurring events. Although we cannot assume all audience members will approach a narrative in this way, these foreshadowing events act as reinforcers for the hindsight bias discussed previously - even if an audience does not recognise an event at the time it occurs, after the foreshadowed event has occurred the audience may look back on these foreshadowing events as confirmation of a successful conveyance of foreshadowing.

Emmott and Alexander's model to describe their theory of burying not only provides a macro-evaluation of the narrative itself, but bridges the gap between this large-scale narrative consideration and the specific linguistic features associated with burying on a micro-level. In this case, any event prior to the moment of 'detection' as defined by Bae et al can fit into Emmott and Alexander's 'presolution stage', in which a relevant item may be present, but which does not yet have a connection to a foreshadowing event; this is then reinforced throughout the text (through the inclusion of more foreshadowing events) until the solution stage in which the once buried item of significance is foregrounded. By combining this hypothetical timeline of foreshadowing with that outlined by Bae et al, we are provided with a greater flexibility by which to describe foreshadowing that is either not reinforced by burying (such as in Emmott and Alexander's work), but which does not necessarily assume sentimentality on the part of the audience.

By utilising the diagrammatic model seen in Figure 1-5, we may consider where this foreshadowing falls along a much longer timeline - this allows us to consider whether foreshadowing does indeed become more explicit closer to the reveal moment as hypothesised by Bae et al and whether or not the audio description follows this process of explicitation. For

each case study, the specific transcribed moment will be placed onto the scale, along with any other foreshadowing events that occur prior to the final reveal of the foreshadowed event.

3.4 Analytical methods from Stylistics

Although briefly discussed in the preceding section, the final methodological requirement is concerned with micro evaluation, more specifically the linguistic content provided from the transcriptions - primarily this means the language specifically encountered in the 'audio description' channel of the transcripts, however it may also encompass other linguistic (or paralinguistic) information, particularly if these alternate channels are being used to reinforce or supplement the audio description.

In terms of general stylistic evaluation, the linguistic content of each case study must be examined on a case-by-case basis; this is due to the narrative, semantic content of each extract being different. To examine the textual data itself, however, this thesis will refer to the linguistic and stylistic categories outlined by Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* (1981/2007:61-66). This list includes four specific categories:

- **Lexical categories** (general, nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs)
- **Grammatical Categories** (sentence type and complexity; clause types and structures; noun and verb phrases; other phrase types, including adverbial, prepositional and adjectival phrases; word classes; general grammatical constructions)
- **Figures of speech** - described as 'features which are foregrounded by virtue of departing in some way from general norms of communication by means of the language code' (1981/2007:63)
- **Context and Cohesion** (consideration for the external relations between a text and its participants; considering the way in which one part of a text is linked to another)

These categories were chosen primarily due to their focus on text-based, spoken narrative style. Other stylistic categorisation methods – included visual features such as graphology, which is not applicable to a spoken audio description track; or pragmatic content such as accent or dialect features. Whilst such features have obvious merit in certain stylistic studies, they did not prove relevant when discussing foreshadowing and audio description. Leech and Short's categories, by comparison, provided equal attention to elements of style seen at the lexical and

grammatical level, as well as allowing for the investigation of context and cohesion, both of which have been established as important features to consider and preserve when writing audio description tracks. Despite Leech and Short's initial application of these categories specifically to style in *fiction*, these categories can be easily extended to incorporate the representation and creation of narrative style in audio description - although not all of the case studies represent fictional narratives, some involve the dramatic portrayal of non-fiction, predominantly the case studies are examples of fictive narratives with the audio description providing supplementary information in order to allow access to otherwise inaccessible data about the larger narrative. Alongside this, Wales' *Dictionary of Stylistics* (2001) provided a solid reference text to describe a much wider array of stylistic features; this text is an invaluable research tool for stylisticians as it provides a number of basic definitions of common stylistic terminology alongside relevant referenced texts. As such, Wales provides a grounded First port of call for stylistic analysis. Filmic terminology, whilst not this thesis's specific area of study, was required not only to name particular visual effects (such as camera angles or shot changes), but also to establish conventions surrounding the *meaning* of such effects. In order to do this, much of the terminology used in this thesis to address specifically filmic convention and language is taken from Sikov (2009), a standard work in Film Studies and Chandler and Munday's (2011) explanations which account for general meaning within camera angles.

Burying is perhaps the more 'classic' stylistic choice when discussing foreshadowing (despite the relatively small amount of stylistic research into the topic), as it represents the more easily recognisable 'puzzle solving' or Chekhov's gun style of foreshadowing – this kind of narrative foreshadowing plays a much larger role in encouraging the kinds of sentimental readers identified by Bae et al. By comparison, foregrounding may also play a role,

It is however, also important to be mindful that the intent and construction of audio description tracks operates in a very different way to the construction of a narrative from scratch - not only does an audio describer have no control over the established narrative they are describing, but their roles require them to choose *what* to draw attention to and whether or not this provides an appropriate description to a visually impaired audience to fully understand the content and meaning of an audiovisual narrative.

By considering the bigger picture established through the compound narrative model discussed in the previous section, we may establish where a particular case study falls within this process

and identify whether information is more likely to be buried (in the presolution stage) or foregrounded (the closer to the foreshadowed event the foreshadowing occurs). In order to evaluate this 'degree of burying', we can return to the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander in the literature review. These provide eleven methods by which plot significant information can be obfuscated on the part of an author - as discussed in the literature review, these burying strategies are outline with the implicit assumption that an author has created a narrative from scratch with full control over its content unlike the unique specificities found when creating audio description tracks. It is for this reason that this thesis will work from an adaptive version of these strategies which will exclude those that do not operate within the specific restraints of audio description, resulting in seven strategies that can be utilised in conventional audio description tracks:

      i.   Mention the item as little as possible.

      ii.   Use linguistic structures which have been shown to reduce prominence.

     iii.   Under-specify the item

     iv.   Place the item next to an item that is more prominent, so that the focus is on the more prominent item.

      v.   Make it difficult for the reader to make inferences by splitting up information needed to make the inferences

     vi.   Place information in positions where a reader is distracted or not yet interested.

    vii.   Stress one specific aspect of the item so that another aspect (which will eventually be important for the solution) becomes less prominent.

   (adapted from Emmott and Alexander, 2014)

When discussing the creation of foregrounding we may view it in opposition to these strategies - for example, rather than an item being mentioned as little as possible in order to foreground it, the logical method would then be to mention it as *much* as possible instead. These strategies often work together, such as in strategy (iv) in which a foregrounded item may be used to detract attention from a buried, plot relevant item. We must, therefore, establish at which points information is foregrounded or buried, and then consider *why* and *how* this occurs. Each case study's audio description will be considered against these strategies in order to identify if any are used consistently as well as the stylistic features which lead to the application of these

strategies. Although a large amount of stylistic research has previously been undertaken relating foregrounding, in order to remain consistent, this thesis will consider foregrounded items using a reversal of Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques.

By reversing Emmott and Alexander's techniques, the idea of foregrounding may be seen more as a parallel to burying, rather than distinct from it. As burying was developed from the idea of foregrounding, much of the work on burying is referential and draws attention to the impact and contributions that foregrounding has had on burying as a research area. By comparison, little of the stylistic work on foregrounding takes the idea of burying into account.

3.5 Analytical Methods for Case Studies

As well as the analytical methods used to approach foregrounding in this thesis, it is also important to establish the direct method by which each case study was investigated and lay out the approach taken in order to provide a degree of replicability.

Initially, the individual instances of foreshadowing were decided upon and the data relating to their timing was recorded. Due to Netflix's anti-piracy software, the individual scenes could not be directly pulled from the video to act as standalone video files. This results in three primary issues:

1. The temporal data could not easily convert into a more standardised form (ie each case study's beginning being 0:00), leading to assorted timings associated with different case studies.
2. A smaller degree of control over the unit of measurements, as Netflix does not typically show milliseconds and displays the time *remaining*, rather than time *elapsed.*
3. Transcription relied entirely on being able to access content on Netflix, usually requiring an internet connection

Because of reasons one and two, the layout of the multimodal transcription was arranged with descending numbers taken directly from Netflix's timings, arranged along the X Axis of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in descending numbers, as can be seen in Figure 3.3. The numbers represent where in the episode or film the individual case study occurs. The Y-Axis contains the categories assigned by McIntyre as well as the additional categories required to account for studying audio description specifically. A brief summary of each category has been included for posterity:

- Audio Description: A direct transcription of the spoken audio description track
- Diegetic Sound: Any sound that occurs within the narrative itself (ie, playing from a speaker in a character's car)
- Non Diegetic Sound: Sounds that are for the audience, and are not heard by characters within the narrative itself
- Dialogue: Lines and speech provided by characters or narrators
- Paralinguistic Audio: Covers any 'human made' sound that is not speech (such as coughing or sniffing)
- Linguistic Visual: Any written text, whether diegetic (a roadsign in a film) or non diegetic (title information given to an audience)
- Camera Angle: Identifies which kinds of filmic shots are used
- Nonlinguistic Visual: Any visual content that does not include written text.

Each case study was then watched, with the appropriate transcriptions filling in the categories. These were approached one at a time, beginning from top to bottom in order to focus more directly on each individual category before analysing them as a whole. In order to make the transcribed information easier to identify, each category was given a different colour, with each 'block' of information individually coloured. Whilst categories such as dialogue, linguistic visuals and paralinguistics are easy to block out thanks to their distinct beginnings and ends, other categories could be more complicated to discretely separate out; this included areas such as nonlinguistic visuals, which are blocked out based on when a distinct shot change occurs.

This transcription was done for each of the case studies, and allowed for the individual case study narratives to be laid out in such a way that whilst the individual multimodal categories can be identified and examined, they may also be seen within the context of the wider content of the scene itself.

For some case studies, particularly televisual examples such as *Arrested Development*, it became obvious that even this 'wider context' discussed above was not wide enough as foreshadowing ordinarily requires a number of preceding foreshadowing events (and in some case studies, foreshadowing events may continue *after* the point transcribed). In order to account for this, whilst avoiding having to multimodally transcribe *all* of the foreshadowing events, this thesis then uses the model shown in Figure 1,5. in order to establish firstly, at which point in a wider narrative the case study takes place; but also to identify other

foreshadowing events that take place before or after, and whereabouts they relate to one another temporally. This was primarily done through research relating to the plot of each case study using reviews, summaries and other fan-related content; these events were then independently viewed and confirmed before being inserted into the diagram. These are then displayed at the beginning of each case study as a way of contextualising the analysis that follow them – further explanation of this diagram can be found in .

3.6 Conclusion

This section is concerned primarily with the methodology utilized within this thesis in order to acquire, transcribe and analyse foreshadowing events. Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques provide a solid foundation with which to contextualise these instances of foreshadowing and a framework into which these events can be placed in order to view them as part of a full story rather than simply isolated occurrences.

As well as the methods by which case studies were selected, the method by which they were transcribed has also been outlined, highlighting the benefits of such transcription methods. As well as this, the methods by which stylistic analysis is undertaken is explained and some of the more general stylistic categories and evaluation methods are laid out. The methods outlined in this section relate directly to the data analysis portrayed in Section 4, which is subdivided by each case study.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Case Studies

This section contains each of the six case studies transcribed and evaluated for this thesis. For each case study, multimodal transcription was used to identify individual timings, as well as account for the way in which different modes overlapped. This chapter will address each case study individually, providing some general context as well as adapted burying diagrams for each one in order to outline pre- and post-case study foreshadowing events. After this, the content of each multimodal transcription is analysed stylistically in an attempt to address the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis.Each case study in this section contains an individual conclusion relating to the specificities of the case study itself, however a more general conclusion about the provision of foreshadowing within the case studies can be found in Section 5.3.4 along with conclusions and observations about foreshadowing generally in Section 5.3.1.

4.1.1   The Discovery

The inclusion of the 2017 Netflix Original *The Discovery* represents perhaps the most well-known kind of foreshadowing, known as a Chekhov's Gun, as part of a larger twist ending. Rather than every visual component to a narrative having an active participatory role, filmic narratives often use visuals to create atmosphere as well as attempting to mimic a particular setting. This mayeither be temporal, such as *Stranger Things* which is designed to represent the 1980s, or spatial such as the visual representation of different rooms in a house seen in *The Umbrella Academy*. As a result, the concept of a Chekhov's gun is no longer representative of the idea that *everything* needs to be narratively impactful, but refers instead to the particular items (the 'guns') that *are* important for narrative foreshadowing. In these cases, individual Chekhov's guns are most frequently employed to assist in the successful deployment of a foreshadowing event.

In the film, the existence of an afterlife has been scientifically proven, leading to a rising suicide rate. During the film it is revealed that a machine exists with the ability to record what is seen

in the afterlife if it is hooked up to a corpse. In the scene in question, the protagonists are observing the corpse of a man in the machine; the footage shown of the afterlife is revealed later to be an alternative version of a specific moment of regret in the dead individual's life which they are then given the potential to change in some way. The idea, that what is being shown it is not the afterlife at all, but at parallel universe and thereby a chance for individuals to potentially fix past mistakes by killing themselves the said universe, is an example of a twist ending or a 'rugpuller' (Tobin, 2009).
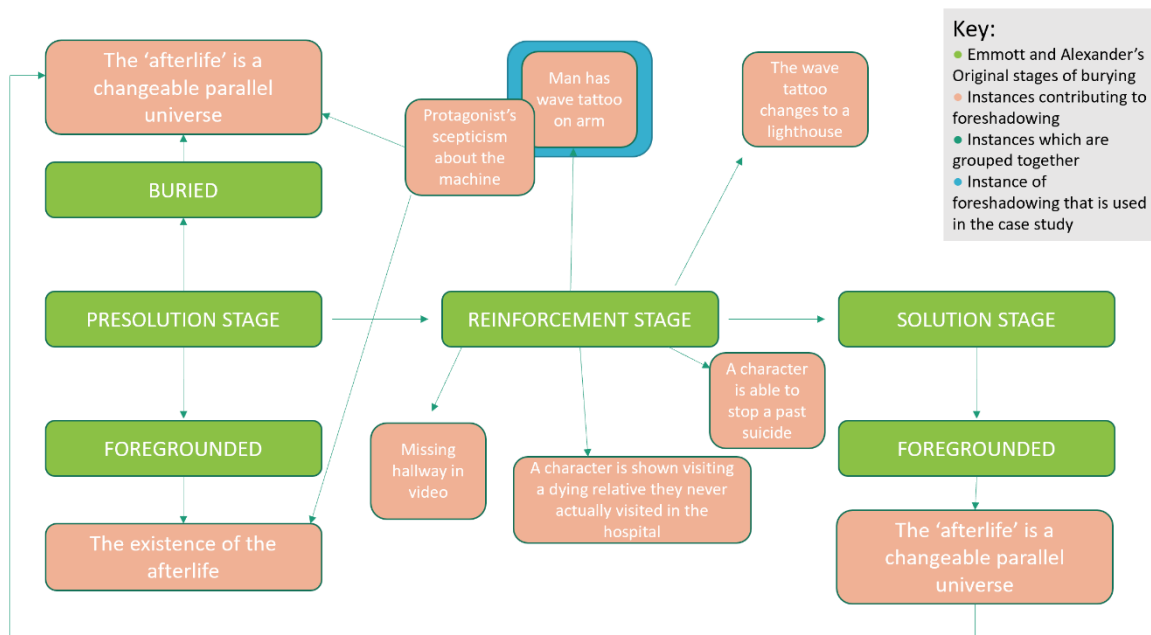
FIGURE 4-1: *THE DISCOVERY* **CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

When observing the modified diagram seen in Figure 4.1, we can see that the case study follows Emmott and Alexander's concept of burying on a macro level, as well as the micro level discussed in the stylistic analysis of this particular case study. On a macro level, we see that the idea of foregrounding is used more generally to detract from the larger reveal – this is done by utilising the curse of knowledge, which is described by Vera Tobin as a cognitive bias which works on the idea that 'things that are highly salient in our own minds […] tend to seep into our notions of what others know' (2009:156). Whilst this bias is generally considered negatively when applied to real-world psychology and social cognition, Tobin argues that within narratives, the curse of knowledge may be used to '[capitalise] on [the] predictable tendencies of the mind to generate aesthetically pleasing effects' (ibid:158).

The curse of knowledge is simultaneously effected and modulated through the embedded perspective of a protagonist within a narrative; the more embedded the perspective, the more likely an audience is to align with this same perspective (taking an enactive mode in narrative processing), leaving them vulnerable to surprise twists within the narrative itself (ibid: 165-166). This also aligns with Emmott and Alexander's method of discrediting information provided by certain characters, the final of their burying techniques. Foreshadowing of this kind specifically relies on the enactive viewpoint mentioned by Tobin - that an audience's viewpoints will, for the most part, conform to the presented perspective of the narrative (2009). In this case, the protagonist of Will remains skeptical of the afterlife's existence, not because he believes it to instead be a parallel world, but simply because he does not trust the proponents of the afterlife theory; alongside this however, the idea of the afterlife existing, is also reinforced throughout the film itself with 'reliable' figures of authority such as news-readers or doctors also asserting its existence, despite Will's skepticism. In this sense, Will's skepticism acts as a misdirection – leading viewers to suspect (correctly) that the afterlife is not real, but obfuscating the actual situational reveal – by foregrounding the idea of an afterlife, it is this concept that an audience focuses on (specifically whether or not it really exists) rather than the extended question which would ask 'if the afterlife does not exist, then what are we seeing?'. Alongside this, if we consider the way in which the twist is initially buried, Will's character not only does not believe, but is actively disparaging of the individuals involved in the study of the afterlife – this allows an extra level of cognitive bias, whilst still preserving the narrative cohesion of the reveal. If we consider the more broad examples of Emmott and Alexander's technique, we see a number of them are used to guide audiences into a particular mental blind spot by aligning their perspective with that of the character of Will.

It is important too however, that a narrative provide enough hints which (even if unacknowledged at the time) lead to a solution that makes sense in hindsight. In *The Discovery*, when first meeting Isla, the primary protagonist Will states that she 'looks familiar' – later on, this is revealed to be because Will is stuck in a memory loop that restarts at the same point of meeting Isla on a ferry right before she commits suicide. An audience is unlikely to guess the twist from this information alone, however retrospectively, it supports and reinforces the twist ending itself; these features are useful in considering the way in which hindsight bias operates from a narrative perspective. In isolation, the wave tattoo, the Chekhov's gun seen in Figure 4-2, does not immediately tie to the concept of alternate timelines, however once the existence

of these timelines is revealed, the wave tattoo's significance becomes apparent and an audience relates its inclusion to the greater reveal.

This case study takes place during the foreshadowing events leading up to the realisation that the reality shown is not the afterlife, but a parallel universe. In the case study, Will and Isla are inspecting a deceased individual who is hooked up to the machine that purports to show the afterlife. In the world inhabited by the protagonists, the dead man has a tattoo on his arm of a wave seen in figure 4.2, which is mentioned directly in the audio description at 58:23. In the parallel universe, however, the tattoo is not of a wave but of a lighthouse seen in figure 4.3, revealing the slight differences in the parallel universe when compared with the world of the characters. The initial wave tattoo shown in figure 4.2 is a Chekhov's gun in that the motivation for its inclusion becomes apparent only *after* the foreshadowing event which occurs at 34:55, at which point Isla remarks that "there was a different tattoo" on the same spot on Pat's left arm whilst replaying the footage taken from the machine (this also accounts for the grainy nature of figure 4.3, the protagonists are looking at footage on a mobile phone).

This case study also takes place during what Bae et al refer to as the foreshadowing events stage – this begins with a sentimental reader detecting that something is unusual in Will remarking that Isla 'looks familiar', but does not necessarily provide enough information until the activating event which then reveals *why* she looks familiar. The foreshadowing events stage takes place before the activating event – as a result of the activating event, both sentimental and unsentimental readers will (provided the foreshadowing has been deployed successfully) understand what the foreshadowed event will be. These foreshadowing events are frequently the kinds of buried foreshadowing studied by Emmott and Alexander, and represent a classic mystery solving style of foreshadowing; an initial piece of information is used to generate the anchoring effect discussed by Tobin (in this case, Isla looking familiar) whilst the earliest available moment of detection within a narrative may vary depending on the number of clues provided and the type of sentimental audience attempting to piece them together. In practice, this initial foreshadowing event is not enough to make any concrete speculation about the plot, however when viewed as the start of a chain of buried hints that link to one another, a narrative will retroactively make sense. At the centre of this chain is what Bae et al refer to as 'the activating event' - in this case, is the reveal that the machine does not prove the existence of afterlives, but parallel universes; the point of the chain furthest from the initially anchored foreshadowing events is referred to as the foreshadowed events in which the final ultimate

narrative twist is revealed, in this example, the foreshadowed event is that Will is stuck in a time loop trying to save Isla's life. This final reveal would not make sense were it not tied to the initial foreshadowing events; there may even be elements that make sense only retroactively (such as the film opening with Will on the ferry, later revealed to be how each loop begins) – as a result of availability bias (the protagonist is travelling to an island, so initially an audience is unlikely to see Will's mode of travel as anything other than a practical means of transportation; this idea is much more salient and immediately accessible to an audience than 'the ferry represents the beginning of a timeloop').
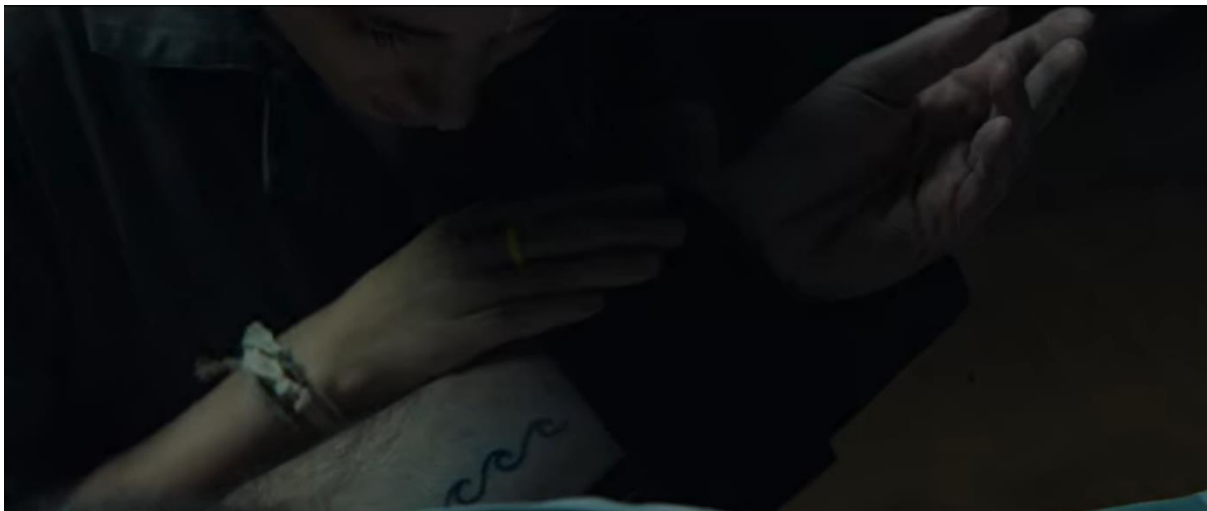
FIGURE 4-2 - VISUAL OF THE WAVE TATTOO

These differences are reinforced by a number of other events, such as the inside of a hospital which is recognised in the footage by the protagonists being laid out differently in the 'real world' and the parallel one. Prior to this, the protagonists are either suspicious of the afterlife (but with no alternative explanation offered for the footage) or believe in it entirely. Up until this point in the narrative, what both the viewers and the characters have seen of the parallel world has been consistent with the primary world in which the action takes place rather the reality that although the worlds appear to be the same, there are a number of inconsistencies that reflect their differences.

