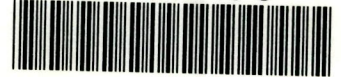


Symbolism & Significance

An analysis of the function and causality of
non-diegetic sound in the classical narrative tradition



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"Symbolism & Significance: an analysis of the function and causality of non-diegetic sound in the classical narrative tradition"

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Quoted in David Bordwell's
'Musical Analogy'

"It is music's task to fuse with the drama, to penetrate its smallest crevice, and amplify what cannot be said or shown"

Wagner

From the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations

"Extraordinary how potent cheap music is"

Noel Coward

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Introduction:

¹ This tradition was recently continued in "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka", a satire of the "Shaft" series. The hero is continuously trailed by a band playing a version of the "Shaft" theme.

Figure 1
Blazing Saddles (1974)
High Anxiety (1977)
I'm Gonna Git You Sucka (1988)

This dissertation is the result of an encounter with the work of a great cinematic thinker: Mel Brooks. In his **Blazing Saddles** a singing cowboy rides into the sunset, passing the band which accompanies him as he does so. In **High Anxiety**, a dramatic revelation on the highway is synchronized with the chance passing of an orchestra aboard a greyhound bus.¹ Essentially, Brooks was had the same agenda as modernist avant-garde film makers such as Godard: he was pointing out the artificial nature of cinematic 'reality'. Unlike Godard, Brooks is not concerned with exposing the artificiality inherent in traditional montage, or other fundamental cinematic paradoxes—because the loss of narrative sense that this would entail would subvert any comic intent. Brooks realizes that the structure that supports the fictional world he has created cannot be tampered with without confusing his audience. Yet background music is already at one remove from that world. When Brooks, with a faultless logic, tries to place the source of his background music in the realm of the narrative microcosm, the audience ridicules the idea. Brooks is successfully highlighting the incongruity of sound that functions apart from the diegesis.

The concept of diegesis is very straightforward: it is the apparent space-time continuum in which the characters reside, and the events of the narrative occur—the fictional world accepted by an audience. This dissertation is discussing sound that does not have a source within the diegesis—non diegetic sound. This dissertation will not attempt to provide a global investigation of non-diegetic sound, nor to critique particular methodologies or films. Instead, it will focus only on analysing the role of non-diegetic sound in the Hollywood classical narrative tradition, where, with very few exceptions, the actuality of non-diegetic sound is music of some description. This selection is not due to the

dominance that this tradition has on the cinematic medium: rather, it is because this tradition has developed the most advanced codification of the cinematic elements, and has fostered a largely unchanged lexicon of style. This allows an analysis which has the potential to be as expansive in its potential application as the tradition being studied. In analysing non-diegetic sound, this dissertation will attempt to answer three questions.

**Why is a patently unreal mechanism necessary
to maintain an illusion of reality?**

**What is the effect of non-diegetic sound
on the audience?**

**What is the function of non-diegetic sound
in the narrative?**

These issues will be discussed through an investigative process of four parts:

Historical Analysis

The first section of the dissertation provides the historical arguments: first, there is a discussion of the evolution of the concept of music in general, and its relation to the development of the tradition of the spectacle. Secondly, the history of Hollywood's use of non-diegetic sound is outlined.

The subsequent three sections discuss analytical writings on the process of perception. With the exception of the work of composer Hans Eisler, and unlike all other cinematic elements, there are no seminal texts on the nature of cinematic non-diegetic sound. This dissertation will therefore explore the possibility of applying theory on the methodology of cognition to the issue. This manner of investigation is divided into three sections.

Politics:

Using the writings of Adorno and Eisler, this section examines the Marxist philosophy on cinematic music.

Psychoanalysis:

This section discusses psycho-analytical thought on the nature of aural perception and music, and their applicability non-diegetic sound.

Semiotics: The Aural Object

First, there is an examination of the essay "Aural Objects", by Christian Metz— a commentary on the process of aural perception, with particular reference to the relationship of aural and visual stimuli.

Semiotics: Symbolism & Significance

Finally, there is an assessment of the possible organisation of non-diegetic sound according to the basic tenets of semiotic theory.