FIGURE 4-3 LIGHTHOUSE TATTOO SHOWN IN THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE

The wave tattoo's initial mention is provided in the audio description beginning at 58:25, the audio description states that 'Isla gently straps one of the wrists to an armrest. She examines a wave tattoo on the forearm. She studies Pat's face as he seems to be sleeping peacefully.' The structuring of this information places the foreshadowing element (in this case, the tattoo) in between two sentences that are mostly unrelated to the reveal of the parallel universe. This appears to align with Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques, particularly technique IV which is concerned with placing the relevant item next to items that are more prominent, in order to distract from the 'true' significant item. Essentially, this technique works by foregrounding less relevant elements at the expense of the true foreshadowing. In this case this technique is also reinforced through an under-specific description of the tattoo in the audio description, particularly when contrasted with the comparative lexical richness of the surrounding clauses. If we look at the content of each, we see that the description of the tattoo itself is less lexically rich than its surrounding descriptions of Isla's motion of strapping the body down, as well as the description of Pat's face; both of these pieces of descriptions contain adverbs - , 'gently' to describe the motion of Isla restraining the body and 'peacefully' to reinforce Isla (and in this case, the audience's) perspective that the man appears to be sleeping, rather than deceased. The final clause also changes the pronoun structure encountered in the preceding two lines of description - in both of the initial pieces of information, Pat's presence is entirely removed, with his wrists and arms being referred to using the definitive article 'the';

by comparison, in the third piece of description, we are reminded that the body belongs to an individual through the possessive 'Pat's'. In this case, it is somewhat difficult to tell which clauses are foregrounded and which are buried - whilst there are more uses of the definitive article 'the', when combined with the visual of Pat's full body creates distance from his ownership; if Isla was examining a collection of severed limbs without any tangible or obvious owners present, this deviance from pronoun use may feel more natural, however, when discussing the body parts of a visually obvious, named character creates a certain degree of cognitive foregrounding.

The use of the term 'wave tattoo' is notable, however whether this in itself assists with burying, and why it has been phrased in this way, rather than the more conventional form 'a tattoo of a wave'. One theory could be simply due to the mechanics of audio description: 'wave tattoo' takes less time to say than 'a tattoo of a wave', allowing a describer more time to choose to describe other things. This, in itself however, creates an interesting discussion: the unrelated pieces of information are afforded the time for adverbs, whilst the clause relating to the foreshadowing is minimised. Whether intentional or not on the part of the describer, the important information is buried by its surrounding clauses that provide much greater lexical richness. Unlike the phrase 'she examines a wave tattoo on the forearm', which contains a simple structure of subject, verb and direct object, the first clause contains all of these alongside an indirect object ('an armrest'); the third contains a conjunction 'as' as well as a complex phrasal modal in the phrase 'seems to be sleeping'.

The inclusion of 'seems' allows for an interesting consideration of objectivity in audio description - the word 'seems' already sets up an unknown element - the observation is based on the impression of either the describer, or potentially the character of Isla. Although Pat seems to be sleeping, the implication is that he is not. Whilst Pat *is* dead This inclusion may result in a more foregrounded final clause - not only does the narration move away from the determiner of 'the' as discussed previously, but the use of the verb 'seems' may instead distract the audience into asking whether or not he seems to be sleeping peacefully because he is dead, or whether he seems to be sleeping peacefully because he is actually alive. This ambiguity lends itself to Emmott and Alexander's technique of stressing a specific aspect of an item in order to reduce the prominence of the true, relevant aspect (in this case, creating the ambiguity of whether Pat is truly dead or alive distracts from the significance of the preceding information regarding his tattoo, as well as drawing attention away from the twist that instead relates to

alternate universes rather than death). In this sense, the 'aspect' is Pat's body, however it could be equally argued that these three clauses lend to the underspecification of the wave tattoo, and that its position as the 'middle' piece of information means that it has been placed between two far more prominent, lexically and grammatically complex descriptions leads to its burying at the expense of the information either side of it.

4.1.1.1   Conclusion

This case study shows the way in which an initial Chekhov's gun may be easily buried within the audio description track when enough time and space is available in which to convey such information. The burial of the wave tattoo utilises more than one of the techniques outlined by Emmott and Alexander and effectively employs these strategies in an effort to provide the amount of information required for hindsight bias to function effectively whilst still avoiding foregrounding of the wave tattoo itself. This ease of deployment however, is perhaps reflective of the types of foreshadowing that have previously been researched in depth, with buried twist-ending narratives predominantly being those discussed within the topic of cinematic foreshadowing. In these cases, it is hard even as a researcher not to be drawn in by the element of surprise; narratives such as these are almost exclusively *entirely* structured around building up to the reveal, making the narrative in its entirety the foreshadowing, rather than the foreshadowing playing a more minor role such as for the benefit of narrative cohesion as seen in *7 Days Out,* or for immediate character introduction like that seen in *Stranger Things.*

Through the use of particular sentence structures, the describer may redirect and refocalise the attentions of the audience whilst still providing a reference to the tattoo and its content – this is done through increased prominence of other less relevant items which are made more salient through the use of more descriptive terms including adverbs where possible; as well as this, the use of the verb 'seems' becomes foregrounded when we consider the supposed objective nature of audio description – by drawing attention to the fact that Pat "seems to be sleeping" the audio describer creates a level of ambiguity that could either mean that Pat appears to be sleeping, but is dead *or* that Pat appears to be sleeping, but is actually awake. In this case, the ambiguity functions well, not only does it draw attention away from the wave tattoo by foregrounding the subjective verb 'seems', but even within the narrative itself, it becomes ambiguous whether or not Pat is dead (as he exists, alive, within the parallel universe). In this sense, the audio description helps to construct hindsight bias on the part of a BVI audience in which

retroactively such subjective description will make sense and be recontextualised as objective audio description.

4.1.2 Stranger Things

Stranger Things is a science-fiction series set in the 1980s – the series has been well received and is known for its intertextuality regarding the pop-culture of its temporal setting (Veale, 2017). This case study is taken from the first episode of the second season of the show, *Madmax* and is the first introduction of the series' new antagonist, Billy Hargrove. In the scene, Billy's car arrives at the high school whilst two of the protagonists watch him.
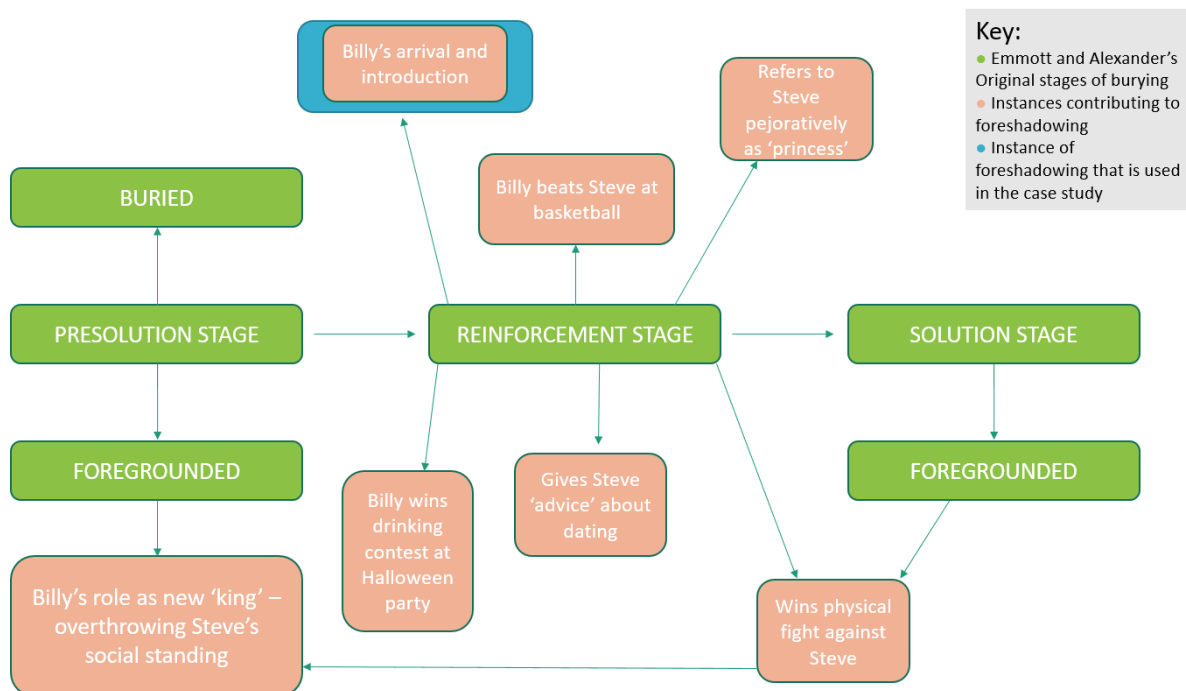
FIGURE 4-4: *STRANGER THINGS* **CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

This case study is an example of the initial introduction of a character – this kind of foreshadowing functions somewhat differently to those case studies concerned with more traditional perspectives on foreshadowing (*The Discovery, Arrested Development*). In this case, there is no obvious mystery component; rather than requiring an audience to actively consider indirect clues or hints about a particular narrative event, the information is foregrounded in an effort to make such information immediately accessible. This is a direct contrast to the efforts required by Bae et al's 'sentimental readers', who will put in active effort in order to predict or understand a narrative using buried information leading up to the solution stage (2013), and

instead requires that *all* of the audience gains access to the information, rather than just the individuals actively seeking it out.

When discussing introductions, rarely do we encounter a solution stage that functions like that of a 'rugpuller', unless the character is hiding something, or acting differently to their 'true' character which may be revealed later on. In this case study, however, the introduction to the character of Billy is designed to act as a short-cut to understanding his character, as well as the role he will play in the later narrative. As the case study is taken from the first episode of the second season of *Stranger Things*, it is not only the first introduction of the character in question, but it also acts as the first episode establishing the second series, meaning that the content of the episode is primarily designed to build upon the events of the previous season, whilst establishing the new plot characters and narrative arcs. The reinforcement stage identified shows a much more straightforward example of reinforcement – it is not used to misdirect or obfuscate the events, and it does not have a 'pay-off' in the same sense as a twist ending, in which there is a tangible moment of recontextualisation. Instead, the reinforcement stage simply stacks these moments of reinforcement, providing multiple hooks for non-sentimental readers, who are unlikely to consider further than the information explicitly provided to them. By doing so, and by providing multiple instances of this explicit foreshadowing, the series aims to provide character information as directly as possible and as *soon* as possible. It is for this reason that this scene provides a number of different components across multiple modes designed to establish and reinforce Billy's character.

The scene in question provides a good example of the way in which character viewpoints may be represented through cinematic effects, as well as the way in which non-dialogic sound may be used to reinforce this point of view. The initial shot of Nancy and Steve watching the arrival of the Camaro is an example of an eyeline match shot; this kind of shot sequence is described by Tobin as 'one shot [presenting] a character looking at something outside the frame of the shot, preceded or followed by a shot presenting the seen space' (2017:27). In her research, Tobin stresses that these particular cues are understood by audiences primarily through established convention, but that these conventions are pervasive enough within film that audiences also frequently attend to such cues without actively attributing them to the idea of character perspective (ibid). In this case, the anchor point that begins Billy's establishment comes in the fact that both Nancy and Steve see his arrival as something significant enough to interrupt their conversation and lead to them getting out of the car to watch it – this initial

moment acts as an anchor point for an audience, and as a result of an audience's presumed investment in the characters (both of whom had large roles in the first series), their viewpoints are more likely to align with those of Nancy and Steve in seeing Billy's arrival as a source of significance.

FIGURE 4-5: EYELINE MATCH SHOTS IN *STRANGER THINGS*

This eyeline match shot is supplemented by multiple examples of non-dialogic sound that are linked inherently to the action occurring on the screen – in this case there are two examples: firstly, the sound of the squealing brakes and the Camaro's engine, which occur *prior* to the car's visual introduction, whilst Steve and Nancy are still sitting inside their own vehicle. The occurrence of this sound, not only draws the attention of both characters, but leads directly into them getting out of their car to observe the arrival of the Camaro seen in Figure 4.3.

The second example of non-dialogic sound follows the initial engine rev (which is still audible during the eyeline match sequence, but at a much lower volume), replacing it with the 1984 heavy metal song *Rock You Like a Hurricane* by the Scorpions. Initially, it is ambiguous as to

whether the song is diegetic (occurring from a source within the narrative) or non-diegetic (audio without an on-screen source) due to the overlap with the diegetic sound of the Camaro's motor; this effect may be intentionally ambiguous – *Rock You Like A Hurricane* is contemporary within the context of the narrative which takes place in 1984 (Renfro, 2019) and the song's heavy metal genre, aside from providing a loud, obvious guitar riff also implies the idea that Billy is sufficiently 'other' to warrant attention, and that he is potentially dangerous. This diegetic ambiguity is resolved when Billy steps out of the car – the Camaro's engine noises disappear and are replaced by the song entirely, despite the car being turned off; the non-diegetic nature of the soundtrack is finally reinforced with Billy turning to directly face the camera during the chorus which begins with '*here I am*'. This synchronicity of image and sound is representative of the way in which non-dialogic audio can be made more prominent through its direct association with an action on screen (Chion, 1994:69), closely tying the character of Billy to the content of the song that plays behind his arrival.

The audio description for this sequence divides the attention of the viewers between these three areas of focalisation. In the visual sequence of events, this is achieved using cross-cutting, a method of representing multiple actions occurring at the same time in which a camera will cut away from one scene to another, alternating between characters and allowing viewers to see the same event occur from multiple character points of view (Gaudreault, 1979:42). As stated previously, the initial shot is of Nancy and Steve observing the Camaro; then the Camaro itself as it is driven and parked; finally, Billy's introduction as he exits the car. The importance of the non-dialogic sounds and the roles they play in directing viewer attention are observed in the initial audio description, which states that '[Nancy and Steve] both glance towards the sound, then climb out of the car' – by establishing this, the nature of the eyeline match shot is mimicked through the audio description, tying their responses to the occurring sound and establishing that they are observing the unfolding scene as well as upholding the enactive viewpoint to be taken by the audience. This is explicitly referenced in the second piece of audio description, which states that '[Nancy and Steve] watch the arrival of [the car]'; this functions in a similar sense to Tobin's assertion that eyeline match shots often 'rely on viewers' tendency to notice gaze direction' (2017:28), and that they will draw inferences based upon such information. By establishing that Steve and Nancy are explicitly watching the arrival, the point of view association has a greater chance of being preserved through the audio description.

After initially signposting Billy's importance through his introduction and arrival, the focalisation shifts to address the Camaro itself – even within this description, we are provided with further information to support and reinforce Billy's character. The Camaro is also described as having 'California license plates', othering it in deliberate contrast to *Stranger Things*' Indiana based setting and allowing viewers to infer Billy's home state, as well as alluding to his status as a new character. The Camaro is specifically described using the brand name, rather than a generic description of the car itself which is in itself significant – Dávila-Montes and Orero discuss the pros and cons of naming specific brands in audio description tracks and state that 'in this sort of characterisation the audience would see a brand name and understand existing brand values shared by the character' (2016:129); this seems to be similar motivation behind the choice of the cars used in *Stranger Things*, with Eric Weiner describing the vehicles as being 'cast to reflect the characters who own them' (2017), with Billy's 1979 Camaro being one of the cars mentioned in his assessment. This is not unusual – in fact, Barthes refers specifically to 'make of car owned' as one of a number of examples of the way in which ideological signs (such as Billy's camaro) may be used to make judgements about strangers (Wales, 2001:355; Barthes, 1953); although Barthes was talking about judgements based upon *real* people rather than fictional ones, the idea of reworking such human biases as a means of characterisation and narrative comprehension is similar to the way in which Tobin discusses the way in which cognitive biases may be exploited by authors (2014:347). The Camaro itself appears to have been chosen to reflect the resurgence of high-powered muscle-cars in the USA in the 1980s, as well as the hyper-masculine image associated with the movement itself, which has been discussed as a 'source of masculine identity formation' (Lezotte, 2013:83). The fact that the audio description chooses to refer to the Camaro by brand is unusual in itself – frequently, audio describers will avoid mentioning brand names unless 'triggered by explicit dialogical mentions' (Dávila-Montes and Orero, 2016:136), that is unless the item has specifically been referred to using the brand name in question by a character's dialogue. As this is Billy's first introduction, his car has neither been seen nor referenced prior to this scene, and neither Steve nor Nancy refer to the car using the brand-name 'Camaro'. This suggests then, that the audio describer recognised some degree of association between the stereotype associated with Camaros and the character of Billy.

Whilst there has been some general discussion as to Billy's character, frequently they relate to features associated with masculinity, as well as a more general homage to the stereotypical

bully associated with cinema from the 1980s, the era in which *Stranger Things*. Intertextual references are used to reinforce this characterisation at certain points, such as one of Billy's unnamed friends being dressed in a Cobra Kai uniform, the uniform worn by the bully antagonists in the 80s film *The Karate Kid* (Ahr et al, 2017), as well as Billy's outfit and hairstyle being described by *Stranger Things'* costume designer as both an homage to Rob Lowe's character in the 1983 coming of age drama *The Outsiders*, as well as being designed to bring both "raw masculinity […] with a bit of a dangerous edge" and the "kind of bad boy [we haven't seen before] in Hawkins", the small-town setting of *Stranger Things* (Bricker, 2017). Billy's machismo has also been discussed by Tracey Mollet, who describes his character as 'the epitome of toxic masculinity' (2019:4) identifying that he is a deliberate foil to the less traditionally masculine characters (including Steve, present in the scene in question). By specifically using the brand name of the Camaro, Billy's very specific type of masculinity is alluded to even prior to his physical introduction; this functions as part of a wider 'web' of associations designed to point viewers towards the idea of a hypermasculine, antagonistic character.

As the focus shifts to describe Billy himself, the audio description utilises a more forcible method of establishing his masculinity by utilising two very specific adjectives to describe elements of his characterisation: 'rugged' and 'brawny'. The representation of physical attraction in audio description is discussed in the ITC guidelines, stating that opinion is divided as to whether or not viewers should decide for themselves whether or not a character is attractive (2001:20); the guidance provides a particularly vague assertion that 'it does help to indicate the level of attractiveness where [attractiveness] is relevant to the issue', stating that if a characters' appearance has some bearing on how other characters react to them it 'may be necessary to mention someone's looks' (ibid). What constitutes relevance is defined only through the statement that although a television presenter may be 'pleasant to the eye' her appearance is irrelevant to the information she is presenting. This idea makes sense when discussing 'real' people, however it may become more complex when attempting to discuss characters, who have been created deliberately to portray some kind of perspective or stance.

Although Billy's attractiveness is signposted, neither Steve nor Nancy (who, as discussed earlier, are implied to be the point of view characters) are ever established as being attracted to him – the adjectives in question are not implied to be *their* assessments of Billy's appearance, but instead come from the external perspective of the audio describer. Whilst the adjective

'rugged' is technically utilised in the description of Billy's boot hitting the floor ('a rugged boot steps out from the drivers' side'), the word's association with (specifically masculine) attractiveness as well as strength and power manages to skirt around describing Billy *himself* in this way initially, whilst still alluding to their association. The audio description continues to further reinforce the link between Billy, masculinity and attractiveness by moving on to state that 'the view looks up at a brawny, teenage boy with a mullet wearing tight jeans'. Firstly, as mentioned, the term 'brawny' is used, however in this instance the adjective is specifically attributed to Billy himself – brawny itself is in fact listed as a direct synonym of rugged in the US based Meriam Webster dictionary (2017), and is ordinarily associated with toughness and physical power. Although not strictly an assessment of attractiveness, both words are associated with a very specific *type* of person – generally features that are seen as masculine, and by proxy are often considered to be complimentary assessments of male attractiveness, which are often linked to muscularity and power (Frederick et al, 2005:82).

In this particular piece of description, we also see a different method of describing shot-choice in comparison to the eyeline match shot discussed earlier in this case study: in this case, the shot in question is an example of a low angle shot – a shot that is angled in order to be looking up at a character as though the camera is placed at their feet. In this case, the view moves up from Billy's boots to his face as he climbs out of the car – the progression of the camera movement can be seen in Figure 4.4.

FIGURE 4-6: LOW ANGLE SHOTS IN *STRANGER THINGS*

Low angle shots are often utilised in filmic narratives in order to create a connotation of power or high status (Chandler and Munday, 2011), with the individual who is being looked up at implied as the source of this power. This provides an interesting example of a shot with a point of view, the meaning of which is figurative rather than literal with the shot existing primarily to reinforce the fact that Billy is a character of power and significance. Audio describers are often discouraged from using cinematic language in their description, with the Ofcom guidelines, which are identified by Fryer and Freeman as focusing exclusively on *plot* content of a narrative, dismissing other methods by which the messages of a film are portrayed (2012:413) and actively dissuading describers from using 'specifically "filmic"' terminology such as labelling camera angles. The audio describer manages to avoid this whilst still attempting to preserve some visual information that relates to the shot itself – instead of using the cinematic 'low angle shot', the describer instead states that 'the view looks up at [Billy]'.

The audience is also still most likely aligned with the point of view of Steve and Nancy, due to the shot beforehand of them physically watching Billy's arrival and the tracking shot that follows their eyeline – this sequence of events means that the content of the low angle shot may be seen by an audience to specifically relate to the idea that Billy will have some kind of higher status than either Steve or Nancy in the previous narrative. This is not to imply that Nancy and Steve are crouching and that this shot is a direct eyeline match as seen in the tracking shot, but the establishment of them as the point of view characters and observers in the tracking shot of Billy's Camaro is preserved and translated into the cinematic conventions associated with low angle shots.

Fryer and Freeman (2012) argue that the assumption that BVI audiences will not understand the meaning or implications behind certain camera shots or editing techniques is fundamentally based on a flawed understanding of *who* constitutes a BVI audience – whilst individuals who are blind from birth may have more difficulty understanding the meaning of specific cinematic techniques, a large proportion of those classed as blind or visually impaired have 'acquired' their sight loss rather than never having any visual input. These kinds of viewers may have already constructed the 'meaning' of certain shots, or at least be able to mentally envision the spatial positioning of elements within them. The audio describer responsible for the description in this example displays an innate understanding of which filmic techniques (such as shot types) are utilised, as well as the implications behind these shots and their importance to the narrative.

4.1.2.1 Conclusion

This case study represents a divergence from the common idea of foreshadowing being hidden or buried; by comparison, Billy's introduction is heavily foregrounded both in the original presentation, as well as in the audio description track that accompanies it. The methods by which the describer conveys filmic language (whilst avoiding technical terms for camerawork that may be confusing to audiences) through the portrayal of point of view provides a distinct tie between the existing characters and the newly introduced one, reinforcing that the characters will, in some way overlap, and that audiences should be aware of this imminent shift. In a similar sense, the low angle shot of Billy is referenced by the audio description as 'the view', helps to preserve this point of view whilst still avoiding jargon that may make it harder for an audience to follow the narrative.

Whilst Billy's visual features rely heavily on intertextual references, the Audio Description does not mention these directly (for example, at no point is Billy's similarity to Rob Lowe's character in *The Outsiders* mentioned, despite his character's physical appearance being noted by the creators as being an homage to them); instead, the audio description focuses heavily on the meaning behind the intertextual references, such as mentioning his mullet, jeans and boots and describing *them* rather than the character from which these features are taken. In this situation, however, this visual information is also framed through the lense of Billy's attractiveness and masculinity – by utilising adjectives alongside the more straightforward description (eg a *rugged* boot, rather than just a boot), the describer increases the linguistic prominence of such visual features. This works especially well within the format of audio description, in which physical attractiveness may be a tricky concept to convey; this case study, however, shows the importance of considering both motivation and meaning behind the inclusion of such observations – in the case of *Stranger Things*, the character of Billy is deliberately written as a specific portrayal of attractiveness and so to not describe these features ignores the intent of the original creators. The audio describer in this case recognises the importance of highlighting these features regardless of personal taste and directly describes Billy as 'brawny', foregrounding that there is a *reason* to address his attractiveness and that it will become relevant or significant later on in the narrative – in some ways, this may act as even more explicit foregrounding due to the suggestion that audio describers should avoid describing attractiveness unless it is of some kind of relevance to the plot or the other characters; in this case, an audience will be primed only to expect such descriptions in a situation in which they are relevant.

Whilst the idea of using foregrounding as a way of establishing characters is revisited in both *7 Days Out* (which considers characterisation in a non-fiction narrative)and *The Umbrella Academy*; *Stranger Things* represents a much less restrictive narrative than either of these for a describer to work with as a result of its focus on a single character, the deliberate foregrounding of the effect he will have on the existing characters and the lack of dialogue in the sequence. As a result, *Stranger Things* is afforded much more time to utilise multiple ways of establishing character, including detailing his appearance in depth and attempting to translate the meaning of the cinematic features used to portray ideological meaning.

4.1.3 7 Days Out

This case study establishes character in a similar way to the previous case study, *Stranger Things*. *7 Days Out* is a documentary that follows the seven days that lead up to a large-scale event, in this case the Westminster Dog Show. This case study focuses on the introduction of the over-all winner of the competition and the way in which the documentary and its audio description must attempt to generate hindsight bias in order to prevent an audience's disappointment or confusion about a dog who is not introduced until the final 15 minutes of the narrative winning. This case study discusses the difficulties associated with attempting to modulate foreshadowing in a narrative with less control than those seen in fictional stories or retrospective styles of documentary films.
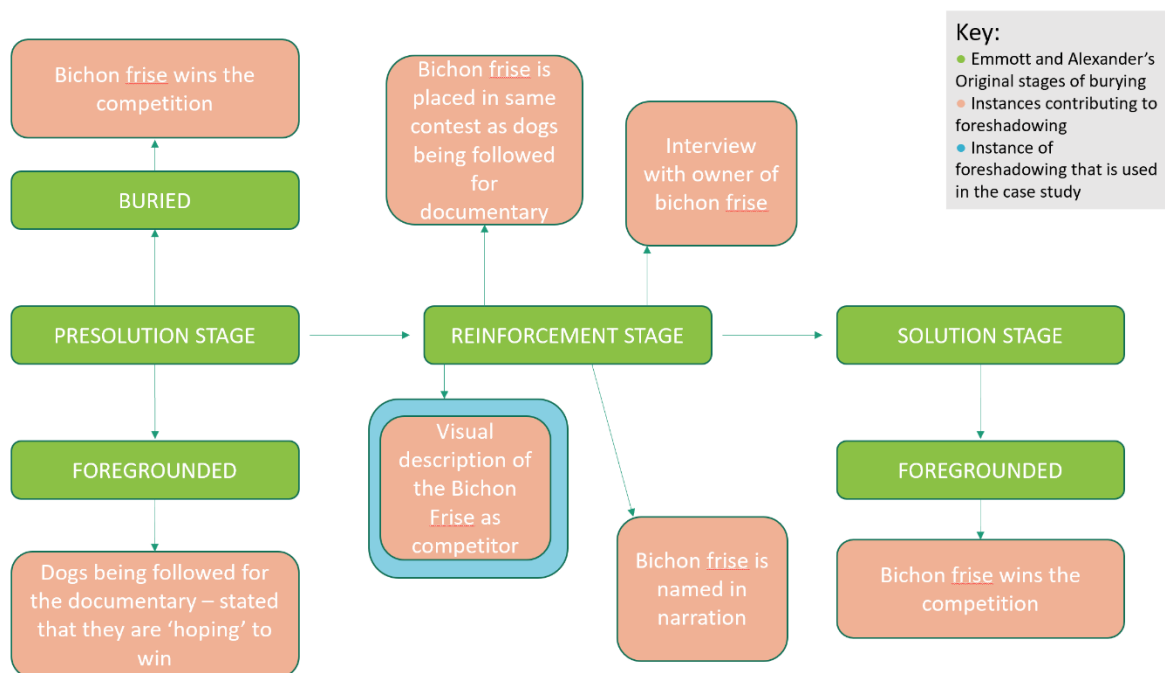
FIGURE 4-7 *7 DAYS OUT* CASE STUDY CONTEXT

As discussed in the conclusion of the case study *The Discovery*, it became apparent whilst writing this thesis that a large amount of the extant literature relating to the concept of foreshadowing was concerned not only with strictly fictional narratives, but more specifically with the kinds of fictional narratives concerned with solving a mystery or predicting a twist or subversion. The draw to such kinds of foreshadowing is understandable; it is, after all, is far easier to talk about these kinds of narratives for a number of reasons, including the fact that their final reveal is usually so unexpected that the foreshadowing preceding it must be both frequent and well deployed in order to build to the final foregrounded event, and the fact that such twist endings are generally memorable or ultimately satisfying. These kinds of narratives form much of the groundwork for plotting and modeling foreshadowing in both

Bae et al's diagram designed to model the way in which sentimental audiences interact with and attempt to piece together these kinds of foreshadowing events, as well Emmott and Alexander's model of burying, which relies on an author attempting to hide such foreshadowing events in order to maximise the impact of the reveal.

One of the drawbacks of using Emmott and Alexander's model to discuss foregrounded foreshadowing becomes apparent upon attempting to map it onto the diagram – in the same sense as *Stranger Things*, *7 Days Out* provides a case study based around character introduction that is deliberately foregrounded. In this case we encounter some of the limitations of Emmott and Alexander's diagrammatic model not only in the sense that it does not relate to buried information (as is true for *Stranger Things*), but also in the sense that we have no true axis by which to measure the time between the foreshadowing events.

In this case, every point of foreshadowing from the initial studied introduction to the ultimate 'reveal' takes place within a ten-minute timeframe. Whilst *Stranger Things* provided an introduction to a character who will exist for hours within the running time of the show and months or years within the narrative itself, *7 Days Out* has access to a much smaller temporal window. Flynn is introduced by the dialogue at 15:47, then visually with a long-shot of him being walked by his handler Bill a second later at at 15:46; this shot is accompanied by an intertitle identifying Flynn's name, breed and the group in which he is participating. The audio description does not mention Flynn specifically until 15:45, at which point the describer begins to read the intertitle aloud approximately a second after it first appears on the screen. Unlike in *Stranger Things* where the remaining foreshadowing events can play out across the span of multiple episodes, in *7 Days Out* the initial introduction and moment of reveal are compacted into a timeframe of only minutes: Flynn's over-all win of the Westminster Dog Show is portrayed at 3:24, leaving just over 12 minutes between Flynn's initial introduction (the foreshadowing event) and his win (the foreshadowed event).

It is for this reason that we must start thinking of the foreshadowing in this case study as more functional than luxurious, and in which narrative cohesion and foregrounding of the foreshadowing event must be given preference over other features. The concept of narrative cohesion is at its most basic sense, the idea of a narrative having a 'logical sense' (Hargood et al, 2011); we can think of this on an extreme scale using Tobin's concept of rug-pullers: In order for a dramatic twist to be impactful, it must have been set up with enough hints or clues

that it seems to an audience that the twist itself *could* have been predicted (even if it was not). Tobin states that 'an entirely unpredictable narrative element frequently qualifies not as a satisfying twist, but as an unsatisfying non sequitur' (2009:157). I would argue, however, that this line of reasoning applies equally to narratives even without an especially dramatic or memorable reveal. Whilst rug-pullers provide evidence of tightly plotted narratives which hinge almost entirely on the successful deployment of foreshadowing, foreshadowing can also be a much more functional mechanism within a larger narrative as is seen in this case study. This case study was included to argue for both foreshadowing within non-fiction narratives, as well as drawing attention to the mundane nature of what I will refer to as 'narrative cohesion' foreshadowing.

7 Days Out follows the planning of the Westminster Dog Show from the perspective of a handful of both its organisers and participants; *7 Days Out'*s inclusion provides an example of the way in which foreshadowing is relevant even when discussing less traditional instances of its use, as well as discussing what might motivate a narrative, or even a describer, to foreground foreshadowing events rather than burying them. Unlike the discussion of this topic in the case study for *Stranger Things, 7 Days Out* considers foregrounding as a result of narrative constraint – whilst both are concerned with the signposting of important characters within their respective narratives, *7 Days Out* is an example of the difficulties and constraints that can be encountered both from a technical, audio description standpoint and within the larger context of a speculative non-fiction narrative. The lack of prior foreshadowing in the first two thirds of the documentary means that *7 Days Out* does not fit neatly with Emmott and Alexander's model of burying, and represents evidence of the constraints that are unique to speculative narrative nonfiction in constructing more complex foreshadowing.

The narrative of *7 Days Out* seems to be concerned with two primary ideas: firstly, showing work that is required to both plan and set up large scale events and secondly by following individual stories of people involved in the event. Unlike in fictional narratives, which can be controlled and refined by those creating them almost infinitely, nonfiction requires the portrayal of something that is much less malleable than fiction in order to refrain from seeming deceitful or misrepresentative. Whilst there is less narratological research on the construction non-fiction narratives, the idea of creative nonfiction is not a new one, and refers

to the idea of using a literary style to convey a nonliterary narrative. Gornick explains this idea within the context of a written memoir: although the story is taken from real life, and is related by a first-person narrator who is *also* the writer (thereby distinguishing it from fiction) the remaining elements that make up the narrative are otherwise the same as they would be for a fictional narrative in that it must "shape a piece of experience so that it moves from a tale of private interest to one with meaning for the disinterested reader" (Dean, 2015). Katie Wales does not exclude non-fiction from her general stylistic definition of narrative, which states that a narrative is "a story, of happenings or events, *either real or imaginary*, which the narrator considers interesting or important" (Wales, 2001:264, emphasis added); in the same definition, Wales also acknowledges that narratives may also be "visualized in the images of film", as is the case with all of the narratives examined in this thesis (ibid).

The task of portraying and representing a documentary-style narrative is made uniquely more complex, however, when the topic of the documentary has not yet occurred, as is the case for *7 Days Out*. This comes as a result of the *7 Days Out* series' focus on the build-up and planning of large-scale gatherings or events proactively, as opposed to a retroactively. In order to legitimately portray the nature of the planning of the event, producers must select the individuals who will be the 'main characters' *before* the event has occurred. In this case, these are not 'characters' in the traditional, fictional sense but represent a selection of owners, handlers and dogs around whom the programme builds a story; their opinions and points of views are represented both as a shortcut for portraying the way in which the event is planned (eg: their signing up to participate is the way that *all* the dogs participating were selected, but we are shown this through the perspective of just one character), as well as their unique individual narratives (such as one of the characters never having participated before); it is for these reasons that the individuals involved will be referred to as characters or 'point of view characters', as the documentary itself is portrayed through them and their experiences.

In this case, none of the dogs involved as point of view characters win the overall 'best in show' title, meaning that their win cannot be used as a satisfying 'reveal' as it does not actually occur; to change the ending to represent this would be disingenuous and would not fit with the expectations of conventional documentary style narratives which require a focus on portraying factual truths. Instead of any of the point of view characters, the title is won by a Bichon Frise named Flynn, who is unassociated with the documentary; this means that the

documentary creators must attempt to still create a satisfying narrative without the 'payoff' hinging upon one of their point of view characters winning. This highlights the difficulty in crafting a narrative around a future event – although the documentary *is* about the individuals it follows and must be entertaining in itself in order to satisfy its audience, it is also necessary for *7 Days Out* to portray an accurate series of events.

As stated previously, *7 Days Out* does not fit well into Emmott and Alexander's model; not only is the foreshadowing event (Flynn's introduction) not buried, but there are very few instances of other events to lead up to the reveal. This is most likely reflective of the difficulties encountered when attempting to create a proactive documentary – the camera people are unlikely to have footage of Flynn prior to the initial win described in this case study, unlike the point of view characters who are followed prior to the event and at all the points throughout the dog show itself. The documentary crew would have relied on *any* footage obtained prior to Flynn's win of Best In Show in order to be able to effectively foreshadow his importance; as this importance was unlikely to be recognized until Flynn's winning of the Non-Sporting Group competition (meaning that he would then advance to the Best In Show category), the documentary filmmakers are then most likely reliant on any footage taken during the non-sporting group competition. It is most likely that footage was taken of each of the group stages in order to account for the potential outcome of a non-PoV dog winning over-all, then edited specifically to focus on Flynn at the point at which this case study takes place.

Initially, Flynn is introduced by name in by dialogue of the commentator at 15:47 and also in the intertitle appearing at 15:46, which reads "Flynn, Bichon Frise, Non-Sporting Group". This text is also read aloud by the audio describer from 15:45 – 15:42, slightly before it actually appears on screen; this appears to be done so as to allow a BVI audience to access the dialogue of the female judge selecting Flynn by name at 15:41, as well as the change in the diegetic audio portraying the intensity of the applause when Flynn is announced as the winner; both of these audial features take place at the same time as the paralinguistic shot of the same female judge gesturing towards Flynn shown in Figure 4.8.

FIGURE 4-8 PARALINGUISTIC GESTURES SHOWING THE JUDGE SELECTING FLYNN AND ANOTHER COMPETITOR CONGRATULATING BILL

There is no further audio description until 15:24, most likely due to the dialogue between the commentary team which, following the announcement of Flynn's victory provide the exposition of what Flynn's victory in the non-sporting group might mean for the direction of the narrative that *7 Days Out* is attempting to portray; the commentary track is taken from the official commentary of the Westminster Dog Show and has been deliberately selected by the producers of *7 Days Out* in order to support and reinforce the story being told by the documentary – by deliberately choosing a soundbite in which the commentator states that Flynn is "in position for tomorrow night's crowning of 2008's best in show" at 15:28, the audience is primed to not only expect Flynn's participation when *7 Days Out* shows footage of the best in show category, but to expect him to be significant enough to win by merit of being the only competitor to be shown in any detail outside of the main, point of view dogs.

One of the important methods by which Flynn's significance is foregrounded in both the original narration and the audio description is by the use of his name. Flynn is named by a commentator at 15:49, from which point the audio description also begins to refer him in the same manner in the descriptions that follow. Although this is almost certainly done as a way 'to avoid long phrases by naming instead of describing a person' (Beneke, 2014:142), this is a good example of the way in which foregrounding takes effect in situations such as this. In

this particular narrative, the naming of Flynn is entirely different to the preceding descriptions of non-PoV dogs, which are limited to strictly visual features including markings ("A dog with a white snout"), breed ("a woman lifts a Lhasa Apso") or some distinct visual feature ("a black dog wears a Wonder Woman outfit"), even if they have won their categories; as well as this, in these cases all of the backgrounded dogs are referred to almost entirely using the indefinite article 'a' – by comparison, the PoV dogs are referred to using either their names or their specific gender pronouns. Although as Wales points out, 'articles have little lexical meaning' (2001:30), their content may be telling in the creation of a proximal relationship between an audience and the participants in a narrative. Jucker states that the use of an indefinite article "implies that the referent is one among many and not familiar to the [audience]" (1992:212) as is the case with the backgrounded dogs who are used more as scene setting than characters actively engaged in the wider narrative.

In this case, Flynn becomes an anomaly – introduced almost two thirds of the way through the programme , both he and his owner are introduced both in the linguistic audio channel using audio taken from the judges' commentary at 15:47 which states that "this is Flynn, being handled by Bill McFadden", through the use of a non-diegetic title in both Flynn's breed and category are identified and his name is written, appearing almost as soon as the judge's commentary has finished introducing him (Fig. 4.9). The audio description track by comparison, must wait until the judge has finished her comment before the describer can state firstly that "text appears" at 15:45, over a second after the intertitle initially appears.

FIGURE 4-9 INTERTITLE SHOWING FLYNN'S NAME, BREED AND GROUP

Drawing attention to the textual mode by which the information is conveyed plays a role in conveying the multimodal nature of Flynn's foregrounding – he is introduced by name in both an audial and visual manner within less than a second of one another – rather than burying an item by mentioning it infrequently, as suggested by Emmott and Alexander, Flynn is instead foregrounded by being mentioned in both the dialogue as well as the intertitle shown in Figure 4.9. There is no need for the describer to give any graphological details of the text of the intertitles and very little space in which this would be possible: following the audio description identifying the textual information, there is over eighteen seconds (15:41-15:25) of footage which is dubbed over with the judges' commentary. This provides no breaks in the original audio track in which the describer may add descriptions of such visual content, despite there being a total of five shot changes which occur before the describer manages to insert "Bill holds Flynn", before a sixth shot is shown of him holding the dog surrounded by interviewers.

In this shot we see a non-diegetic title appear reading "Bill McFadden Professional Handler" appear in the same position on the screen and in the same font and style as the earlier title introducing Flynn, his breed, and his show category. In this case, however, the text is not read aloud by the audio describer. The most obvious reason for the exclusion of this non-diegetic text in the audio description track is timing; this echoes Matamala's thoughts on the audio

description of filmic credits, a similar form of non-diegetic text, in which she states that when there is not enough space in which to audio describe all of the text, describers must decide which text is the most relevant at the time (Matamala, 2014:104); we may also consider the idea that some text is simply less important in understanding what is happening in context; for example we see a large amount of diegetic text onscreen that is not necessary to describe, such as the small podiums showing breed names seen in Figure 4.10, these provide an aesthetic component but are not necessary for contextualizing the narrative, particularly as they occur at 15:30, a point at which the audience is likely to already understand both the location and context in which these kind of visual features occur.

FIGURE 4-10 DIEGETIC TEXT SHOWN IN *7 DAYS OUT*

In this case, Flynn is given increased salience when compared with his handler, Bill, in both the original production and the audio description. Flynn is mentioned by name four times in the commentary as well as once in the non-diegetic introductory title – this title is then also read aloud by the audio describer, as well as the audio description mentioning him by name again at 15:24. By contrast, Flynn's owner Bill is mentioned only twice in the commentary and once in a non-diegetic title text shown in Figure 4.12. Unlike Flynn, Bill's title text is entirely omitted from the audio description -whilst Flynn's introductory intertitle was mentioned somewhat later than its actual appearance on-screen, the describer still clearly felt

that it was important enough to preserve in the description track. Bill is not entirely absent from the audio description and is mentioned by name at 15:24 in the shot preceding his non-diegetic title. The audio description states that "Bill holds Flynn", whilst the visual content immediately changes shot at 15:22 from Bill walking backstage to Bill being interviewed by a crowd of journalists. These two shots are represented in Figures 4.11 and 4.12, which show the visual content of each one; it is important to note that these shots occur consecutively, with the audio description overlapping the end of 4.11 and bleeding into the visual shown in figure 4.12.

FIGURE 4-11 BILL CARRIES FLYNN BACKSTAGE

FIGURE 4-12 BILL HOLDS FLYNN BACKSTAGE

The audio description "Bill holds Flynn" plays a versatile role in describing these two specific sequential scenes – the description's vagueness allows it to simultaneously describe either one of the two shots which occur one after the other: first of Bill walking out of the arena holding Flynn, then shot that follows showing Bill standing still holding Flynn and surrounded by journalists. In both scenarios, the description that "Bill holds Flynn" is an accurate one, even if it does not contain a great deal of specific lexical information. This reveals a novel method of dealing with such restrictive timings, particularly when sequential shots contain very similar features that may be summarized in order to apply more broadly: by *decreasing* the specificity of the audio description, a describer may be given the opportunity to make such kinds of description work for multiple shots, provided that they occur close to one another.

 The use of Bill's name in the audio description also plays a functional role in order to prime a blind or partially sighted audience to link Bill's identity to the new voice that follows at 15:21 when is Bill talking to the journalists. Prior to this, Bill has not spoken at any point, and whilst for viewers without a visual impairment, this does not matter, for BVI audiences, this creates a lack of context. For sighted audiences, this role is fulfilled by the non-diegetic title identifying Bill's name seen in the left hand corner of figure 4.12, as well as the fact that

Bill is visually the same man as in the preceding shots of Flynn winning the non-sporting group shown from 15:46 -15:27. In this sense, the audio describer has chosen to provide at least *some* diegetic visual context after a long period of being unable to do so due to the commentator's dialogue which takes up much of the real-estate available for the audio describer.

As previously stated, Orero and Wharton have discussed the difficulties in reading certain textual inserts, identifying that although on some occasions in the description a textual insert could be easily read out loud, often there was not enough time to audio describe both the text and the action, meaning that describers would be forced to prioritize one over the other (2007:170). In this case, we see the describer choose the action rather than the intertitle shown in Figure 4.12; this is unsurprising as both pieces of textual information are conveyed by the commentator at 15:47, who identifies both Flynn and the fact that he is "handled by Bill McFadden". It is important to note that this is not a verbatim reading of the title and does not occur at 15:23 when the intertitle is first shown, however it provides almost exactly the same information conveyed by the text. Where the intertitle uses the noun phrase "Professional Handler" beneath Bill's name, the commentator uses the verb 'handled' to imply this instead in the phrase "this is Flynn, *being handled* by Bill McFadden" (emphasis added). Despite the slightly different grammatical contexts of the two pieces of information, a BVI audience is unlikely to be confused by the omission of the intertitle text: If Bill *wasn't* a professional handler, there would be no obvious reason for him to be handling a dog at the Westminster Dog Show, and so it is somewhat unnecessary to mention this again in the audio description, particularly when there is little free space to do so. The audio description stating "Bill holds Flynn" is also representative of the way in which Flynn's significance is still reinforced without compromising the more functional establishing link between Bill (the less important human counterpart character) and Flynn necessary to understand that it is Bill speaking to the journalists and that it is Bill who is responsible for Flynn.

Flynn's importance is moderated as well as can be done so given the rigidity of the constraints imposed by the density of the existing audial channel; its minimal nature is reinforced and supported well in the original narration, which focuses exclusively on Flynn (rather than the other unrelated dogs shown in background shots who belong to the same non sporting category that Flynn is shown winning) and to a lesser extent, his handler.

By reinforcing Flynn's importance *7 Days Out* avoids the "unsatisfying non sequitur" described by Tobin – it is also important to note that Flynn's temporally late inclusion to the narrative of *7 Days Out* is further evidence of the difficulty in crafting and portraying a non-fiction narrative from a speculatory position; as Flynn is not one of the PoV dogs, the story cannot have the opportunity to seed Flynn's presence earlier in the documentary as no footage of him will have been filmed by the creators during the same timeframe as the PoV dogs (eg: footage of the dogs at home, their drives to New York etc). It is therefore necessary to foreground Flynn as soon as possible within the timeframe afforded by the narrative. In this case, out of a total of seven days Flynn is introduced on the start of the fifth (the first part of the documentary which consists of footage taken from the official broadcast of the Westminster Dog Show rather than footage shot by the producers of *7 Days Out*). In instances such as this, burying this information will in fact be detrimental to narrative cohesion – one might speculate that there is not enough space, time or literal footage to sufficiently build up to a buried reveal, therefore foregrounding must instead be used in order to maximise the chances that an audience will be able to correlate the provided data with an ending or result satisfactorily.