Summary and Application

The fifth and final section of this dissertation is of a more applied nature. First, the information on non-diegetic sound's causality, gleaned from the previous four sections, is reorganised in order to highlight the key functions of non-diegetic sound in the narrative. Subsequently these key functions are then exemplified, in a brief analyses of five scenes from **The Silence of the Lambs**.

Historical Background

Before I clarify the technical and aesthetic developments that accompanied the introduction of sound to film, I feel it is necessary to synopsise the historical precedence evident in the use of sound in certain other forms of spectacle. It is my belief that the function of non-diegetic sound in film is rooted in the development of the concept of music itself. Sound has always played a major part in ritual, and it was through ceremony that the notion of music developed.

The root of music lies in the concept of initiated non-communicative sound. That is, the level of aural awareness where sound is voluntarily produced through conscious action, without the intention of communicating meaning. In the ritualistic, totemic community, the concept of non-communicative sound as a link with the spirit developed from huntsmen mimicking animal cries. In their conception, there was no separation of the noise made by an animal, and the animal itself. Therefore, deified figures, with a basis in the sensory world of the community, would be declaimed with facsimiles of their characteristic noise— sound was a link with the spirit. Combined with the newly discovered ability of inanimate objects to produce sound— a further mysticism of the aural— the tradition of communal noise making was born. The root of this use of sound is onomatopoeic— the sound is perceived by the listener as denoting something. The evolution from this representational sound to music— a codified, non figurative use of abstract sound— involves a shift in the perceptual process away from denotation. If the listener derives meaning from music, it is done so through connotation. It is arguable, though, that this is solely due to its denotative origin. Music in film functions through an interplay of these properties of symbolism and significance, which will be detailed in the penultimate section of this thesis.

With the development of language, the spoken word served to adopt some of the function of abstract sound— now matured to a point where it could be termed music. Yet, this music could not be rationalised as simply as language, so it retained its 'mystic' associations. Simultaneously, with the growing ease of survival, it became associated with non-productive experience, with pleasure and entertainment. Therefore, with the evolution of the story telling tradition into the theatrical tradition, the association of music with the ritualistic, the spiritual, and the pleasurable ensured it a function in the performance. That function was mainly to distract from the lulls in the action, during necessary breaks in the narrative which facilitated the process of staging.

Equally, there were traditions of spectacle, especially those associated with religion, where music was the medium of expression. Somewhere between those two developed the operatic tradition. While, in appearance, the classical narrative has more in common with drama, the use of non-diegetic sound— mainly music— is inexorably linked to the conventions of opera. It is here we see the acceptance of a musical commentary on the narrative, of the perceived reality of a patently false illusion, and the further development of music as a constituent part of the narrative. An influence that cannot be underestimated is Wagner, especially his writings on the theory of opera. His concept of the *Gestamtkunstwerk*, the unification of the arts of poetry, music, and drama, while never fully resolved in his work, was expressed in his theoretical writings with clarity and enthusiasm. These writings have been cited as an influence by many cinematic composers.²

² It is also one explanation for the love affair between film and opera. From the use of opera as non-diegetic music (Prizzl's *Honour, Diva*), and the visual re-interpretations of operatic solos in *Aria*, to the many filmed versions of operas from directors such as Zeffirelli and Bergman, the two media have long displayed mutual appreciation.

Figure 2
Aria (1987): Franc Roddam interpreting Liebestod, from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

It is not only the function of cinematic music that is rooted in nineteenth century romantic opera— the language of cinematic music itself shares a basis of arrangement, scale, and tonal colour with the nineteenth century musical tradition. The cause of this

link is not clear, but can probably be attributed to the development of musical tradition after this period: like the move away from the established code of representation in the changing aesthetic of painting, there was a shift from the established tonal code of music, towards a more formalist approach to the nature of western tonality. Yet, like painting, the work of the period identified with the highest codification of the medium's means of identification is widely perceived as a definition of the medium itself.