4.1.3.1   Conclusion

In conclusion, *7 Days Out*'s specific narrative structure relies heavily on foreshadowing through foregrounding as a way to reduce the impact of a potentially unsatisfying narrative ending; the documentary's original method of foregrounding Flynn is echoed in the sparse audio description, which focuses the entirety of its available space on descriptions exclusively relating to him, minimizing other visual elements such as other background dogs, physical descriptions of the setting, and the journalists interviewing Bill McFadden in the final shot. Of course, much of this may well have been described had the audio describer had more gaps in which to insert the description, but in a similar manner to that seen in *Arrested Development*'s case study, a fast paced original narrative is a double edged sword: whilst a great deal of 'heavy lifting' may be undertaken by the original audio track, there is then very little room for audio describers to work with, becoming problematic when the narrative does not allow time to describe a shot at all before it has disappeared.

We see *7 Days Out* must occasionally modulate these elements, either through temporal manipulation (such as stating "Bill holds Flynn" at 15:24, three seconds after we see the initial visual of this in Figure 4.11 such that it occurs a second before the second consecutive shot of Bill and Flynn seen in Figure 4.12), the combining of multiple scenes into a single line of audio description through the use of vague or imprecise descriptors ("Bill holds Flynn" can apply to both Figures 4.11 and 4.12) or omission (the excluding of the intertitle in Figure 4.12). Although these methods may seem to exclude or simplify a great deal of the visual content associated with this scene, they are in fact evidence of the role of audio description as a supplemental narrative track and represent the way in which existing audiovisual content may require more or less support depending on the relevance of its audial features to understanding the meaning of the portrayed visual information.

The lack of existing research into the way in which narrative devices such as foreshadowing (which are typically associated with fictional, literary narratives) are deployed and used in creative nonfiction narratives most likely requires further research; whilst *7 Days Out* uses foregrounded foreshadowing to play a functional role in mediating the audience's expectations for the direction taken by the story, there are most likely other examples of foreshadowing present in other nonfiction programming which could play roles closer to those identified in the fictional case studies.

4.1.4   A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Wide Window

This case study is based on Netflix's adaptation of the children's book series *A Series of Unfortunate Events* written by Lemony Snicket, a fictional narrator and nom de plume for American author Daniel Handler. This case study is taken from the adaptation of the third book in the series, *The Wide Window*. In the Netflix adaptation, a total of thirteen books were adapted across three seasons, with two episodes dedicated to each book; in this case study, the transcribed data is taken from the second of *The Wide Window* episodes, although reference is also made to the foreshadowing events which occur in the first episode.
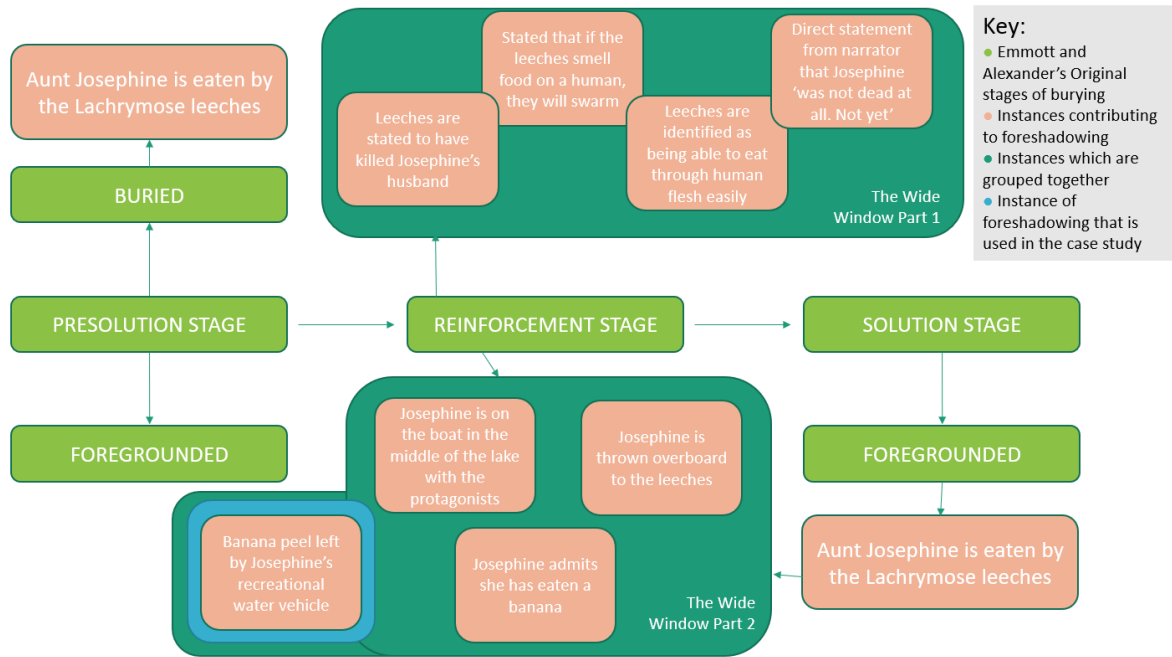
FIGURE 4-13 *A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS* **CASE STUDY CONTEXT**

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A Series of Unfortunate Events tells the story of the Baudelaire orphans, three siblings who are pursued for their fortune by a distant relative, the villainous Count Olaf; as the children are passed between a number of different legal guardians, Olaf pursues them, targeting the children as well as the adults entrusted with their care. In *The Wide Window*, the Baudelaires have been sent to live beside Lake Lachrymose with their Aunt Josephine, a once brave woman who has developed a number of phobias following the death of her husband, Ike; Josephine is eventually murdered by Count Olaf, who pushes her into the lake, leaving her to be eaten by the predatory leeches in the water.

 A Series of Unfortunate Events has had two telecinematic adaptations, the 2004 film, which combined the plotlines of the first three novels in the series, and the Netflix series encapsulating each of the novels across 25 episodes released between 2017 and 2019. After the film adaptation, but before Netflix's series, Ryan Pait (2015) discussed the benefits of adapting the series into an episodic television series; Pait's enthusiasm for the book series is obvious, however what is more interesting is that a number of his suggestions and assertions came to fruition in Netflix's adaptation of the series, including the use of flashforwards and flashbacks as a way to link and foreground a subplot revolving around many of the series' adult characters (2015:13). In the novel, this plotline was almost entirely backgrounded apart

from a supplemental book outside of the main series which itself claims to be the 'unauthorised autobiography' of the series' fictional narrator, Lemony Snicket (this is for stylistic effect – the *Unauthorized Autobiography* was written by the series' author, Daniel Handler); by contrast, the series chooses to explicitly portray this plotline alongside the 'main' narrative taken from books 1-13, threading these flashbacks in amongst the plotlines revolving exclusively around the Baudelaire orphans.This case study focuses on the plot of *The Wide Window, which*tells a story in which the orphaned children are being cared for by their Aunt Josephine, a distant relative who is 'afraid of everything' (Handlen, 2017) and whose husband was previously devoured by the same species of leech that eventually kill Josephine. The foreshadowed event is Josephine's death as a result of these leeches, and the story contains several foreshadowing events which assist with the build-up to this event which will be discussed within this case study.

Josephine herself is an example of one of several characters throughout the series who are significantly named in order to showcase a variety of intertextual references and lend to their characterisation. Culpeper identifies tcharacters with meaningful names may reflect features such as ethnicity or origin, but also that some characters are named meaningfully, with names reflective of different concepts or ideas (2001:231). Atvara links Josephine's homophonic surname 'Anwhistle', to the Hollywood actress Peg Entwistle famed for committing suicide by jumping from the Hollywood sign, leaving behind a note that simply read 'I'm afraid, I'm a coward' (2012:27); Josephine and her husband Ike are each named for both the tropical storm and the hurricane of the same names, which occurred simultaneously in 2008. This links them both to the hurricanes that are said to build up around Lake Lachrymose, where much of the action in *The Wide Window* takes place. Intertextuality such as this, whilst not foreshadowing in a direct sense, provides an example of meaningful naming that alludes to a number of later plot points (Josephine's false suicide, her character's cowardice, the occurrence of a hurricane as a significant moment). Whilst unnecessary to the over-all comprehension of the narrative, these references provide extra information for those privy to the specific meanings behind the intertextual character names.

The initial foreshadowing events for Josephine's death occur in the preceding episode; rather than visual foreshadowing, all of the initial foreshadowing events are conveyed almost entirely through spoken dialogue and narration. This is a good example of the way in which Emmott and Alexander's burying technique of separating relevant information functions in

practice across multiple episodes of the same show. Despite nobody outwardly discrediting Josephine's dialogue during the initial foreshadowing event, in which she tells the orphans that her husband Ike "only waited 45 minutes" before swimming, her character is known to be both dramatic and intensely afraid of often harmless situations. In this case, an audience's association with someone not waiting to swim after eating is typically that a swimmer might get cramp, rather than the much more dramatic result that they will be eaten by leeches, and so the audience is less likely to find this information especially salient (as it is expected that Josephine is afraid of leeches as she is ultimately intensely afraid of almost everything). The information pertaining to the foreshadowed event (that one must wait before swimming after eating) is placed at the beginning of Josephine's speech, before she begins describing the leeches themselves; this represents a number of Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques. Firstly, the stressing one specific aspect of a buried item (in this case the physiological attributes of the leeches) at the expense of the actual significant information. In this case, Josephine describes the way in which the leeches differ from regular leeches (including observations about their size, teeth and their ability to smell food in the water) and whilst this knowledge *is* relevant for knowing that the leeches are carnivorous and therefore a foreshadowing event in itself, the information relevant to knowing that Josephine specifically will be eaten is found in the observation that one must wait more than an hour before swimming after eating food. Much like the wave tattoo shown in *The Discovery*, this information cannot be used to make accurate assessments about the foreshadowed event until more information has been revealed that will specifically tie Josephine's remarks about Ike to her own fate. The second burying strategy used is that of placing information where an audience may be easily distracted, in this case, by Josephine's description of the leeches themselves.

A Series of Unfortunate Events also uses its existing narrator, Lemony Snicket, to deliver foreshadowing of Josephine's death to the audience at the end of the first episode of *The Wide Window*. In the final few minutes before the credits, the audience is left with a scene in which although it appears that Josephine has committed suicide by jumping out of a window, we are informed by Lemony Snicket that she 'was not dead at all. Not yet'. The audience is provided with no further information regarding the manner of her death, merely that it *will* occur. Whilst this event is also a foreshadowing event, by not mentioning the leeches or the lake when explaining that Josephine will die, an audience has less chance to link these

separate foreshadowing events together, despite the fact that with hindsight bias both Josephine's speech about Ike and Snicket's observation regarding Josephine's inevitable fate make sense narratively speaking. Snicket's observation represents an unusually frank example of an 'activating event', the point at which a sentimental audience realizes that the foreshadowed event is inevitable. For sentimental audiences, any remaining foreshadowing events which occur after the activating event will serve only to reinforce and confirm their suspicions, whilst for unsentimental viewers, these foreshadowing events will contribute instead to hindsight bias, meaning a foreshadowed event will make sense retrospectively. In *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the traditional format is played with somewhat – despite it being explicitly stated that Josephine will die, there is an instance before this foreshadowed event that lead an audience to believe that the foreshadowed event will occur at an earlier point in the narrative than it does, only for Josephine to survive. Josephine's narrow escape from the leeches during the false foreshadowing is likely to make even a sentimental audience wonder whether the foreshadowing events *are* in fact building up to Josephine's death as a result of the leeches, or whether the foreshadowing events were actually leading up to the circumstances of her *almost* death. Despite being told that Josephine will die, an audience is often likely to forget key details such as this, particularly when they occur further away from the foreshadowed event (Vedantam, 2018).

This kind of false foreshadowing is not discussed by Emmott and Alexander as a means of burying information; whilst they suggest similar techniques, such as placing the item next to one of greater prominence, the idea of actively having a number of 'false starts' in which the foreshadowed event appears to be occurring, but in reality will not occur until later on in the story, is not identified in their research. We see this when it appears that the Baudelaire's boat will sink with Josephine on board; this second instance is the closest to the *actual* foreshadowed event both temporally and in terms of the way in which it occurs. At this point, the activating event (the realization that Josephine has eaten prior to the journey across the lake) has taken place, and so it would still make sense with hindsight if she was killed during this initial 'false start'. This may function similarly to Emmott and Alexander's technique of placing foreshadowing events in positions at which a reader is distracted; the surprise at Josephine *not* dying during the sinking of the Baudelaire's boat may then make the audience suspicious as to whether the foreshadowing itself is real or false, despite Lemony Snicket informing them in the previous episode that Josephine *will* die.

As well as this, Snicket's observation shows the way in which dramatic irony can contribute to foreshadowing, and the way in which this effect can be mapped through the use of different discourse levels – as readers are likely to overlook specific details in a narrative, or forget about the manner by which they have acquired certain significant information (Vedantam, 2018), these blind-spots may be exploited in the creation of a text. In *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, we are provided with a narrator in the form of Lemony Snicket, who is stated at multiple points to be narrating from an undisclosed point in the future and whose aim is to "tell the tale of the Baudelaire's tragic lives" (*The Wide Window: Part One,* 2017). The character of Lemony Snicket is a fictional one, created by the actual author of the series, Daniel Handler, as an in-universe character and narrator figure; ultimately this means that much of an audience's information is provided to them through Snicket's narration. If we consider this using the structure associated with Short's discourse levels (1996:169-172), we can see that the dramatic irony occurs as a result of the inclusion of a narrator:

Addresser 1 (The Writers) → Addressee 1 (The Audience / us)

Addresser 2 (Lemony Snicket) → Addressee 2 (The Audience / us)

Addresser 3 (Character 1) → Addressee 3 (Character 2)

Because Snicket is *directly* addressing the audience, and is stated at multiple points to be doing so from an indeterminate point in the future, an audience is likely to trust his observations, particularly as his character is defined by his dedication to researching and telling the story of the Baudelaire children. Despite the false foreshadowed event seen when the Baudelaire's boat sinks initially, Snicket is confirmed to be a reliable narrator when the *true* foreshadowed event takes place.

Whilst all of the foreshadowing events mentioned prior to the case study are taken from both narration and dialogue, the only instance of visual foreshadowing regarding Josephine's death takes place when the protagonists have tracked down Josephine where she is hiding in a cave, having faked her own death and been forced into hiding. Upon seeing the children, Josephine remarks at 25:00 "[she hopes] that they brought food" because she's "out" – this foreshadowing event is used to imply that Josephine *did* bring food with her, but that she has already eaten it. This foreshadowing event is an example of an 'activating event' as described by Bae et al. – whilst previous foreshadowing events have provided information *relevant* to

fully understanding why this event is the activating one (the information provided about the leeches, the fact that Aunt Josephine will die), it is this moment that allows all of the isolated foreshadowing events to move away from isolated pockets of information, to evidence to support the idea that Josephine's death will definitely be a result of the leeches.

However, even in this scene, we see that this information is still partially buried, despite being a much more direct example of foreshadowing, with an obvious cause and event – this burying is primarily achieved through the embedded perspective of the protagonists (which we as an audience are more likely to align to), rather than viewing Josephine's comment about food as a foreshadowing event, the children instead appear crestfallen at the implication that Josephine does not intend to leave the cave, and is instead expecting to remain there for a long time; this functions in a similar manner to Emmott and Alexander's burying technique of stressing one specific aspect of an item relating to the foreshadowed event, so that the actual significance is buried. As with Josephine's speech about Ike, audiences are primed for Josephine's character to be fearful, and are likely to focus on and align with the frustration displayed by the Baudelaires due to the fact that Josephine wishes they had brought food because she intends to stay in the cave indefinitely and has already eaten everything she has brought, rather than the implication of what may happen in the future because she has eaten the food. For this reason, unsentimental audiences are less likely to view this foreshadowing event as significant, instead contextualizing it through the point of view provided by the orphans.

It is after this exchange that we are provided with the only piece of visual foreshadowing that pertains to the foreshadowed event of Josephine's death: a close-up shot at 19:37 of a discarded banana peel on the cave floor shown in Figure 4.14.

FIGURE 4-14 CLOSE UP OF THE BANANA PEEL

The audio description begins slightly before this at 19:41, stating: "Barefoot, Josephine follows Klaus past a discarded banana peel". The use of the indefinite article 'a' does not inherently tie Josephine to the banana peel; rather than "her discarded banana peel" which would confirm that the banana peel unequivocally *is* hers, the prominence of the banana peel's connection to Josephine is minimized. Josephine's name *is* mentioned in the audio description at this point however, creating a potential association between her presence and the presence of the banana peel. The onus is, in this situation, placed upon the audience to firstly remember Josephine's dialogue, and then to make the connection between it and the visual of the banana peel. Josephine's statement at 25:00 in which she hopes the children have brought food occurs almost six minutes earlier than the audio description of the banana peel and its visual appearance, meaning that an audience are more likely to have forgotten the initial activating event of Josephine stating that she is out of food.

The close-up of the banana peel is immediately followed by a shot of the Baudelaires and Josephine in the boat on the lake; the audio description tying the two sequential shots together using the adverb "later", stating: "Josephine follows Klaus past a discarded banana peel. Later, the sailboat glides over calm water"; this may help to prime an audience to associate the banana peel with the lake as well as Josephine due to the sequence of the events portrayed; even if the two shots are *not* linked together in a sentimental sense, they will contribute to the effectiveness of hindsight bias, with unsentimental audiences recognizing

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that the temporal proximity between Josephine having eaten and the characters being out on the lake following this.

4.1.4.1 Conclusion

Initially, this case study seemed to have less impact due to the short length of the audio description associated with the foreshadowing event – whilst described, it felt neither especially foregrounded nor buried in the audio description. Whilst this case study may not be especially novel or impactful when contrasted with the findings of some of the others, it is important as an example of how foreshadowing may be modulated throughout a narrative across multiple modes.

A Series of Unfortunate Events represents a narrative in which the audio description's shorter length does not detract from the effectiveness of its foreshadowing. The narrative's use of multiple prior instances of foreshadowing across the audial mode (such as in Snicket's narration and Josephine's story about Ike) mean that a BVI audience will have an almost identical experience in terms of accessing foreshadowing events to a sighted one right up until the point at which the case study takes place.

In this sense, a BVI audience has a much higher chance of already having access to the knowledge required by them to make sense of the narrative; this also means that both sentimental and unsentimental BVI audiences will be able to function in much the same way as their sighted counterparts, either being able to speculate on the presented foreshadowing events, or simply viewing them afterwards as narratively cohesive.

The inclusion of a narrator also represents an interesting difference between *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and the case studies that preceded it. Whilst the impact and usefulness of a preexisting narrator is discussed in more depth in the case study for *Arrested Development*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* shows the way that narrators can play a similar, but not identical, function to the role of audio describers, and the way in which this may be used to bolster or support the audio described content.

4.1.5 Arrested Development
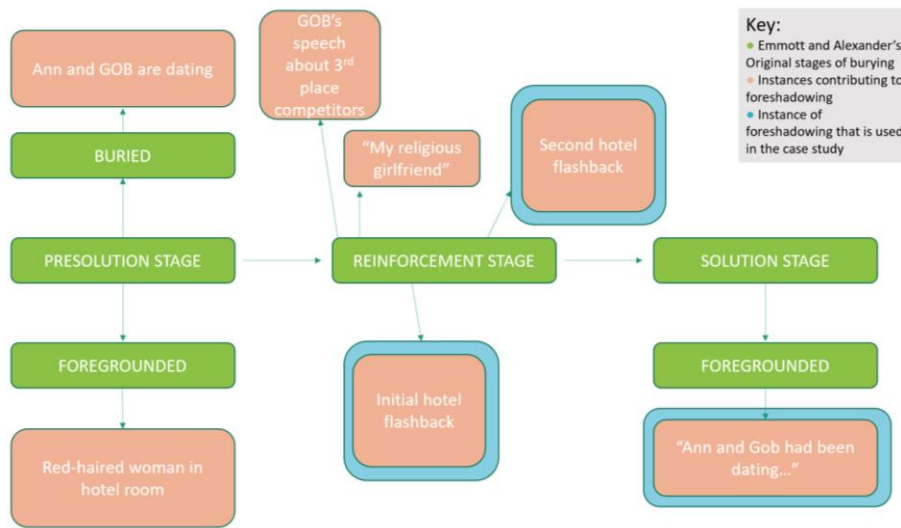
FIGURE 4-15 *ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT* CASE STUDY CONTEXT

Arrested Development is an American comedy following the lives of the once wealthy, now disgraced Bluth family and their real estate company. The show is notable in that it contains a number of complex running jokes and themes that often reveal themselves only on multiple rewatches. *Arrested Development* has been defined as a 'quality' comedy, rather than a sitcom - the distinction between the two is defined by Jenner, who draws attention to several features associated with 'quality' comedy:

- The three-camera set-up of conventional sitcoms is abandoned
- 'Quality' sitcoms do not usually feature a laughter track
- Jokes may build across multiple episodes
- Jokes may reoccur, but are not viewed as catchphrases (2018:146)

When discussing *Arrested Development* specifically, Jenner states that 'there is little repetition of punchlines and, instead, a repetition of sentiment [usually amounting] to character construction' (2018:147). This repetition is a deliberate choice on the part of creator Mitchell Hurwitz, who has stated that he 'loved adding jokes that […] could somehow relate to the story [being told] and the idea of calling things forward - anticipating comedy instead of callbacks' (Berkowitz, 2013). This leads us to consider the initial question of the functional qualities of 'calling things forward'; in a similar sense to *The Discovery*, there are examples of Chekhov's guns, but *Arrested Development* more frequently utilises recurring Chekhov's guns, in which an audience is primed to expect the same (or a similar) event over

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multiple inclusions, rather than an item's presence resulting in a singular large-scale narrative reveal. For example, a running joke involves an invention known as the 'cornballer', a deep-fry machine invented by the Bluth patriarch described as '[not being] legal anywhere' ('*Bringing Up Buster*', 2003) and which when present in a scene, will almost always result in a character burning their hand on the machine whilst trying to use it in some way.

These styles of Chekhov's guns rely heavily on a greater semiotic context shared amongst the show's audience - by reinforcing and repeating the joke enough that a recurrent audience will be primed to expect certain outcomes (eg the burning of a hand), *Arrested Development* can choose to subvert these, or incorporate them into the fabric of a larger narrative (eg that a character has no fingerprints due to burning them off on the cornballer earlier in an episode; that a character with a prosthetic hand does not notice it getting burnt). These styles of joke seem to play a functionally distinct role from foreshadowing based on mystery solving or the intangible nature of symbolic foreshadowing. Instead, in *Arrested Development*, the foreshadowing's function appears to reward repeated viewings of the series. The more familiar a viewer is with the semiotics of *Arrested Development*, its complex repetition of jokes (often occurring across multiple modes, within different overlapping narratives) and Hurwitz's use of 'call forwards', the more a viewer will notice within the story.

This function of foreshadowing is unique, particularly when contrasted with the other case studies; whilst we see examples of both mystery solving (the fourth season contains a literal murder mystery narrative), and symbolic foreshadowing (a character wears certain clothing styles or colours that reflect whomever they are dating at the time), *Arrested Development*'s foreshadowing is intrinsically tied to the repetitive structure and humour associated with the show itself.