The immediate history of non-diegetic film sound follows an erratic path. Its usage far precedes the development of film's sound recording technology. To use the most basic analysis, it could be said that non-diegetic sound was simply born of the necessity to mask the noise of the projector, and assuage an audience distracted by its own shuffling. The use of non-diegetic sound in the silent film quickly became more complex. With the rapid growth in narrative, it adopted the role of bridging the gap made by dialogue inter titles. What type of sound, specifically, was used for this function? There is no record of any sustained attempts at adding synchronised diegetic sound for this, or any other, purpose. Without exception, it was music that provided a seamless quality to the narrative, both during the intertitle intrusions, and more importantly, at the change in scenes.

³ 6, page 12

Yet with the arrival of successful synchronous sound in 1926 ³, the rival sound technologists at Vitaphone, Movietone, and Photophone spent almost a decade trying to create pictures whose sound was entirely diegetic. Although, at first, the sound-track was most often a recording of a non-diegetic orchestral score, ⁴ the impetus was in the recording of non-narrative vaudeville acts, or, in the case of Movietone, sound newsreels. Here, they believed, was the true potential of cinematic sound: as a means to record more fully what happened in front of the camera.

⁴ This mainly appealed to the minor movie houses and their audiences, who were used to pianists—of varying talent—improvising to the events on screen. While some movie companies would send out cue sheets for a particular movie, it was more common for a batch of generic music to be sent at intervals, labelled 'chase', 'romance' and the like. My grandfather, moonlighting as a cinematic pianist when a music student, used the time to rehearse his exam pieces.

⁵ 4, page 46

⁶ In the contemporary generation of sound technology. Previous attempts at film sound had failed miserably when put to this acid test, facing a myriad of problems: Poor amplification was the most insurmountable, which necessitated a porous screen, and resulted in a foggy and blurred image. More problematic for the viewer was the immense problems of synchronization caused by the strategic placement of the sound and vision elements at either end of the cinema. Mechanical synching, with ropes, pulleys and fly wheels running the length of the auditorium, regularly lost synch for up to 12 seconds.

Figure 3
The Jazz Singer (1927)

⁷ 6, page 390

⁸ While no film historian has attempted to explain this fact, I can only guess that it is the consequence of light travelling faster than sound, necessitating a delay to accommodate the distance between the projected image and the sound output.

⁹ This problem was eventually solved by Movietone's development of a light-proof ink, which could be painted over splices. Known as 'blooming', this process would appear to explain the origin of the term for offcut mistakes in a film—'bloopers'.

¹⁰ 6, page 391

The difficulties of producing a narrative film with sound were enormous. Hence, 'semi-talkies', many still rooted in a vaudeville context, were the norm. Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, (October 1927) ⁵ the first attempt ⁶ at synchronised diegetic sound in a full length narrative film, limited this sound to four scenes showing him performing, dovetailed with snatches of Jolson's monologue. Aside from the ease with which performance— a convention of sound film after one year— could be accepted by an audience, it was also the easiest, if not the only, type of scene that the developing sound technology could cope with. Cameras, enclosed in sound proof booths, could not move, nor pan more than 30°. The sensitivity of the sound recording equipment limited dialogue to theatrical levels of voice production, which audiences would not accept outside of that context. Finally, post production sound was a technical impossibility.

Until late 1929 ⁷, editing of sound was impossible within a scene. At first, this was due to the recording of sound onto intransigent phonograph records, and then, with the development of sound on film, was caused by the simultaneous recording of sound and vision onto the same stock. This meant the sound was twenty frames (just under a second) ahead of the image.⁸ Additionally, splicing of any kind made a mark on the film which the photocell would read as sound, which resulted in the loud 'pop' we associate with scene changes in films of this period.⁹ The editing problem was only one of the difficulties in dealing with optical sound sharing the same film stock as the moving image. Most troublesome was the fact that optical sound needed high contrast development, or it sounded muddy, while film stock looked appallingly grainy and flat if processed to suit the sound. It took the development of double-system sound on film, where the sound and vision was on separate stock, and the perfection of multi-channel recording techniques, in 1932¹⁰, before film makers could control the use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound in

the same scene.