In addition to this, *Arrested Development* is notable for its disembodied narrator, which provides some level of narrative information even prior to the inclusion of an audio description. As discussed in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the inclusion of a narrator may help or hinder audio description: on one hand, a narrator may provide information that renders audio description unnecessary (meaning that a describer will not have to attempt to 'fit' this information into a description track, and will not have to disrupt the flow of the original presentation). An existing narrator, on the other hand, may prove a hindrance when they are not describing visual elements as they will then act (from an audio description

standpoint) as another source of dialogue that the audio describer should refrain from speaking over. As such, this narration may occur over important visual information, often segueing into dialogue or a new scene immediately following the narration, leaving a describer with no gaps in which to describe. We see this in the case study for *Arrested Development*, in which the describer is occasionally forced to speak over the beginning of dialogue in order to fully describe the necessary information. In the case of *Arrested Development*, however, the narrator will often play a similar role to that of an audio describer, which can be seen most obviously in *Arrested Development*'s establishing shots. Due to the quick-fire nature of *Arrested Development*'s running plotlines, the way in which scenes and storylines are signposted is often described in similar methods to those used by audio describers to establish context. For example, if we consider the ITC guidelines' method of 'what, where, when, who' (1999), we see that these features are frequently signposted in *Arrested Development*'s standard narration:

"Meanwhile, GOB was beginning his charity work at a local nursing home."

('*Public Relations*', 2004)

'Meanwhile' provides the temporal information about when the action takes place with regards to the scene that precedes it and acts as a way to prime the audience for the shift into a new contextual frame; 'GOB' is the individual involved in the scene; the statement 'was beginning his charity work' provides both information about what is occurring in the scene (charity work) as well as some more temporal information that relates to the scene itself rather than its place in the larger sequence of events (ie, that this scene takes place as he is *starting* his work), finally, the temporal location is established as being 'at a local nursing home'.

For this reason, generally speaking, the audio description provided for *Arrested Development* is relatively minimal: the fast pace of the narrative, coupled with the inclusion of a narrator character means that whilst the show contains less space to include audio description, much of the functional 'heavy lifting' is provided by the original narrative track. The audio description track consists of mostly short, concise description which works alongside the provided narrative. This style changes the nature of *Arrested Development*'s audio description significantly; describers have much less time to fully describe the actual visual content but are also able to fall back on the constant repetition of jokes, concepts and settings

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which allow them to potentially reveal more information on a later revisit to a scene, particularly if there are only minor differences each time.

This case study focuses on one specific set of scenes from the 2006 episode '*Family Ties'*, in which it is revealed that George Oscar Bluth (GOB), the eldest Bluth son, has been secretly dating his nephew's religious ex-girlfriend, Ann. This narrative and the way in which it is presented are a good example of Emmott and Alexander's 2014 model used to identify the process of foreshadowing a plot-significant item through burying. In this example Ann is the buried item of significance at the presolution stage and a foregrounded red herring is provided in the form of Ann's friend (who viewers are led to believe is the woman GOB is actually dating) to further bury Ann's presence. This burying occurs through a number of flashbacks to the same scene, with each revisit providing slightly more information each time. Emmott and Alexander's model specifically accounts for the burying techniques that foreground items deliberately in order to draw the attention of an audience away from the actually significant items, despite this technique not being used in all situations that utilize the technique of burying. In this case, however, *Arrested Development* represents such kinds of foreshadowing both in the original audiovisual presentation, and in the audio description that accompanies it.

As this case study is narratively more complex than the other case studies (in that it is the same scene repeated multiple times with slight alterations each time until the ultimate reveal), and because the repeated flashback was not too long, the separate instances were transcribed in order to better evaluate the differences and similarities in each scene; these will be referred to by the order in which they occur for the viewers. Flashbacks are not uncommon as a means of revealing information, whether foreshadowed or not, and rely on a disconnect between the way in which story occurs and the way in which it is represented to an audience (Scott, 2013:67); whilst a flashback may show a scene decades before the scene it sequentially follows, an audience will typically understand that it is not intended to be seen as a literal follow up to the one before it, but that it has been included to provide some new or extra information about a character or event.

As well as those identified in the case studies, there are two instances of foreshadowing to GOB and Ann's relationship outside of the transcribed flashbacks, which occur in episode 4 (the same episode that the inner beauty contest flashback is taken from). In both instances,

there is no audio description, and the foreshadowing occurs in dialogue or narration rather than as a visual component; for this reason, BVI audiences will have access to exactly the same foreshadowing content regardless of the lack of audio described visuals. The first reference to Ann and GOB's relationship occurs in a dialogue exchange in which GOB is explaining his role as a judge in the contest to his younger brother Michael. When discussing why he enjoys this role, GOB states: "I don't want to say it. First place chick is hot, but has an attitude, […] But third place, although a little bit plain, has super low self-esteem. So I step in and, uh, lay her crown upon my sweet head." This exchange explicitly conveys GOB's intentions, as well as the fact that he has (presumably) done this before. Whilst this occurs early on in the episode, Ann coming third does not actually happen until the end, at which point the GOB's dialogue about third place contestants is referenced by the narrator in a scene where Ann breaks up with her then boyfriend:

> Ann: Outgrown you. That is the term I've been looking for.
>
> Narrator: It seems G.O.B. was right about what happens to third-place contestants.
>
> Ann: I met a man.

During this exchange, much like Lemony Snicket's comment that Aunt Josephine *will* die in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the narrator has, confirmed the inevitable. Although Ann does not specifically name GOB, referring to him only as "a man", the narrator confirms that GOB's assessment was correct. Even at this point, however, we are given some ambiguity about whether GOB was right about contestants who are "a little bit plain" and have "low self-esteem" being vulnerable to predatory men upon coming third, or whether he was literally right about his own plan to act in the role of the predatory man. This is a result of the tendencies of an audience to forget crucial or important components of things they have been told throughout a narrative, meaning that they are less likely to be able to make connections between these events (Vedantam, 2018).

The burying in *Arrested Development* frequently hinges upon unsentimental viewers, or even sentimental viewers who are overwhelmed by the many *other* plotlines occurring simultaneously, not fully remembering GOB's earlier dialogue. This is an example of a number of Emmott and Alexander's techniques including the splitting up of information to make it harder for an audience to make inferences as to its meaning by spreading the

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foreshadowing events throughout the narrative with enough space in between them that an audience may forget that they have occurred, or at least find it harder to recall them in their entirety. Alongside this, the specific meaning of the scene in which Ann claims she has outgrown her ex-boyfriend is framed and contextualized around *him*, and his storyline throughout the episode which is concerned with the fact that he is not seen as masculine. Ann's dumping of him is more likely to be viewed by audiences as a specific moment in *his* plotline rather than Ann's (who is a minor character) or GOB's (who is not visually present in the scene). Because the scenes which both precede and follow the dumping are related to Ann's ex-boyfriend's storyline, the audience's inferences about the narrator's comment are much more likely to be short lived (Keefe and McDaniel, 1993). This is due to the increased prominence of a different aspect of the foreshadowing event (GOB's nephew and his storyline): whilst the events that occur in the scene are still linked in some way to GOB's nephew's narrative arc, the 'reveal' of the scene is more likely to be viewed by an audience as the fact that GOB's nephew has been dumped rather than the buried information that Ann and GOB are dating.

The plot of GOB and Ann dating is not foreshadowed again until the point at which the case study takes place. The first flashback transcribed is taken from the 11th episode of the series, seven episodes after the previously mentioned foreshadowing events; this in itself is another example of Emmott and Alexander's burying technique of splitting up important information, with no more foreshadowing events between the 4th episode and the 11th, an audience is unlikely to assign a great degree of salience to the earlier foreshadowing events until they are explicitly revisited in the third flashback of the case study.

Each of the transcriptions in the case study is a return to a flashback event which takes place in a hotel room in which GOB misunderstands the phrase "holy trinity", taking it to mean a threesome with Ann and one of her religious female friends:

> GOB: My religious girlfriend just dumped me, and for a simple little misunderstanding. I mean, if someone was always asking you to embrace the holy trinity, what would you think it meant?

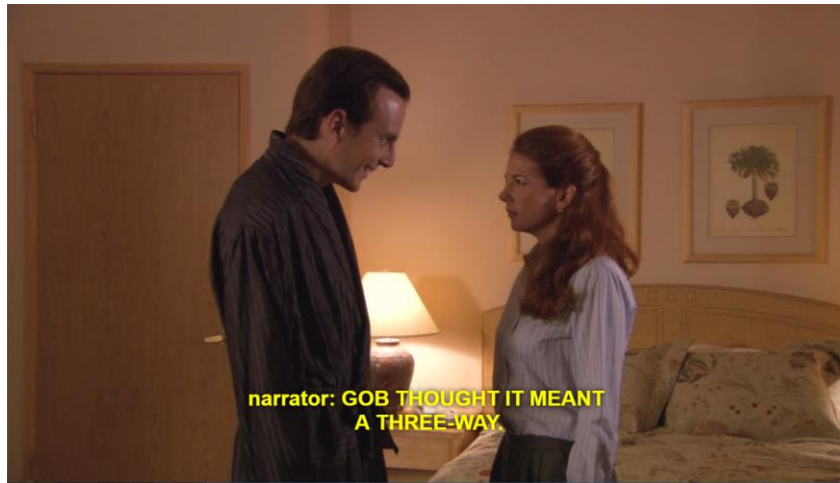> Narrator: GOB thought it meant a three-way.

FIGURE 4-16 INITIAL VISUAL OF THE RED-HAIRED WOMAN

The woman shown in Figure 4.16 is *not* the girlfriend referred to by GOB himself - she is a friend of Ann's, however the audio description explicitly refers to her at 19:01 as *his* (GOB's) girlfriend.

Following this, the flashback ends and the narrative returns to its primary timeline, in which GOB recounts the story to his indifferent siblings. GOB's brother Michael appears uninterested in the story, and quickly changes the subject to a topic relating to an unrelated storyline. This method is similar to the one seen in the earlier foreshadowing events relating to GOB's nephew and Ann's ex-boyfriend in which the inferences of audiences may be manipulated more easily so long as their attention is consequently directed elsewhere (Keefe and McDaniel, 1993). In this case, the audience's attention is immediately redirected to the new narrative arc brought up by GOB's brother Michael. Alongside this redirecting of attention, Michael is immediately dismissive of GOB's story, moving on quickly to an unrelated topic, in a manner similar to Emmott and Alexander's burying technique of having characters or narrators state that an item is uninteresting or insignificant. Whilst this is not him directly *saying* that GOB's story (and therefore the flashback itself) is uninteresting, Michael's dismissiveness about GOB's story plays a similar role in signalling disinterest to the audience. This is reinforced by an audience's existing perception of GOB's character which has been reinforced at multiple points throughout the series; GOB's existing characterisation plays a longer term role in making him appear to be an unreliable narrator who has been shown to both lie and exaggerate when conveying stories at multiple points throughout all five seasons of *Arrested Development*. This, alongside Michael's lack of interest, means that a viewer is less likely to view GOB's reported information as especially

salient, and are unlikely to consider the wider meaning of the flashback until it is revisited at the end of the episode.

This second flashback occurs at 1:04 just prior to the credits sequence. Each episode of *Arrested Development* provides an epilogue of short clips with the narrator stating that they occur "on the next *Arrested Development*"; these snippets do not generally *actually* appear in the next episode, despite them being presented as though they do. The *Arrested Development* wiki describes this short epilogue as a segment in which "lingering stories are wrapped up or extended humorously" (*Arrested Development* Wiki, 2019), meaning that all of the information provided in these epilogues still fits into the wider narrative and is to be considered canonical. In this case, we see that the "lingering story" is that of GOB and his Christian girlfriend, although unsentimental readers will not yet realise the disconnect between the visual of the red haired woman and the fact that GOB has a girlfriend.

The audio description in this scene once again reinforces this disconnect, using the possessive "his girlfriend" to describe the red-haired woman, and the vague "someone" to describe Ann, who is out of shot and therefore not actually visible. At 0:54, however, GOB tilts his head towards Ann, and his dialogue is directed at her, so it would be remiss to omit her presence entirely. Instead, by using the burying technique of making the description deliberately vague, the audio description manages to build upon the original flashback (which made no reference to 'someone') which still visually features GOB turning to face address an off-screen Ann at 18:59-18:58.

The final flashback occurs in the season finale and actually consists of two different flashbacks portrayed sequentially, despite the audio description only making reference to the initial flashback when it begins at 8:10. This is immediately followed by *Arrested Development*'s narrator stating that:

> "GOB had been dating Ann since he awarded her third place in an inner beauty pageant. Since then, Ann and her friends tried to teach GOB about the Holy Trinity."

This is followed by the flashback to the inner beauty contest shown in episode 4, and shows a shot of Ann coming third at 08:06-08:03 and a shot of GOB at the judge's table clapping from 08:02-07:59. Unlike in the initial portrayal of the inner beauty contest, in which Ann and GOB's roles were less salient at the expense of Ann's ex-boyfriend, in these flashbacks

we are *only* shown the two of them, one after the other, to accompany the narrator's statement that they have been dating.

After this context has been established, the second flashback begins immediately after the shot of GOB at the judge's table at 07:59. This flashback returns to the familiar hotel room setting, and reveals the full content of the scene in question. We see both the red-haired woman (Figure 4.17) and Ann (Figure 4.18), both of whom slap GOB before leaving the hotel room.
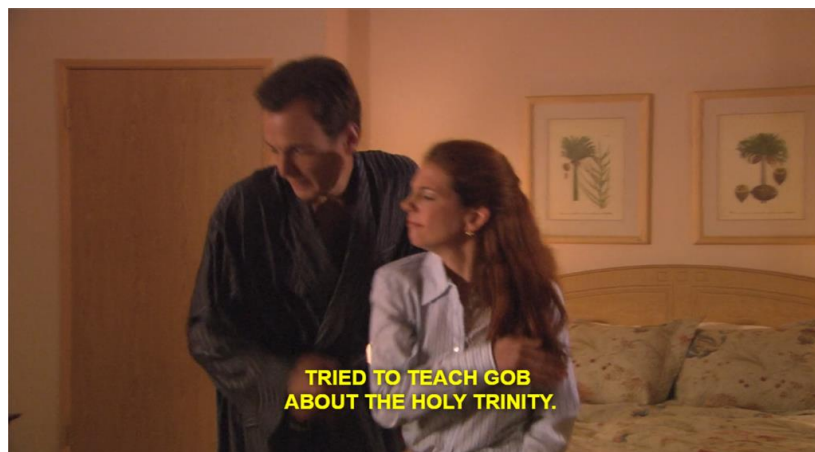
FIGURE 4-17 FINAL SHOT OF THE RED-HAIRED WOMAN

The final portrayal of this scene extends the spatio-temporal context of the encounter: not only do we get extra narrative dialogue, but we get the new visual context in which the camera shows Ann as well as the red-haired woman. The red-haired woman is shown first in Figure 4.17, as we have seen in the previous flashbacks; we are shown the same kind of tracking shot that follows her across the room and out of the door, before the camera tracks back to GOB at 07:56 as he turns back to face Ann. Unlike in the previous flashback to the hotel scene, instead of cutting to another scene after GOB asking "What about you? You Game?" to Ann offscreen, the camera continues to roll, showing Ann slapping him in the face in response (Figure 4.18).

FIGURE 4-18 ANN SLAPS GOB

The most notable initial feature in this final revisit to the hotel room scene is that the audio description changes from describing the red-haired woman in the scene as 'a girlfriend', to the possessive, by changing the indefinite article 'a' to 'his'. This then changes the context of the audio description to mean either: GOB has multiple girlfriends, and this woman is one of them; or that the 'girlfriend' in question actually refers to one of Ann's female friends in a platonic context. In a similar sense to the use of 'a dog' to describe the backgrounded dogs in *7 Days Out*, the use of the indefinite article signals that the referent is just one in a number of similar things, rather than being of significance or importance (Jucker, (1992:212), demoting the importance of the red-haired woman when compared to Ann, who in the final flashback, is named in both the narration and the audio description. This naming of Ann works in tandem with the show's own narration, which makes reference to "Ann and her friends" attempting to educate GOB; not only does this directly name Ann, but also links the red-haired woman to her; instead of the woman being GOB's romantic girlfriend, she may be seen as one of multiple *platonic* girlfriends of Ann, who have been attempting to educate him religiously. Prior to this, Ann is not mentioned by name in this particular plotline, instead she is only alluded to by GOB when talking to Michael at 19:10 before the first flashback; in this instance, rather than her name, GOB uses a description instead ('my religious girlfriend'), and may be seen as a way of under-specifying (and therefore detracting from) the important feature that it is Ann that GOB is dating. As an audience, our knowledge of GOB's attitude towards women and his own selfishness means that the red haired woman *might* be his girlfriend: it makes sense within a narrative world, based on our expectations of specific

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character traits and actions for him to be dismissive, as well as not to refer to his girlfriend by her name. As a result, an audience is then allowed to make assumptions without correction on the part of either the canon narrator or the audio describer, manipulating their availability bias in favour of the easier narrative assumption. Alongside this, however, the character of Ann is frequently the butt of a reoccurring joke throughout *Arrested Development*'s run, in which the other characters tend to find her boring and bland, frequently forgetting her name or even the fact that she is *in* a particular scene (Mapes, 2013), and so GOB not referring to her by name still makes logical sense, even when reconsidering the scene with the benefit of hindsight bias.

This sequence of events fits neatly into Emmott and Alexander's (2014) burying theory, and maps well onto their theoretical model, accounting for both foregrounding and burying working in tandem: At the pre-solution stage, attention is drawn to the red-haired woman by referring to her as 'his girlfriend'; at this point, the character of the red-haired woman has not been introduced by anyone she is not named or physically described, only identified by her relationship to GOB. This, in itself foregrounds her presence - ordinarily, important characters (such as the apparent partner of a main character) will be introduced either by the audio description or within dialogue or narrative events before or at the point of their introduction; instead, we are simply told that she is 'his girlfriend' with no further context or information about her. GOB's mention of "his religious girlfriend" comes at 19:10 and is immediately followed by the first flashback at 19:05 - an audience watching televisual media is not typically primed to question the reliability of the visual and audial modes matching one another and so the mention of '[GOB]'s religious girlfriend' primes us to expect that this is referring to the woman we immediately see on screen.

At this stage, by avoiding mentioning Ann's presence, even if viewers remember the context that there are at least three characters within the scene *and* that GOB's girlfriend is supposedly religious, the scene ends before a viewer has time to consider what that might mean for the narrative itself. With each revisit, slightly more information is revealed; in the first occurrence of the scene, it is already implied that there is an extra character (in this case, GOB's actual girlfriend, Ann), as GOB believes he is there to have a threesome, and the dialogue of 'what about you, you game?' is spoken by GOB once the red-haired woman has left; in this example, however, we are still led to believe that the red haired woman is GOB's girlfriend and that whoever he is speaking to off-camera is the third person outside of the

relationship that he is trying to convince to participate. In reality, the scene is the *opposite* situation – the woman who leaves is the individual that GOB is attempting to sleep with, whereas the 'you' on the bed is actually his girlfriend. Narratively, this misconception is reinforced using a number of Emmott and Alexander's techniques. Most generally, we see that the two women play the roles of the 'items', in the technique of placing the important item next to one of more prominence, to focus the audience on the item of false significance, thereby burying the actual item of importance.

In the first occurrence of the scene, the medium shot of the red-haired woman and GOB is shown immediately following GOB's assertion that '[his] religious girlfriend dumped [him]'. Because of this, the narrative intrinsically primes an audience to link these two shots together with the assumption that the girlfriend he is talking about is the red-haired woman; she becomes the anchor point by which an audience will try to understand and contextualise the narrative deliberately designed to mislead them into the assumption that she is GOB's girlfriend, and that whenever he mentions his "religious girlfriend", it is the red haired woman to whom he is attributing the title. Although we are still primed to expect there to be three individuals in the scene due to GOB visually turning to face Ann (who is out of shot) and asking her if "she's game", we are led to believe that the red haired woman is the girlfriend that GOB is talking about, due to her prominence in the flashback compared with his *actual* girlfriend Ann. This is reinforced by the dialogue which sees GOB use the phrase 'you guys' directed towards the red-haired woman as she leaves, which not only implies that he believes that Christians or Christian women in general are "like that", but also more directly references the multiple individuals within the scene, both of whom are Christians. In this initial audio description, there is no mention of the presence of a third person, meaning that BVI audiences must rely primarily on the dialogic mention of the third individual to frame the scene until the it is expanded upon in its second portrayal.

The second flashback, whilst less than twenty seconds long, provides extra information for a BVI audience, in that it specifically states that "[GOB] turns to someone else on the bed" following the red-haired woman storming out. Unlike the previous flashback, this revisit makes Ann's presence slightly more foregrounded as it is addressed in both the dialogic content as well as within the audio description. In both instances, a sighted audience does not actually *see* Ann in either, only the direction that GOB turns to face her on the bed. Ann is also not named in the audio description in either of the first two flashbacks in order to

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preserve the visual ambiguity experienced by a sighted audience. This fits with the conventions laid out in the Netflix guidance that advises describers to refrain from actively naming characters who are "purposefully supposed to remain unknown" (Netflix, 2019a), and Ann is not named in the audio description until first referred to by the narrator in the final revisit to the scene at 08:08.

As stated previously, the third flashback is actually a combination of *two* flashbacks – the first takes place at the furthest point from the reveal, and shows the inciting moment of GOB and Ann's relationship at the "inner beauty contest" for which GOB was a judge. Whilst we are unsure at which point during their relationship the flashback with the red haired woman takes place, it is definitively *after* the flashback to the beauty contest which occurs in the fourth episode of the season, rather than the hotel room flashbacks which are implied to take place after this event has occurred. Whilst we cannot say definitively *when* in the story the hotel flashbacks take place, they are only shown to the audience towards the end of the series, of which episode 13 is the series finale.

The audio description does not, most likely due to time constraints, distinguish between the two separate flashbacks – the first (of the contest) begins at 8:10 and ends at 08:00, with the beginning of the flashback signposted by the audio description simply stating "flashback". The spatiotemporal shift into the second flashback, however, is not explicitly stated or referenced in the audio description; at 07:59, the audio description states that "a girlfriend slaps him", without clarifying the location or the fact that it is a second, different flashback to the first. This is, however, not as restrictive as it may first seem – multiple modes reinforce the different flashbacks: most importantly, the narrator states that "GOB had been dating Ann since he awarded her third place in an inner beauty pageant", setting up the initial flashback which is reinforced by the diegetic sound of applause that plays in the background during the shots of Ann on stage and GOB at the judging table at 8:10-07:59. During this narration however, the second flashback is also alluded to in the narration which continues "since then, Ann and her friends had tried […]". By using "since then", the narration sets up that the second flashback to the hotel room will be a later occurrence, and the use of "Ann and her friends" signposts the active characters within the scene.

Ann's obfuscation can also be explained through the interplay of Short's (1996:169-172) discourse levels, which can be used to describe the exchange of information and the way in

which it is conveyed by the creators through characters and narrators, as well as the way in which an audience receives such information.

Both the second and final flashbacks are examples of a three level discourse structure:

> Addresser 1 (The Writers) —> Addressee 1 (The Audience / Us)
>
> Addresser 2 (The Narrator) —> Addressee 2 (The Audience / Us)
>
> Addresser 3 (GOB) —> Addressee 3 (Ann, her Friend)

There is some minor variation in this structure in the first instance of the flashback; when GOB is narrating the story to his brother Michael at 19:10 by stating 'my religious girlfriend just dumped me' prior the flashback occurring at 19:05, a fourth discourse level is created to include this, as GOB is implied to then be narrating a story about himself to someone else. In this case the structure would look more like this:

> Addresser 1 (The Writers) —> Addressee 1 (The Audience / Us)
>
> Addresser 2 (The Narrator) —> Addressee 2 (The Audience / Us)
>
> Addresser 3 (GOB - present) —> Addressee 3 (Michael)
>
> Addresser 4 (GOB - past) —> Addressee 4 (Ann, her friend)

In the second and third repetitions of this scene, however, GOB is not implied to be narrating, and instead, the story reverts to the first three-level structure typical of stories with a narrator. In these cases, the narrator is responsible for providing the information contained in the flashbacks to the audience, rather than the audience 'overhearing' GOB conveying the flashback to his brother. What is important to note is that in all cases up until the reveal, the identity of Addressee 3 (or 4, in the case of GOB recounting the story to Michael) is deliberately either obfuscated or unmentioned; this is an example of the way in which Short's case for dramatic irony (1996: 169) may actually be manipulated on another discourse level. By restricting information to an audience, either by leaving it unsaid, or by burying it within other narrative information, the primary addresser (the writers) can choose when to reveal a particular addresser or addressee; Short describes these overarching discourse levels as a way in which an audience may "listen in" to what the characters are saying, and that such levels

can also establish dramatic irony, in which the knowledge of characters about what occurs in the story and why is typically less than the knowledge of the writers and audience.

In this case, however, the audience does *not* have all of the information known by the creators and multiple characters (GOB, Ann and the red-haired woman). By implying that the red-haired woman is the primary addressee of GOB's message in the flashback, rather than dramatic irony, an author can instead create blind spots in the knowledge of the audience.

It is important also to note that both of the first two flashbacks occur within the same episode, the first occurring at the beginning and the second at the end; the third flashback occurs two episodes later, in the series finale. The finale flashback provides the reveal, whereas the preceding flashbacks are examples of foreshadowing events which occur before an audience has all of the information necessary to definitively be aware of the reveal.

Throughout this plotline, we see the scenes themselves, as well as the audio description building upon its previous incarnations - although the events within the audio description may be *very* similar each time (it takes place in the same hotel room, GOB getting slapped, someone leaving), the closer that the narrative gets to the actual reveal, the more explicit Ann's presence becomes before ultimately she is named, and the red-haired woman is shown to be a red herring. This supports Emmott and Alexander's description of foregrounding plot-insignificant items early in the pre-solution stage, creating false trails and snares in order to deliberately obfuscate plot-significant elements.

This foregrounding is done directly by the narrator, who states that "GOB had been dating Ann since he awarded her third place in an inner beauty pageant", immediately making Ann's presence explicit, as well as tying the reveal back to foreshadowing events associated with the inner beauty contest shown in episode 4. This piece of narration benefits BVI audiences as it follows most of the 'what, where, when, who' method of audio description mentioned in the ITC audio description guidelines. This is further evidence of the way in which non audio description tracks can bolster the comprehension of a visually impaired audience *without* the audio description track needing to restate this information.

The 'where' of the situation is excluded both in the standard narration and the audio description, most likely due to the repeating structure of the flashback; the setting of 'a hotel room' is established in the scene's first instance of audio description, then again as 'the hotel

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room' during its second run-through, implying a level of familiarity with the setting and content of each scene; similarly, by changing 'a' hotel room to 'the' hotel room, it is firmly established that it is the same hotel room as mentioned in the previous flashback – this same spatiotemporal setting is used each time, and by the third run through it is unnecessary to establish the hotel room again. Free from establishing the setting for a third time, the audio description simply identifies the scene as a flashback and allows an audience to identify the setting based on the content of repeated dialogue, the context that GOB's previous flashbacks have been to some form of this scene, and the conventional narrative track.

As well as the narrator's up-front establishment that GOB and Ann have been dating for an extended period of time, linguistically the narrator also loops back to two established turns of phrase to connect the new information back to information seen in previous versions of the flashback. The first clause of the narration is a straightforward reveal of the previously buried information, whilst the second makes reference to the snares (Ann and her friends) and other potentially buried information (the holy trinity implying three people). This allows a viewer to not only catch up with the narrative quickly, but links each of the flashbacks together through repeating linguistic information. Although the most important information is presented up-front, the second clause allows for buried information to be revisited within this newly revealed context.

This information is presented before the replaying of the flashback a final time, this time presenting all levels of the discourse structure to the audience. By placing important information in a prominent position (the narrator establishing the twist at the beginning of the scene's revisited flashback), the audience is given enough information to reevaluate the flashback, as well as its previous incarnations.

The audio description supports this narrative reveal in a number of ways: firstly, the changing of the red-haired woman from 'his girlfriend' to 'a girlfriend' and secondly, the clear establishment of Ann's presence through the use of her first name.

4.1.5.1   Conclusion

This case study is a good example of the effectiveness of burying, as well the way in which an the presence of an existing narrator outside of the audio description track can affect the

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nature of information distribution. Although *Arrested Development* itself is rapidly paced, one of the key difficulties identified by describers, the nature of the narrator (his establishment of setting and context, as well as knowledge about the characters and their motivations) requires less functional input on the part of the audio describer.

The frequency and intensity of *Arrested Development*'s narration means that there is very little free space for audio description, meaning that much of it is stripped down and laconic. In several instances, the description consists of only a single word ("GOB" and "flashback" at 19:17 in the first flashback and "flashback" again in the final revisiting of the scene); as well as this, during the final flashback at 07:58, the audio describer talks over the beginning of GOB's dialogue, evidence of the lack of viable describing space. Despite this, the audio describer manages to generate the desired effect of misdirecting the audience into anchoring their expectations of whom GOB is dating to the red-haired woman by using "his girlfriend" to tie her presence in the scene to GOB's declaration about "his religious girlfriend". In the final revisit to the scene, the describer's use of "a girlfriend" reinforces the narrator's reference to "Ann and her friends", changing the context from GOB's girlfriend to a platonic girlfriend of Ann instead. Although it may be seen as disingenuous for the audio describer to refer to the red-haired woman as "[GOB]'s girlfriend" when she is not, I would argue that this choice is made deliberately on the part of the audio describer in order to reinforce the misconception intended on the part of the creators. Ann is deliberately buried in the narrative, and so the description must also take care to reflect this, even if that means making stylistic choices that may at first seem deceptive or inaccurate.

This case study also provides a good example of the way in which audio describers may still manage to uphold intended burying even with strict temporal restrictions; this may, however, be in part due to the nature of *Arrested Development*'s dedicated narration and the way in which it frequently conforms to the functional requirements placed on audio describers to address spatiotemporal information as well as the characters involved in a scene. The more discourse levels within an audiovisual presentation, the more complex the task of accurately audio describing it seems to become: *Arrested Development* shows this in the way that it typically contains at least four separate levels of discourse as a result of having a dedicated narrator. In *Arrested Development*, this manifests mostly as a practical issue, with the narrator taking on (functionally) the same importance as dialogue and therefore being less desirable for an audio describer to talk over. In a different context, the fast-paced narration associated

with *Arrested Development* would make the series much harder to audio describe due to its lack of available instances without spoken dialogue in which to supply audio description. *Arrested Development*, however, seems to benefit greatly from its original narrator, who frequently signposts narrative elements that might otherwise have to be audio described, such as locations and temporal shifts. Unlike in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, where the narrator is also a character within the world itself who offers retrospective, often subjective, observations from an unspecified point in the future, the narrator in *Arrested Development* primarily serves the more functional role of knitting together *Arrested Development's* numerous plotlines and signaling to the viewer which features are important at which time. This is a similar function to that provided by audio describers, who generally must also modulate the attention and focus of their audience in order to help contextualise the events of a narrative.

4.1.6 The Umbrella Academy
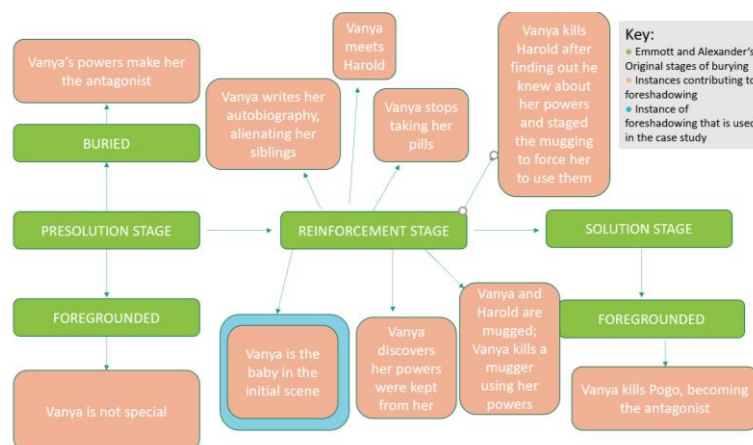
FIGURE 4-19 *THE UMBRELLA ACADEMY* CASE STUDY CONTEXT

The Umbrella Academy is based on a sequence of graphic novels of the same name and follows a group of adopted siblings born with super-powers at the same time and date, who worked as a team of superheroes during their childhood. Now adults, and no longer superheroes, as they reunite following the death of their adoptive father. Feay describes the 'occasional nods' to the comic book upon which the series is based, describing its 'overhead shots of pleasing symmetry and stylised movement' (2019). *The Umbrella Academy*'s showrunner Steve Blackman describes the television adaptation as being inspired by the director Wes Anderson's approach to "[telling] stories visually" (Ferranti, 2019) with

carefully structured cinematography and visual symbolism. The characters are based on realistic, human-like depictions of superheroes as well as a model of a dysfunctional family unit (Holmes, 2019). The author of *The Umbrella Academy*, Gerard Way, has discussed the way in which the series reflects his own experiences with "fame and notoriety and [that] the characters experience that" (Holmes, 2019), and as such much of the series' characterisation considers the impact of fame at a young age. Nelson's review of the series seems to recognise this particular source of input on the characterisation of the protagonists, stating that the characters "seem to be treated as more of an oddity, like former child stars" (2019).

The Umbrella Academy may be viewed as a companion case study to *Stranger Things* and *7 Days Out* in that it is primarily concerned with character establishment. *The Umbrella Academy* differs from the previous case studies however, in that it is concerned with burying the significance of an introduced character, rather than foregrounding it. The nature of this kind of introductory foreshadowing is more closely related to *Stranger Things* than *7 Days Out*, in that it occurs early in the narrative and concerns a character who will remain in the story for an extended period of time, unlike in *7 Days Out* which takes place within a much narrower timeframe. *The Umbrella Academy* is unique in the way that it buries the significance of the specific character that is introduced by using her introduction as a blueprint to introduce her siblings. This method is similar to the way in which *7 Days Out* uses the experiences of the point of view dogs as a shortcut to show more generally the process that *all* of the participants take part in; this is a relatively straightforward method of condensing a narrative, however *The Umbrella Academy* uses the expectations an audience has of these kinds of condensation in order to bury the significance of one individual character by way of using her introduction as a way of also introducing her siblings.

The siblings are named and described only in their 'adult' introductions – the initial flashbacks showing the characters as infants do not distinguish between them as characters, describing them only as 'the baby' or 'a baby' in the audio description. With hindsight, however, it is easy to ascertain which of the siblings is portrayed in the opening scenes. Although one birth is depicted to represent the origin story of all the characters (who were all born at the same time on the same day across the world to previously unpregnant mothers), the baby shown in the case study is specifically the character of Vanya. Vanya is deliberately raised to believe that she has no super-powers, unlike her siblings born at the same time as her. Throughout the series, Vanya shifts from being one of multiple protagonists, to the

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series' main antagonist after discovering that she is actually the most powerful sibling, but that her powers were deliberately suppressed by her adoptive father, Sir Reginald Hargreeves. Blackman describes her as being "the one with the sort of biggest road to climb because she's not only trying to navigate the real world, given her family upbringing, but she's [been] told her whole life she's not special. She's just ordinary in a family of extraordinary kids." (Ferranti, 2019). Vanya's "activating event", which pushes her character into the antagonist role, comes when she murders the family's butler, Pogo, who reveals to her that he was aware of Hargreeves' deception and of Vanya's suppressed powers.

Whilst all the siblings are given relatively equal time throughout the narrative, Vanya is often 'othered' when compared to them. As stated previously, much of her narrative arc revolves around her insecurity of not being special or super-powered when contrasted with her siblings. Although Vanya's lack of powers is later revealed to be false, throughout her childhood and into adulthood (during which the series takes place), Vanya believes herself to be ordinary and of less importance than her siblings.

Vanya's beliefs, and those displayed by others, initially help to reinforce the misconception that she is not special, helping to further bury Vanya's true significance to begin with. During the first episode of *The Umbrella Academy* one of Vanya's brothers states that Vanya is the only sibling he can trust; when Vanya asks why this is, he asserts that it is "because [she's] ordinary". Vanya herself also reinforces this belief by asking the question of "if you're raised to believe nothing about you is special, if the benchmark is extraordinary, what do you do?", reflective of feeling outshone by her super-powered siblings. These kinds of character assessments represent what Culpeper (2001:167) defines as other-presentation (explicit information provided about a character by someone else) and self-presentation (explicit information provided by the character themselves). Culpeper is quick to point out, however, that "the validity of presentation may be affected by strategic considerations" (2001:168), and that the content of the observations made through self- or other-presentation is often affected by contextual features; audiences must then attempt to assess which of these observations to discount as a result of such contexts. In this case, however, an audience's belief is initially likely to align with those of the protagonists: both Vanya and her siblings are unaware of the truth about Vanya's powers, and so have no immediate motivation to discount the information they present as it appears to be offered in good faith. Although Vanya's self-presentation reflects her insecurity (hence her being more likely to have a negative opinion of

herself), her feelings of being "ordinary" are initially more likely to be viewed as a statement about how famous and extraordinary her family is compared to her, rather than a specific foreshadowing event. Stating that something (or someone) is unimportant or insignificant has been mentioned as one of Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques, although it is a technique which cannot be easily done by an audio describer for reasons of objectivity. In the case of *The Umbrella Academy* this technique is instead used by both Vanya herself and the characters of her siblings, all of whom reinforce the idea that Vanya is mundane. Of course, with hindsight, these characterisation cues are very much affected by the kinds of strategic considerations identified by Culpeper – the characters do not believe they are being disingenuous with their observations and their choices are not necessarily motivated by particular feelings or emotions, they are simply just not aware of the information that they (and the audience) will discover later on in the narrative.

This is not the only one of Culpeper's characterisation cues that *The Umbrella Academy* utilises when portraying Vanya. Vanya's name provides two significant details that contribute to her charactersiation: firstly, in terms of what Culpeper dubs "nationality markers", which are names that "suggest nationality" (2001:230), Vanya is the only one of the siblings shown with a name of Russian or Slavic origin. Whilst we do not see the children being physically named another of the siblings, Diego, is Hispanic implying that the siblings' names are at least somewhat tied to their birthplace and background. Vanya's name is also typically a male one, contrasting with her siblings whose names generally match their gender identity and presentation. The second significant feature of Vanya's name is an example of an intertextual reference used to create a "meaningful name" similar to those of Ike and Josephine in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. In this instance, Vanya was the code name for the RDS-220 hydrogen bomb, the most powerful nuclear weapon in the world (Adamsky and Smirnov, 1994) developed by the USSR; this is reflective of Vanya's true significance and the level of her power and its destructive ability.

The transcription written for this case study is taken from the opening scenes of the first episode of *The Umbrella Academy*, and as stated previously, portrays Vanya's birth and subsequent adoption by Hargreeves.

FIGURE 4-20 SOVIET MURAL DISPLAYED BEHIND SWIMMERS

During the scene of Vanya's birth, the audio description notes first the initial visual showing women's legs under the water at a pool, and then at 59:17 reads aloud the intertitle 'RUSSIA. OCTOBER 1, 1989'. At this point, the visual choices made on the part of the describer become more apparent: at 59:11, the camera pans up to show the women's torsos, with a large Soviet mural depicting Lenin in the background behind them (Figure 4.20). The mural disappears briefly during another panning shot back under the water, but is shown again in a wide angle shot at 59:04. Elements in a scene such as this mural, are an example of visual cultural references, designed to attach a narrative or setting to the 'heart of a particular society and a particular culture' (Ripoll, 2005:75). Consistently, however, throughout the scene, the audio describer does not address such features, choosing instead to focus on the individual characters within the scene, as well as the movements of the women in the pool. Some of this description seems tautological: the audio description at 59:12 refers to the women "performing water aerobics", then at 59:06 repeats this idea by stating that "the swimmers move in synchronised movements", despite no obvious visual changes to the swimming women's behaviour requiring this to be restated. In this case, the audio description neglects any of the visual cultural references that are not explicitly required, such as the intertitle displaying the spatiotemporal setting of the scene which identifies that it takes place in Russia in 1989.

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FIGURE 4-21 SOVIET FLAG FOREGROUNDED AGAINST BLUE TILES

This audio description continues to avoid mentioning such cultural references even when they are present in multiple forms, such as at 58:59 when the shot changes to show the parents of the baby, with the flag of the USSR displayed behind them (Figure 4.21). Visually the flag is foregrounded as a large block of red designed to contrast with the blues and yellows in the scene, but it again remains unmentioned by the audio describer. There is some attempt made on the part of the describer to represent visual atmospheric features, such as describing the swimming pool as "dimly lit" at 59:12, or referencing the "bright yellow swimsuit" worn by the teenage girl at 59:01. As well this as some effort is taken to emulate the symmetry of the scene, the ground-work of which is laid by stating that the teenagers are 'sitting on two separate benches' which is followed with a description of a woman who "bends over between them", meaning that the teenagers must look at each other "around the woman's bottom". Whilst this seems to show at least some understanding for the kinds of distinctive filmic conventions used throughout *The Umbrella Academy* as a means of telling "visual stories" using distinctive cinematography, the foregrounded visuals pertaining to the Soviet Union are entirely neglected, despite their prominence.

The initial scene taking place in the pool lasts for 2 minutes and 30 seconds and out of this, a total of 38 seconds exists in which either the mural seen in Figure 4.20 or the flag seen in Figure 4.21 can be seen *fully* in the shot (not mostly obscured such as at 57:35-57:32 in which the mural can be seen partially behind the heads of those gathered around the teenage girl.) This represents almost a quarter of this initial sequence in which any references to the visual cultural iconography associated with the USSR are entirely omitted.

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When discussing cultural references, complete omission is named as a technique for dealing with such elements in a narrative by a number of academics including Pedersen (2009), Gottlieb (2009) and Matamala and Rami (2009). Bardini goes as far as to state that omission is the most 'extreme form of reduction', with the implication that it exists as a necessary evil when it comes to the temporal constraints afforded by audio description (2020). In this case, however, I would argue that there is less temporal motivation to omit such details outright, particularly when they are shown in multiple forms (both the flag and the mural), as well as multiple times (the mural being seen in two shots behind the women in the pool, as well as from the same angle later on in the scene). Details such as the flag and mural are described as a 'culturally marked' examples of emblems and insignia – this category of cultural reference helps an audience to contextualise a piece whilst lending the narrative a degree of authenticity to its setting (Maszerowska and Mangiron, 2014:164). Without it, a BVI audience must instead rely entirely on the spatiotemporal information provided by the intertitle 'RUSSIA. OCTOBER 1 1989' and the untranslated Russian dialogue in order to contextualise the setting within the former USSR. Not only will an audience require the knowledge that the USSR existed until 1991, but this is further obfuscated by the title reading 'Russia', the unofficial name for the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Without any verbal references to the Soviet Union specifically, either in the audio description track or the spoken dialogue, a BVI audience will most likely miss such kinds of cultural references, particularly if they do not know much about the history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

As well as allowing an audience to make the inference that the baby seen at the beginning of the series is Vanya, the symbolism associated with the USSR may also be tied to Vanya's character development more abstractly. Caicoya (2019) speculates that both the time and place of Vanya's birth are intended to be deliberate – it is notable as taking place during the same month as the fall of the Berlin wall, and the subsequent rapid dissolution of the USSR. Elements in the scene such as the mural of Lenin are reflective of the very early glory years of the USSR rather than the scene's setting in the late 1980s. This is mentioned again by Caicoya who believes that the choice of iconography is reflective of the idea that the USSR's power had essentially waned to the point of being "done forever" (2019) and that after the end of the Cold War, Russia returned to being an ordinary country rather than the superpower it had been during the Soviet regime. The ADLAB guidance describes this kind of symbolism as one of the functional elements of filmic language (2015:29), and urges describers to

consider whether such information can be implied from other events, or if they should outline the full meaning and scope of the symbolic features (2015:34). In this case, the describer has chosen the technique of full omission of the visual cultural symbolism associated with the USSR; this would perhaps be more understandable were the narrative fast paced or complicated to describe across, but we see the describer pay a great deal of attention to the purely aesthetic features of the scene, such as the women in the pool, who are described on three separate occasions: 59:22-59:19, 59:12-59:08 and again at 59:06-59:01. Whilst the women do play a somewhat functional role (with Vanya's mother interrupting their aerobics to give birth to her), their denotative role (which shows the most important features required for an audience to understand a narrative) is relatively minor when contrasted with the amount of time dedicated to audio describing them, this is not to say the women have no symbolic role, their synchronised movements when compared with the cannonball done by Vanya's mother at 58:24 may be reflective again of Vanya's otherness when contrasted with her siblings, who appear to work well together during their term as superheroes.

As stated previously, Vanya is not the only protagonist in *The Umbrella Academy.* It is, however her alienation from, and insecurity pertaining to, her siblings which provides a great deal of the motivation behind the way in which events occur within the wider narrative. In the contemporary setting, in which the siblings are adults and no longer superheroes, Vanya is resented by her siblings for writing a negative memoir inspired by her childhood as the only sibling at the academy without super-powers. This divide increases through much of the series with Vanya discovering her powers were deliberately suppressed, leading to further resentment towards her family. It is the unleashing of these previously unknown powers that forms the backbone of the narrative's 'reveal' and the main obstacle to overcome for the other siblings as they attempt to stop her powers from destroying the world.

Following the scenes of Vanya's birth in the swimming pool, the audience is provided with a short piece of narration overlying a high-angle shot of her mother surrounded by other swimmers as Vanya is passed across to her. This narration begins at 57:14 and lasts until 57:04 before the scene cuts to show a futuristic vehicle moving through Red Square in Moscow at 57:03. There is a brief gap in the narration from 57:04 to 57:02 which the describer uses to reference "an aircraft [jetting] across Moscow", which begins during the swimming pool scene at 57:04, slightly before the long shot of Moscow is actually shown. This reference provides another reference to the Russian setting of the flashback, but does not

actually provide any further information beyond highlighting that someone (in this case Hargreeves) is visiting the USSR directly as a result of the birth scene shown immediately before it. The audio description fits neatly into the two halves of the spoken narration, which occur firstly at the swimming pool from 57:17-57:05, then at 57:03-56:55 during the long shot of the city and the medium shot of Hargreeves walking towards Vanya's mother at 57:00.

The benefits and drawbacks of an existing narrator are discussed in both *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *Arrested Development*, and as such do not require as much consideration in this instance; what makes *The Umbrella Academy*'s narrator different is that he is not a consistent element. As in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the narrator-figure shown in *The Umbrella Academy* is a character within the world of the story, rather than a disembodied voice as is the case in *Arrested Development*. Unlike in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, however, at no point is a visual representation of the narrator actually *narrating* the story shown; where *A Series of Unfortunate Events* contains a number of asides in which Lemony Snicket (portrayed by the actor Patrick Warburton) directly addresses the audience regarding the narrative, the narrator in the case study for *The Umbrella Academy* is a character who acts primarily as a character, rather than a narrator.

In contrast to the previously mentioned case studies, which have consistent narration throughout both series in their entirety, the narration for *The Umbrella Academy* appears only during this initial introductory sequence at the beginning of the first episode, At this point, an audience has no frame of reference for the series, and so does not know whether or not the narration will remain a regular feature and therefore, it does not necessarily seem significant or important at the time. It is only upon rewatching the series with the knowledge that the series *does not* typically have a narrator that an audience will begin to question its inclusion.

The voice is not attributed to the character of Pogo, who is the butler killed by Vanya after discovering he knew the truth about her powers and helped to hide them from her; this lack of attribution also reflected in the subtitles of the series which name the voice only as "narrator" at 57:16, possibly reflective of the advice provided by Netflix to avoid using the names of characters that are deliberately supposed to remain unknown (Netflix, 2019a). As this is the opening scene of the series and Pogo is not seen or referenced until 43:51, almost 14 minutes after his spoken narration track, to name him specifically as the disembodied narrator may be

unnecessarily confusing. Pogo's narration is taken from an ambiguous, unknown point in time; it cannot be retroactive like *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, but it also cannot exist outside of the implications of character like *Arrested Development* due to Pogo's death at the end of the first series, as well as his active involvement in the story as a character.

Although Pogo's narration is not consistent in the sense of *Arrested Development* or *A Series of Unfortunate Events,* it is used to establish the context that frames Vanya's birth as a blueprint for the births of *all* of the siblings. At 57:17, Pogo states that "On the 12th hour of the first day of October 1989, 43 women from around the world gave birth." This is the initial statement that assists with the burying of Vanya's significance: by highlighting that 43 other instances took place at the same time as the flashback, an audience is unlikely to see Vanya's birth as any more significant than the births of her siblings beyond its unusual nature in that "none of [the] women [who gave birth] had been pregnant when the day first began". Similarly, the second half of this narration beginning at 57:03 identifies the character of "Sir Reginald Hargreeves, eccentric billionaire and adventurer [who] resolved to locate and adopt as many of the children as possible" prior to his visual introduction at 56:58. This shifts the focus from the characters seen in the pool flashback to the character of Hargreeves, who is the first character to actively be named by both the dialogue at 57:03 and the audio description at 56:43, which refers to him by his surname "Hargreeves". In this sense, this information acts as a way of distracting the reader by moving their focalisation from the unnamed (and therefore less salient) characters including that of the baby Vanya towards the character of Reginald Hargreeves.

FIGURE 4-22 VANYA'S MOTHER HOLDS HER AS A BABY

Whilst Hargreeves is named, Vanya is only referred to in the audio description as 'the baby' at 56:44 or 'her baby' at 56:50 (when referring to Vanya's mother) and in the dialogue by Hargreeves only as 'it' at 56:47 when he asks Vanya's mother 'how much [she wants] for it'. This technique of omitting the names of certain characters is similar to the reasoning discussed about the character of Pogo; ultimately it is not necessary to know the identities of these characters at this point. In this scene however, we see more features that may help to tie the baby shown in Figure 4.22 to the character of Vanya. Firstly, we are given another visual cultural reference to her Russian origin in the form of the Eastern European style pattern of the tablecloth shown to the left of the shot of Vanya's mother, further emphasising older Soviet aesthetics such as those seen in the mural and the flag in the swimming pool flashbacks. Secondly, the baby is shown wearing a pink hat and a sleepsuit with pink flourishes, potentially signalling that the baby is female and therefore most likely not one of Vanya's brothers; she is also unlikely to be identified as Vanya's only sister Alison, who is not ethnically white, unlike the baby shown in Figure 4.22.

Unlike in *Arrested Development*, however, where Ann is eventually revealed explicitly to be the previously unnamed character, at no point in the series does *The Umbrella Academy* revisit either of these particular scenes, meaning that the significance of the initial baby shown, and the identity of the narrator, will most likely only be noticed by the kinds of sentimental readers discussed by Bae et al upon rewatching these scenes with further context. Sentimental readers may also remember the initial Soviet setting and link it to Vanya's name,

or recognise Pogo's voice during his introductory dialogue, but the splitting up of the information required to assign significance to the events and these earlier flashbacks mean that most likely, this information will only be realised with the benefit of hindsight bias amongst individuals who are rewatching the series with *all* of the narrative information at their disposal.

For BVI audiences, however, this chance to tie Vanya to the setting of the initial flashback is diminished somewhat. A BVI audience will have three reference points relating to the understanding that Vanya is the baby shown at the beginning of the flashback: firstly, the initial reading of the title card stating the location as 'Russia'; secondly, the dialogic audio track which features the women at the pool speaking in Russian and finally, the audio description at 57:04 which references the geographical location as "Moscow". By comparison, a sighted audience receives several extra cues relating the scenes and Vanya's presence to the *USSR* specifically, rather than just Russia. This means that functionally, a BVI audience will still be able to realise that the baby is Vanya but without mentions of the cultural references and iconography they will miss out on the more symbolic elements in the scene designed to associate Vanya with the USSR.

4.1.6.1 Conclusion

The Umbrella Academy's audio description represents, I believe, a missed opportunity on the part of the describer. The lack of attention given to culturally significant iconography creates a vastly different perception of the visual content of the flashbacks, leaving BVI audiences to make such inferences themselves based on their existing knowledge of Russian history.

To me, this highlights one of the difficulties faced by audio describers; whilst the omission of such cultural iconography is accepted as a means of condensing audio description tracks, the prevalence of these visual references throughout the scenes means that a describer should be able to see that they are significant in some way, even if their direct symbolism may be ambiguous.

While describers will not all have the same degree of knowledge (whether it is about the history of the USSR as seen in *The Umbrella Academy*, or the knowledge of the intertextual references behind Billy's outfit in *Stranger Things*) it is important to be able to recognize that

regardless of a personal familiarity with a subject, these features may still be significant. Even without this knowledge, it is still possible to identify the significance of certain visuals based on features such as the duration of a visual shot or shots of the item or how prominent they are visually, such as in the foregrounding of the red flag against the blue tiles of the swimming pool.

Vanya's characterisation and her development from an insecure, ordinary woman who believes herself to have no super-powers, to the series antagonist who is the most powerful of *all* of the siblings motivates much of the dramatic content of *The Umbrella Academy.* In order to portray this development effectively, Vanya must be initially strongly characterized as being mundane so that the development and reveal of her powers becomes more impactful.

By using the same technique as *7 Days Out*, using Vanya's experiences as a shortcut to represent the experiences of others, not only does *The Umbrella Academy* successfully achieve this aim (thereby not having to show *all* of the siblings individual births), but uses the audience's expectations of such kinds of cinematic techniques to reduce the salience of the individual baby. In this case, Vanya's significance is only likely to be noticed upon rewatching the series, with the full contextual knowledge that is required to understand that she is *not* a normal person as conveyed in the earlier episodes of the series from which this case study is taken.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Fulfillment of Research Questions

The research questions pertaining to this study mostly focused on the current status of audio description and how it accounts for instances of visual foreshadowing. . The original research questions are revisited and reconsidered in this section, with a summary addressing the successes and difficulties with each question individually. A number of the questions pertained specifically to individual case studies and as I feel there is less to summarise, these questions will be collated into a single subheading addressing the case study specific questions, with the questions themselves reiterated in the text of section 5.1.2.

5.1.1 Current audio description guidelines' approach to foreshadowing

Currently audio description guidance does not typically consider foreshadowing or make reference to the way in which it may effect audio description or narratives more generally. Whilst there has in recent years been more academic interest in audio description and the areas in which it intersects with linguistics, corporate audio description services do not have the same level of reciprocal interest. The initial ITC guidelines from the 1990s have the length of the ADLAB project in terms of direct examples and suggestions for describers, but is more similar to Netflix's guidance in that it has very little quantative or qualitative sources to back up the choices made and enforced.

Whilst Netflix's guidance is frequently referred to as a 'style guide', the elements of style with which it concerns itself are decidedly sparse; the title of style guide appears to be to distinguish it from technical information, rather than a true commitment to the ideas projected by stylistics as a discipline. Whilst credit must be given to this guidance for its inclusion of the *term* 'foreshadowing', it provided relatively little in the way of actual stylistic guidance. Audio Description providers, as well as those involved in the process of its creation, should draw on the research undertaken as part of projects such as ADLAB, which provide concise, example-filled discussion of such stylistic features, and would be of great benefit to those creating audio description tracks even whilst working within the specific frameworks required by companies such as Netflix.

5.1.2 Case Study Specific Research Questions

This section addresses three individual research questions that pertain to the specifics of individual case studies. It did not feel necessary to resummarise what are essentially plot points and so more generalised assessment is provided here. The questions addressed are:

- What is being foreshadowed in each of the case studies?
- At which point within the narrative model does the foreshadowing take place?
- Are other instances of event foreshadowing outside of the examples identified in the case studies? (occurring either before or after the transcribed data)

This section deals with the question of what is being foreshadowed in each case study, as well as any other instances of foreshadowing events in individual narratives; although the phrasing of the question of Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques addresses individual case studies, I feel it is more appropriate to address this question independently in section 5.1.3. The answers to these research questions came, surprisingly, from entirely non-academic sources; whilst more theoretical questions benefitted the most from academic research, researching timelines of events within telecinematic media is very much the weelhouse of the kinds of sentimental readers discussed by Bae et al (2013). This research question was greatly assisted by the kinds of fan-driven discussion spoken about in Section 5.3.2, which considers the contribution that such sources can make to academic research pertaining to contemporary televisual narratives. The fan-developed app '*Previously, on Arrested Development'* (NPR, 2013) provides direct references to *Arrested Development*'s frequent callbacks and call-forwards, dividing them not only by the content of the callbacks themselves but also chronologically by the episodes in which they appear; similarly, a timeline showing the events of *The Umbrella Academy* was uploaded by a user to the social media website *Reddit*, identifying at which point each significant event occurs. These sources also helped with the third research question which was concerned with other foreshadowing events within the same narrative; Identifying whereabouts a foreshadowing event occurs in a wider narrative would have taken much longer, were it not for the dedication of non-academic fans choosing to research and collate such information, as it would have required a full viewing of each series or film with the requirement of noticing all these specific events.

5.1.3   Burying Strategies used in the case study data

This section addresses the question of whether the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander are seen in the case study data. This research question also contained a number of sub-questions:

- o   If burying strategies *are* used, which are most frequently employed?
- o   What are the circumstances in which burying strategies are utilised?
- o   Is their use dependent on proximity to the narrative reveal?

In the case studies, a number represented instances in which burying was present including

The Discovery, *A Series of Unfortunate Events, Arrested Development* and *The Umbrella*

Academy. The differences in this burying became evident through the adapted framework designed to identify previous or subsequent instances of foreshadowing associated with the case studies, namely, the amount of time required to successfully embed buried information. With each of these instances, even if the case study itself contained fewer of Emmott and Alexander's strategies, their primary success seems to come from their fifth: 'make it difficult for the reader to make inferences by splitting up information needed to make inferences' (Emmott and Alexander, 2014). This is most obviously seen in *Arrested Development*, however in all of these case studies, multiple different foreshadowing events are spread throughout a number of hours of telecinematic media. This benefitted narratives such as *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, which relied heavily on the previous foreshadowing events and meant that the specific foreshadowing shown in the case study was not necessarily essential for the foreshadowing to still be effective. *Arrested Development* also used this multiple episode span in order to make it more difficult for viewers to infer meaning not only through the large gaps between the foreshadowing events, but also through the rapid pace of its narrative which typically does not allow for viewers to fully reflect upon a scene on first view. The existing audience perception of the Ann character as bland and forgettable also lends itself to the plotline, with her characterisation almost always hinging upon Emmott and Alexander's technique of having other characters directly state that the item (in this case, Ann) is uninteresting and insignificant, priming an audience to expect the same. *The Umbrella Academy* used the same technique to characterise Vanya as unimportant and powerless by having her siblings express these ideas directly; as well as this, the manner by which she is introduced as a 'template' to introduce *all* of the siblings

however the audio description itself failed to mention cultural features such as the distinctly Soviet visuals that may have tied Vanya's characterisation more closely with the weapon for which she was named, as well as the 'otherness' that contrasts with the series' contemporary (although alternate) United States setting.

Analysis of the case study data revealed that some of Emmott and Alexander's techniques that were also utilised on a micro scale within the case studies and their audio description. Both *The Discovery* and *Arrested Development* were evidence of this smaller scale and both made use of stressing specific aspects of information by way of foregrounding some different feature. In *The Discovery* this was seen most prominently in the way in which surrounding audio description information added lexical features like adjectives and adverbs to the *less* important aspects of the scene in which the characters are looking at Pat's tattoo. *Arrested Development* instead relied heavily on foregrounding the red haired woman at the expense of Ann by using ambiguous language, such as changing the possessive '*his* girlfriend' into '*a* girlfriend' in later instances of the scene. Although *The Umbrella Academy'*s dialogue functions in a similar manner by not naming Vanya, only referring to her as 'a baby' or '[her mother's] baby', there is no ultimate reveal like the one seen in *Arrested Development.*

It was ultimately difficult to assess whether or not burying strategies changed based on their proximity to a reveal due to the nature of this thesis focusing only on individual case studies, rather than each foreshadowing event. Whilst this is addressed in Section 5.4.2, it is worth stating that such this research question would be better suited to the kind of research which might focus on a narrative as a whole, transcribing and analysing each of the foreshadowing events alluded to by my overview diagrams, rather than simply transcribing one instance out of many.

Generally speaking, burying as a technique is deployed as a means of obfuscating information, which works well for narratives in which preserving some degree of mystery is required; similarly narratives which encourage viewers to rewatch and notice more information on a later vieweing such as *Arrested Development* benefit from burying such items in order to allow them to be enjoyed on a subsequent viewing of the series. I believe that burying is frequently the most salient kind of foreshadowing, despite the obvious irony of the statement, it is twist endings or reveals that prove to be the most memorable plot points

to individuals discussing the topic. It is rare for an audience to remember something that was predictable and unsurprising unless it was set up to *seem* like it should have been so. In the following section however, I will discuss the case studies that provide instances of foreshadowing which rely specifically on foregrounding in order to telegraph future events and discuss the way in which this differs from the case studies relying upon Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques.

5.1.4   Foreshadowing by way of Foregrounding

Whilst the initial research questions were concerned with viewing the case studies as part of a larger narrative and the fourth question related specifically to Emmott and Alexander's (2015) burying techniques the fifth research question considers whether an absence of burying may allow foregrounding to operate in a similar manner. The primary difficulty encountered with this research question was in attempting to discuss non-buried examples of foreshadowing (such as in *Stranger Things* or *7 Days Out*), which did not map well onto the initial diagram adapted from Emmott and Alexander. Arguably, *7 Days Out* manages to achieve some level of false foregrounding prior to the case study, so manages to fit into Emmott and Alexander's diagram, however this burying appears to be more of the result of how audiences align to the points of view presented to them in a story, than a deliberate attempt on the part of the creator. Emmott and Alexander's diagrammatic version of their burying techniques includes a specific reference to a foregrounded item at the same time as the buried one. This in itself complicated the use of the diagram, as we did not see false significance foregrounded in all of the case studies, meaning that this aspect of the diagram could be confusing when attempting to account for instances of foreshadowing.

This section is primarily concerned with *7 Days Out* and *Stranger Things,* both of which require the use of foregrounding to convey future events. Each of these case studies have different reasons behind their foregrounding as well as different methods by which this is executed. *Stranger Things'*s audio description focuses on the meanings behind both direct intertextual references (such as Billy's physical appearance being a homage to *The Outsiders*)

and cinematic features (such as camera angles), neatly avoiding excluding audiences who may not understand the intent behind the inclusion of such features, but without losing them entirely. As well as this, the audio description makes multiple references to otherwise subjective features such as attractiveness, which would usually be discouraged other than when it is specifically relevant to the plot; Billy's physical description is reinforced with multiple adjectives, increasing the salience of such features. The *Stranger Things* case study acts as an introduction to the character of Billy, and as such, makes this moment as impactful as possible in order to effectively signpost the importance of his character.

In *7 Days Out* the character of Flynn is also required to be foregrounded by means of his introduction; unlike *Stranger Things, 7 Days Out* represents a much more restrictive field in which the audio describer can work. In *7 Days Out*, there is only around 15 minutes between Flynn's introduction and the end of the entire episode (which is not serialised as with something like *Stranger Things*). In this sense, the audio description was required to be much more functional, without the luxury of time in which to describe the significant features. Primarily *7 Days Out* signposts this significance through the use of names, and by merit of the fact that only the 'main' dogs have, up until this point, been given a name either in the original narration, or within the audio description. This name is then reinforced through dialogue, intertitles, audio description and existing narration.

Generally speaking, the research questions outlined in Section 1.4 were answered through this research; although some proved more complicated to answer than others, this complexity was often indicative of the further research required within this field. Further suggestions and comments are made about the results and findings of this thesis in the following sections.

5.2 Challenges and Limitations

Throughout this research, several challenges and difficulties made themselves apparent; these were primarily methodological in nature and surround both Netflix as a data source and the difficulty with choosing which examples to use for case studies.

Despite the benefits of using Netflix as a source for the case studies as outlined in section 1.3, this choice was not without its issues. Netflix was a useful source of data due to its stable collection of "Netflix originals" which provided a greater degree of replicability and falsifiability in terms of accessing both the original audio visual content and audio description tracks when compared to other audio described services. This meant that not only is the raw data more accessible, but also that all of the case studies were consistently linked to one another through the Netflix style guide which is designed to preserve consistency between all of Netflix's audio described programming. There were, however, a number of issues that became apparent whilst transcribing and writing the case studies, primarily the issue of timings: firstly, Netflix's user interface displays the time *remaining* of a program, rather than the time elapsed, meaning that when transcribing, the X axis displaying the numerical data appears to move backwards; the technical data which displays the playback statistics (including both time elapsed and remaining) may appear occasionally as a glitch on certain games consoles or smart televisions, however this is usually displayed unintentionally and is therefore not an especially useful method of attempting to accurately display timings.

As well as this, at various points during this PhD, Netflix intentionally made it more difficult to take either screen-captures or recordings by using Digital Rights Management (DRM), a type of software designed to "protect copyrighted material from piracy" (Netflix Help Centre, 2020). Whilst this is an understandable goal, and one that is often legally required by studios when licensing content for streaming purposes (Sivonen, 2013), it had two unfortunate knock-on effects on this thesis, which would also impact further researchers interested in using Netflix as source material. Firstly, the software made it difficult to get high quality screen captures of the case studies with which to illustrate visual features, as the process was complicated vastly without the ability to simply use the screenshot options offered by typical screen capture methods. We can see this difference in the sequential screenshots used in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 which were taken prior to the restrictions, and which display cinematic features of the camera's movement unlike the screen captures used in the other case study figures. Ironically this may be seen as representative of the difficulty faced by audio describers who must render these kinds of cinematic language into spoken description, however it made observations about any direct movement difficult to effectively illustrate within the thesis. The second difficulty created as a direct result of Netflix's copyright protection software is that the multimodal transcription had to be taken from the original Netflix player, rather than being able to simply snip the video for the individual case studies and use the timings from such captures. This meant that timing data could only easily be provided by Netflix and an internet connection was required to access it.

Timings provided by Netflix, unless shown in the previously mentioned glitched display, do not include milliseconds and are only shown as hours, minutes and seconds which sometimes proved difficult to utilize when trying to identify exactly at which points modes overlapped such as in *7 Days Out*. Although this did not detract too much from most of the case studies in this thesis, it is something to remain mindful of when attempting to transcribe multimodal

narratives, particularly if strict temporal accuracy is something a study requires as methods of even attaining such accurate information are complicated at best. Despite this, Netflix proved sufficient for this thesis, for which I feel that the codified nature of Netflix's audio description standards across each of the case studies outweighed the difficulties encountered with Netflix's DRM software.

Even though Netflix's codified style guide provides some degree of homogeneity between the case studies, the limits to only titles covered by the Netflix Originals banner made it much more difficult to source definitive examples of foreshadowing due to the quite literal restriction of not having enough time to watch *all* of the programming in order to ascertain which programming contained such examples. As well as this, when then attempting to make judgements about the *meaning* of such foreshadowing events, I was met with difficulty in finding sufficiently robust sources to talk about the programming itself; instead, this thesis had to utilize a mixture of both academic and non-academic content about the specific films or shows; this was easy for a successful show such as *Stranger Things* which resulted in both academic *and* non-academic analysis*,* but much more difficult for a film such as *The Discovery* which was not especially well received, or particularly well known. The benefits and difficulties of using such sources is written about in Section 5.3.3

5.3 Implications of this Research

The originality in this thesis lies primarily in its contribution to the topic of foreshadowing in audio description as well as laying the groundwork for further research into some of the specific difficulties or unique qualities that come with attempting to deploy narrative devices such as foreshadowing within the context of audio description Whilst there is a great deal of contemporary research into audio description, none of this directly considers the conveyance of foreshadowing and the techniques by which a describer might represent such narrative devices, and so has previously remained unresearched.

Similarly, whilst there is some research into the mechanisms of foreshadowing, such as Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques, or Tobin's work on surprise endings, many of these relate to particularly salient examples of foreshadowing rather than functional foreshadowing seen in case studies such as *7 Days Out*. This research is also not designed to talk about audio description specifically, and so a number of the techniques discussed are taken from the perspective of an author or creator, rather than an audio describer who must act in a supplemental role rather than having any control over the original presentation.

In the following sections, I will discuss the implications of this research and its contributions towards the primary areas in which it is concerned: linguistics and audio description.

5.3.1 Foreshadowing as a Narrative Mechanism

The core framework around which this research initially built itself was both Bae et al's mapping of sentimental readers' approach to foreshadowing and the burying strategies developed by Emmott and Alexander outlined in section 2.4. Bae et al's main contribution to this work came in the form of specific terminology used to discuss "foreshadowing events" "foreshadowed events" and the "activating event", all of which remained generally stable regardless of whether the foreshadowing itself was buried or foregrounded. This terminology helped ensure that each case study could be discussed using consistent language surrounding its features relating to foreshadowing. Bae et al's discussion about sentimental audiences also allowed for the consideration of the way that different viewers may approach narrative features such as foreshadowing, and the way in which an author must modulate when and how foreshadowing events occur in order to account for such differences. Whilst unexplored in this thesis, these sentimental readers operate in a similar sense to the idea of 'real readers' discussed by Hall, in that no individual will being the same perspective or context to a particular text and its content (2009).

By comparison, Emmott and Alexander's burying strategies played a much grander role in their contribution to this thesis. As seems obvious, Emmott and Alexander's burying strategies worked well for talking about the case studies which specifically used burying as a means of foreshadowing. As this research began to move away from strictly thinking about more salient forms of foreshadowing such as puzzle solving or rug-pullers, it began to consider that *foregrounding* might also play a role in the kinds of mechanisms associated with foreshadowing.

Rather than attempting to find a sufficiently similar model to explain foregrounding strategies, for the purposes of simplicity, this research chose to consider foregrounded case studies in a relatively novel way, by reversing Emmott and Alexander's burying strategies. This was preferable due to the focus of Emmott and Alexander's work being closely tied with the kinds of narratives specifically expected to be associated with foreshadowing, and so by reversing their guidance, one is hypothetically given a method by which one may instead foreground such significance in order to achieve *some kind* of foreshadowing. This reversal also allowed for the discussion of foreshadowing whilst still preserving the same theoretical framework across each of the case studies. Although there is potential benefit to future research focused specifically on these kinds of foreshadowing with a framework focused exclusively around foregrounding, for the purposes of this research, much of the existing work pertaining to foreshadowing specifically related to buried examples.

As discussed in section 3.4, not all of Emmott and Alexander's techniques may be utilized directly by describers as a result of the unique, supplemental nature of an audio description

track; certain techniques are written from the perspective of an author or a creator of the initial target text, and represent methods either outside of a describer's purview with regards to the script (such as having a character state that an item is unimportant) or outside of the conventions associated with the objectivity to which describers are held (such as the *describer* stating that the item is unimportant). It was heartening whilst writing this thesis, to see that many of the narratives did contain multiple foreshadowing events which may be accessed by a BVI audience in both conventional dialogue and those case studies which contained a narrator. Even if this meant that the actual stylistic content of the transcribed audio description segments was comparatively small, the prior or proceeding foreshadowing events which followed the case studies generally allowed for the potential to access such foreshadowing events at multiple times. In case studies that contained multiple examples of foreshadowing, such as *Arrested Development*, often a number of Emmott and Alexander's techniques were used across multiple foreshadowing events, and as a result, required less effort on the part of the describer to bury these items themselves. Both *Arrested Development* and *7 Days Out*, although representative of both different methods of and motivations for foreshadowing show the difficulties associated with attempting to stylistically analyse just the audio description content for especially fast paced narratives – as a result, these case studies then became focused on the way in which the existing narrative conveys these foreshadowing events and the supportive role that audio description plays, as well as drawing attention to the restrictiveness of the limits placed upon describers. This kind of discussion was particularly difficult in case studies such as *A Series of Unfortunate Events* in which the single instance of visual foreshadowing provided no especially enlightening commentary about the audio description itself.

That is not to say that this foreshadowing was not successfully executed, rather that it was so well supported across the other audial modes, that there was very little required on the part of an audio describer to successfully execute the foreshadowing event represented by the banana peel. This in itself may prove useful when considering guidance for audio describers – the consideration of which foreshadowing events have previously or have yet to be shown to an audience can affect the amount of reliance placed upon the audio describer themselves to describe such features.

The audio description for *The Umbrella Academy* represents, to me, the least successful execution of foreshadowing. Unlike *Arrested Development* and *7 Days Out* which are limited by the pace of their existing narratives and the amount of dialogue that a describer must avoid speaking over, or *A Series of Unfortunate Events* which contains enough existing foreshadowing events to make the singular visual example less crucial, *The Umbrella Academy* represents an instance of only semi-successful foreshadowing that could benefit from greater consideration on the part of the describer. *The Umbrella Academy* entirely ignores significant elements of the scene crucial to later identifying the identity of the child, as well as the symbolism associated with her characterisation; *The Umbrella Academy* has, compared with almost all of the other case studies, a great deal of space in which an audio

describer may operate – and might benefit from more thought as to the reasoning behind its inclusion of certain foreshadowing events and symbolic visual features.

5.3.2 Challenges of Researching Contemporary Televisual Narratives

This thesis owes a great deal to the kinds of sentimental readers discussed by Bae et al., and it would do them a disservice to neglect their impact on this work. Whilst these readers are not necessarily writing academic articles about their findings, they proved invaluable to identifying examples I myself had missed – a testament to well executed foreshadowing, that even without access to every individual reference point, the narratives still achieved the desired effects. Sentimental readers are the kinds of people who will upload long lists of intertextual references to the internet for the joy of sharing and discussing such knowledge with others – whilst the language used refers to 'easter eggs' or 'things you might have missed', we see frequently that these identified moments are often simply pop-culture terminology used to discuss stylistic devices like intertextuality, foregrounding, or burying. It was difficult not to utilise lists and articles such as this, as to do so would have been to miss out on a large portion of what makes foreshadowing so difficult to describe effectively – Matt Hills discusses the differences in the fandom approach to a text compared to an academic reading of a text stating that where fandom had a tendency to approach a series 'intratextually, in relation to [the series] itself and its own histories' (2010:4), academics tended to approach the same series with an intertextual mindset, via 'specific theoretical frameworks' (ibid). When discussing foreshadowing, it became important to appreciate the intratextual perspective as frequently it is these intratextual features that are utilised in order to generate foreshadowing successfully – this was obvious when it came to considering longer-form foreshadowing, such as the character foreshadowing seen in *Stranger Things* which requires intratextual knowledge from over twelve hours worth of narrative, a daunting level of multimodal analysis to undertake from an academic perspective, but less so when you have multiple amateur stylisticians weighing in on the same topic. Of course, it is important to note that crediting such discussion is not necessarily stating that it has the same merit or academic weight as peer reviewed references – ideally, academic papers *written* by such kinds of sentimental readers provide the ideal source, but often when it comes to looking for specific examples (ie, the specific films and shows discussed in this thesis), unless the show is well established already there is unlikely to be the motivation for much academic

assessment. Fandom is not limited by the same temporal, fiscal or academic constraints –
after, and sometimes during, a broadcast sentimental fans will immediately begin to analyse
features in much the same way that this thesis has attempted to do.

I think, therefore, it is important to utilise such fan-fronted discussion when it comes to
specific individual examples, however this discussion must be followed up with legitimate
frameworks in order to ensure such observations are not simply subjective. This may be
either by visually confirming the existence of the feature the piece references (such as
watching the referenced episode to see the character in *Stranger Things* wearing a Cobra Kai
outfit), or by considering other pieces of evidence to which may support certain opinions or
observations and bolster their validity (such as the iconography of the Soviet Union being
foregrounded as part of a larger metaphor in *The Umbrella Academy*) – this may also be
reinforced through multiple, cross-referenced articles discussing the phenomenon in question.

It is important for academics utilising sources such as this to recognise that their content may
frequently be subjective and so academics should be disuaded from blindly taking them at
face value. Within sources such as these however, there are some which better represent
different value to a researcher – the most valuable of these kinds of non-academic work relate
primarily to direct interviews with creators and actors involved with the production of a
specific work; although these interviews are usually undertaken casually, they represent a
level of provenance to the source material unattainable through simple discussion or
observation of the source material. By understanding the motivations of the creators of a
narrative, we are allowed to make observations that do not rely on speculation or complex
analysis – we may instead *work backwards* with our analysis, rather than attempting to strive
for meaning through the analysis itself; informal, non-academic articles are also useful but
not authoritative in the same manner as direct reporting, however depending on the online
publisher, these may be varied as to their level of journalistic rigor.

5.3.3   Audio Description Guidelines

The current audio description guidelines show a steady progression in research and
understanding surrounding the supply of audio description tracks. The ITC guidelines, whilst
lengthy, were concerned mostly with the functional elements of including audio description
within the context of analogue technology. Whilst important at the time, this guidance
remains as evidence of the changing nature of television following digitalization and the rise
of video on demand services. Not only does this show the difference in how media is
contemporaneously consumed outside of broadcast television, but also specifically displays
the relative ease with which audio description and other disability assistance provisions can
be implemented alongside such media. The ITC guidelines also represent a somewhat less
progressive view on audio description when contrasted with the modern day increase in

provision both in practice (such as Netflix audio describing *all* of its original programming), and in theory (such as in Ofcom's 2012 campaign to increase spontaneous awareness of audio description amongst the British public).

By comparison, the 2015 ADLAB guidance is easily the lengthiest and most in-depth, academically speaking. The result of a multinational EU-funded endeavour, ADLAB provided a valuable resource based around peer-reviewed linguistic perspectives on a number of different features associated with the provision of audio description; by comparison, the Netflix style guide is unreferenced, and the ITC guidance provides only eight unique references in its bibliography. The international and collaborative nature of the ADLAB project also allowed its authors to consider the impact and provision of audio description in languages other than English, allowing for a greater consideration of contemporary audio description beyond exclusively English language led guidelines.

It is for these reasons that the ADLAB guidance was uniquely suited to discussing and understanding the theoretical aspects of providing audio description; as well as this, ADLAB's guidance shows a greater degree of consideration for the way in which an audio describer's understanding of a story will benefit the creation of their audio description tracks (2015:11); the idea of understanding a story is key in the detection or acceptance of foreshadowing, whether in the form of a sentimental reader attempting to solve a murder or a more traditional audience looking for a satisfying conclusion. The ADLAB guidance came the closest to discussing the kinds of features mentioned in this thesis; despite never actually referencing the concept of foreshadowing, ADLAB's guidelines show a clear recognition of the way foregrounding and significance are signposted in telecinematic visual features (2015:14), as well as being aware of the fact that by simply describing visual features, a describer may render them more or less explicit than they were originally intended by an author.

The ADLAB guidance represents a positive step in the consideration of audio description from a linguistic standpoint, and negotiates the practicalities of providing audio description whilst still considering the *meaning* of telecinematic narratives as well as the way in which this might then be translated into, and conveyed through, a spoken audio description track. The advice and suggestions contained in these guidelines are evidence for the increased recognition of audio description and its complexities – rather than providing rigid suggestions about what is 'right or wrong' when it comes to audio description, the ADLAB guidance instead seems to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach which may be used 100% of the time in order to produce successful audio description tracks. We can see this in the variety of different audio description styles present throughout the case studies, despite each one of them being obligated to follow the Netflix guidance.

Netflix's guidance was practical insofar as it applied directly to each case study. The comparatively short nature of this guidance allows for a wider degree of flexibility on the part

of the describers and the choices they make, as well as for the kinds of general observations required to ensure that the guidance remains consistent across all of Netflix's original programming. Whilst this may help make Netflix's guide more directly applicable to a wider variety of programming, it does not account for the nuances found in many of these programs. In its style guide, Netflix does not offer direct examples or quotations taken from existing audio description tracks like those seen in the ITC and ADLAB research and offers no sources for the observations or suggestions it makes. It would be interesting to know how Netflix developed its style guide, but as far as I am aware at the point of this research, there is no information available on the creation of Netflix's requirements unlike both the ITC and ADLAB guidance which are both transparent as to their development.

It is for this reason, I would suggest that describers creating audio description tracks for Netflix programming should not rely exclusively on Netflix's in-house style guide to inform their audio description tracks. I would suggest instead that describers working to Netflix's style guide should make endeavors to use the mandated style guide in conjunction with guidelines such as those provided by the ADLAB project in order to reinforce and improve their audio description. Where the Netflix guidance will provide the required framework to guide audio describers, the research undertaken as part of the ADLAB project provides *suggestions* as opposed to requirements, which may be cherry-picked by the describer in order to assist in their text creation.

It is worth noting, however, that I feel that future audio description guidelines would benefit greatly from the discussion of foreshadowing specifically. Although individual features of foreshadowing may be mentioned, such as not naming unknown characters in the Netflix guidance, as well as similar techniques which are described in the ADLAB guidelines such as symbolism, references to these features are scattered throughout the guidance, and do not link to one another necessarily. A codified section within the audio description guidance relating specifically to the describing and execution of foreshadowing would be of great benefit when creating audio description tracks.

5.3.4   Narrative Methods of Foreshadowing Within the Case Studies

Each of the case studies provided a slightly different perspective on the unique nature of providing audio description relating to foreshadowing – initially, each case study seemed relatively insular. Although it was assumed that the case studies would show similarities and differences, it was unclear exactly how this might occur. This section discusses the specific case studies and the way in which they contribute to the over-all understanding of representing foreshadowing in audio description.

In case studies such as *A Series of Unfortunate Events, Arrested Development* and, to an extent, *The Umbrella Academy*, the role of an existing narrator affected the provision of audio

described information greatly. The presence of an existing narrator represents a double-edged sword in which sometimes the presence narrator will take the pressure off an audio describer (such as in *Arrested Development* in which shifts in the narrative either geographically or temporally are often directly referenced by the original narrative track) and at others, will restrict the amount of gaps available for a describer to use, leading to much shorter, less lexically rich descriptions. Unlike *Arrested Development* in which the narrator is a disembodied voice, in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* the narrator is a physical presence who appears on screen and so must also be visually described, limiting the describer even further.

In cases of case studies with narrators, audio describers must make efforts to decide whether or not the narrators contribute to and support the foreshadowing events or whether they may make such events harder to describe. Whilst initially it may seem that narrators restrict the amount of time available for such description, in a number of the case studies we see an awareness of the functional role that these narrators play and the fact that they may reveal information that would otherwise be required to audio describe. We see this most obviously in *Arrested Development*'s narrator's tendency to identify the contexts of the scenes prior to or at the moment of their inclusion, meaning that an audio describer will not generally have to refer to shifts in setting or characters unless this is not actually mentioned by the narrator.

In the case studies with more space available for describers, we see an increase in descriptive terminology like adjectives (such as *Stranger Things* using adjectives relating to Billy's attractiveness) or adverbs (such as *The Discovery* describing the motions of Isla strapping down the corpse's arms); whilst this provides for a richer lexical experience, it is also important to note that in situations where there *is* enough space for these lengthier, more stylistically involved descriptions, a describer must still identify which visual features are the most important to describe. We see this neglected somewhat in *The Umbrella Academy*, whose describer focuses more specifically on describing the minor characters within the scene than the visual features associated with the symbolism of the Soviet Union. Whilst this may not entirely restrict an audience from participating in the kinds of sentimental speculation discussed by Bae et al, by having fewer points of reference a BVI audience is given less opportunity to access the information required to successfully speculate as to the direction of a narrative.

The role of an audio describer benefits from being undertaken by someone who approaches narratives in a similar way to the sentimental audiences mentioned by Bae et al. With this kind of approach, an audio describer is more likely to recognize significant moments and foreshadowing events and modulate their description accordingly. Netflix does not reveal information as to how individual tracks are assigned to their describers, which may become an issue when discussing audio description across a multi-episode series. Typically, with a film a describer will remain consistent throughout: one person will write the entirety of the audio description, which will then be read by the same voice actor. In the audio description for Netflix original series, however, it is unclear whether the author of the audio description

track remains consistently the same from episode to episode, despite the voice actor remaining the same throughout. A sentimental describer is more likely to recognize significant foreshadowing events as they occur, rather than having to identify them retroactively meaning that they are less likely to overlook or miss these kinds of information.

5.3.5   General Impacts

Aside from the academic impact of this research discussed above, it is also my hope that this thesis may also provide a number of potential societal and economic impacts. Societally speaking, this thesis may in part be used to make suggestions for policy-making decisions such as the provision and preservation of audio description services, by governments, charities, and enforcement organisations such as Ofcom. As well as this, commercial interests such as private VoD services may also benefit from this research: by providing higher quality audio description services, although also enhancing cultural participation by BVI audiences, private companies extend their customer base and potentially increase the number of users to their services.By providing better quality accessibility and improved services, companies aid with social cohesion (allowing users who might otherwise not be able to participate in watching something specific) and may significantly improve the general well-being of such audiences, whilst still retaining them as paying customers.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the nature of this research, which ultimately touches upon several different areas of study (linguistics, media accessibility, film studies), a number of different suggestions for future research became apparent as the thesis developed. This section will outline a few of the specific areas I feel that this research would lend itself to in the future. It is important to reiterate that this thesis always intended to act as a springboard for further research. Due to its generalised nature and its reliance on examples and case studies to attempt to understand and account for different types of foreshadowing, and the different ways in which they may occur, the value in this thesis often lies in what it then means for those who read it and build upon it further down the line.

5.4.1   Investigation of Overrepresentation of Buried Foreshadowing Events

One of the key findings from this work was the idea that foreshadowing is overrepresented in the literature as specifically relating to the burying of items. When explaining this thesis short-handedly to other people, I myself would often fall back upon either the Chekhov's gun definition of foreshadowing, or use an example of a twist ending, such as those discussed by Tobin (2018). Typically, unless I was giving an expanded explanation of this thesis, I found myself avoiding mentioning examples such as *Stranger Things* or *7 Days Out* in which the

foreshadowing events are foregrounded rather than buried. Individuals are more likely to remember events effectively when the events occur within the context of novelty (Fenker and Schütze, 2008), and so it is unsurprising that narratives with surprise endings and plot twists are the most accessible examples when trying to explain foreshadowing as simply as possible – such kinds of narratives were immediately obvious and understood by anyone who had ever watched *The Sixth Sense* or read a murder mystery novel. It became increasingly apparent that, at least within the context of foreshadowing, foregrounding was not discussed unless it related specifically to the explicitness of a particular narrative reveal itself or unless it acted in opposition to burying, such as in Emmott and Alexander's burying techniques which suggest foregrounding non-significant features in order to bury the actual significant item. As such, I feel that the acknowledgement of foreshadowing in the more mundane context of narrative cohesion (such as in *7 Days Out*) can help to broaden the idea of what foreshadowing can mean outside of a grand, dramatic gesture and allow for more thoughtful consideration about what may be categorized as foreshadowing.

Similarly, whilst characterization studies have talked at length about the kinds of characterization cues discussed in *Stranger Things* as contributing to an audience's comprehension of characters and their context within a wider story, these discussions have again, never been framed around the idea of these cues acting as a type of foreshadowing. This is not to imply that there is no discussion of the importance of establishing characters, or even the methods by which this may be done, only that these works are not often framed around foreshadowing. . This seems to speak to foregrounding as operating as the 'less glamourous' side of foreshadowing, which whilst necessary, does not seem to engage interest (either on the parts of academics or audiences), in the same way as the more dramatic reveals.

A greater focus on foregrounded examples of foreshadowing could help in developing an understanding of the functional differences behind the choice to bury or foreground a foreshadowing item, as well as attempting to understand the way in which foregrounded settings or characters may be important to comprehension more generally. Such kinds of defining features in characters (and settings, such as the spatiotemporal context of Soviet Russia in *The Umbrella Academy*) are defined in the ADLAB guidance as serving "a narrative / symbolic function" (2015:24), and should therefore be considered by audio describers when making stylistic choices in their audio description tracks – ironically, this discussion is once again framed exclusively around the symbolic setting in 2010's *Shutter Island,* example of a narrative with a distinctive twist ending.

5.4.2   Individual Case Studies

Despite this thesis' attempt to talk about foreshadowing in audio description more generally, this field of research would benefit from more specific in-depth study pertaining to one particular narrative. Although as stated previously, although there are a number of existing works surrounding the topic of foreshadowing that focus upon one specific example, such as Sebo's (2018) work on *Beowulf,* these studies do not relate to specific foreshadowing within

the more restrictive medium of audio description. For this thesis, a more generalised approach was preferred due to the lack of existing research pertaining specifically to the interplay of foreshadowing and audio description, however it would be of great benefit to focus upon a single narrative utilising some of this thesis' techniques.

As seen in the diagrams associated with individual case studies, foreshadowing events can occur at multiple points throughout a narrative; in order to better understand the way in which such events may support and reinforce one another, it would be of great benefit to transcribe *each* of the foreshadowing events shown on the adapted diagram. By only transcribing single scenes (with the exception of *Arrested Development*), it became harder to make concrete observations about the content of the untranscribed scenes and the way in which they might affect the content of the case studies.

By focusing on one case study, a researcher will be able to see the full context of the foreshadowing from the initial foreshadowing event all the way through to the final foreshadowed event, following its progress. This may then allow a future researcher to consider the somewhat unanswered research question of whether or not buried foreshadowing becomes more explicit the closer a narrative gets to the 'reveal'.

5.4.3 Impact of a Narrator on the Provision of Audio Description

In several of the case studies, the presence of an existing narrator changed the way in which audio description was provided. Future research would benefit from considering how such kinds of narrators may modulate the amount of information necessary for describers to provide.

Further work into the impact and effect of an existing narration track would allow for more specific suggestions to be made regarding the way in which information provided by narrators may assist in the presentation of audio described information as well as methods by which audio describers may be able to work with or around such existing narration.

5.4.4 Development of Future Guidelines

Although the ADLAB guidance is a good example of a peer-reviewed, in-depth selection of linguistically driven suggestions, they are not officially employed by any particular company or broadcasting network. This is contrasted with the Netflix guidance, which whilst used, contains very little in the way of academic suggestion.

It is for this reason that I believe that the creation of new Netflix guidelines would be beneficial. Netflix's guidance is relatively short and would benefit from both examples and references taken from actual audio description guidance. Whilst the shortness of Netflix's

guidance is a positive for describers who must make sure their description tracks conform, they are vague and make no real effort to fully explain their reasoning behind the choices that describers are expected to make. These guidelines could be discussed with regulators, describers and broadcasting agencies as well as tested amongst BVI individuals in order to ensure that they are fully understood.

As stated previously, the current consideration of style and stylistics generally would be of great benefit to companies and describers; future guidance could be informed by work such as this which would, in turn, create a societal improvement for BVI audiences by providing a higher quality of audio description. By contrast, however, this may also provide economic benefits to companies such as broadcasters more generally, VoD services, cinemas and film and media producers through a higher degree of accessibility applied to their customer bases.

5.4.5 Consultation of BVI audiences and Professional Audio Describers

As mentioned in Section 5.4.4, the requirements and desires of BVI audiences should not be overlooked when attempting to make decisions regarding the provision of audio description. It is for this reason that further research would benefit greatly from surveying and approaching BVI audiences about the implementation of foreshadowing in audio description tracks in order to find out how the end-users of audio description respond to current and potential future audio description services.

Similarly, it may be of interest to consult professional audio describers as a group, getting each one to audio describe the same scene. This research could play a role in identifying the different choices made on the part of each describer as well as highlighting features that are considered salient to them as professional describers.

This work might be partnered with the kind of research suggested in Section 5.4.4; new description guidelines might be developed, with the opportunity for BVI audiences to test such guidance and comment on their effectiveness.

5.4.6 Eye-tracking software

The use of eye-tracking software has increased, meaning that research may now be undertaken that relates specifically to where an individual's visual attention is focused. Such kinds of software would be invaluable for identifying salience and useful for highlighting

which features are significant to sighted viewers, and therefore which features should be emphasized and described in the audio description.

5.4.7 Development of actual audio description tracks

Finally, this research could be used to produce actual audio description tracks – both burying and foregrounding techniques could be applied to the foreshadowing events in a particular scene and then the effects of the techniques could then be recorded and studied. These individually described scenes could be tested by a BVI audience in order to ascertain the differing effects generated by foregrounding or burying a plot significant item.

5.5 Conclusion

This research aimed to provide context as to the ways in which foreshadowing functions within the context of contemporary audio description services for blind and partially sighted audiences. Going into this thesis, I had very little working knowledge about either audio description or foreshadowing beyond the fact that they existed and that both seemed to be areas that might provide new interest to the field of style and its application.

The original aims of this thesis, laid out in section 1.4, were concerned firstly with the narrative mechanisms by which foreshadowing might be written into a story – much of these questions focused on the burying strategies outlined by Emmott and Alexander (2015), wondering which of these strategies were most often utilized as well as the circumstances specifically pertaining to the foreshadowing events.

This focus on burying is primarily a result of the existing research available on the topic of foreshadowing, which primarily focuses upon foreshadowing concerned specifically with either mystery solving (such Emmott and Alexander's work on Agatha Christie's crime novels) or twist endings like those discussed by Tobin which work primarily through the *use* of burying techniques. It became apparent, however, that not all foreshadowing functions like this, and that in certain cases, the opposite effect is desired, with the foreshadowed event being foregrounded so as to assure that the foreshadowing event was not missed by an audience.

This thesis represents the first academic attempt to collate specific examples of foreshadowing in audio description. Although there are many directions that this particular

research might lead, it was important to me to establish the context of foreshadowing in contemporary audio description in order to fully consider the ways in which such research might develop from this initial start point. For this reason I have attempted to use a variety of examples in order to cast the widest net possible, with each case study representing a slightly different motivation behind or execution of foreshadowing.

When combined with the proposed future research, this work has the potential to impact both audio description guidelines and the regulatory policies regarding the provision of such accessibility features.

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7 Appendices

The transcripts of the case studies are available upon request.