Simultaneous diegetic and non-diegetic sound, if performed live, had briefly been possible. Prior to the development of the sound-proofed, 'blimped' camera in 1930, when film makers had to use multiple, yet stationary, cameras, live music under diegetic sound was occasionally used. Multi-camera filming— where a number of immobile cameras captured the vision, while the sound was recorded from a single source onto disk— made possible the editing of the film stock around the fixed sound-track. For the most part, recordings of musicals and variety acts made use of this capability. Occasionally, continuing the tradition from the silent era of using music on set to motivate the actors, non diegetic, unsynchronous music was used. The disadvantages of this method of filming— conflicting depth perception caused by the use of different focal length lenses within the same scene, and the tenuous synchronization of the sound on disk system¹¹— lead to the widespread adoption of the sound on film technique. Naturally, the sound/vision displacement problem mentioned above required dialogue to be clear, and unsullied by background noise, if editing was to be anyway feasible.

¹¹ While the phonograph was now in the same room as the projector, this was a curse as well as a blessing. If the projectionist bumped into the turn-table, the resulting needle skip was disastrous.

¹² 4, page 49

¹³ John Gilbert is Hollywood's most famous martyr of sound. As the medium developed, MGM found it increasingly difficult to avoid using Gilbert— their biggest silent star— in a talkie. While the issue was sidestepped in earlier pictures (During the shooting of *Love*, in 1928, it was even suggested that dialogue be limited to a dream sequence, where it would be possible for another actor to perform Gilbert's lines) the studio finally took the plunge in *His Glorious Night*, in 1929. Gilbert's first— and near to last— spoken words were "I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you..." delivered in a tone not dissimilar to Mickey Mouse.

In the meantime, film makers strove to perfect full length narrative sound. By late 1928¹², improved microphone technique allowed the use of natural speaking voices, which added greatly to the more realistic, 'overheard', quality of sound film. Yet, the heightened quality of reality which sound gave to a narrative, also served to highlight inadequacies in the narrative itself, especially in dialogue. Rooted in the fractured and encapsulated declamations of inter-titles, early sound dialogue was often greeted with hoots of laughter— especially when delivered by certain stars of the silent era, who had been hired for their looks, not their speaking voices.¹³ However, even when these unfortunates were retired, and scripts were adapted to a non theatrical mode of

expression, the audience was frequently unwilling to suspend its disbelief during scenes of great emotion. Film music historian Claudia Gorbman quotes an unnamed 'Variety' journalist who, in autumn 1929, asserts that the studios are aware of, and have a solution to, this problem:

Studios have found that the hoey going over in [inter-] titles won't go over in talkies. Someone in the audience titters, and it's all off. Hereafter, the love passages will be suggested with the romantic note conveyed by properly pitched music.¹⁴

¹⁴ 4, page 55

As Gorbman points out, it cannot be assumed that the reviewer is referring to underscored music— impossible at that stage— but rather, he may be indicating a reversion to prerecorded non-diegetic scores. In the following four years, music played as major a part in film as was technically possible, culminating in the development of multi-channel recording, which gave sound editing all the flexibility of film editing. Without exception, all historians of film sound pin-point **King Kong**, in 1933, as the coming of age of the medium.¹⁵ While comedy shorts such as Laurel and Hardy had employed non-synchronous background music as it became possible, Max Steiner, the composer for **King Kong**, used music as a narrative tool in a way largely unknown prior to 1933. Motivated, he said, by recitative in Wagner operas, Steiner developed the principle of synchronous diegetic sound to the extreme. Guided by a click track— Steiner's own invention— which played an audible click at appropriate dramatic or rhythmic action on screen (footsteps, for example), he wrote music which did not merely play alongside the visual element, but reflected and accompanied it. While Steiner's slavish adherence to a click track,¹⁶ was soon a derided technique, the very fact that he followed Wagnerian principles of music usage in a narrative influenced music usage from then on.

¹⁵ 6, page 391
4, page 51
2, page 24
3, page 24

¹⁶ Coined 'mickey-mousing', by Director Selznick, who recognised a more recent influence than Wagner on the technique, which, especially in the context of **King Kong**, is very reminiscent of a cartoon.

Figure 4
King Kong (1933)
Canine Caddy (Video release 1989)

The brief, nine year period when film makers tried to work solely with diegetic sound was, I would argue, a combination of two factors. First, like the early motion pictures, the mere novelty of a recorded event— this time with synchronous sound— was enough to attract cinema goers. Second, the technical difficulties with combining sound and image caused the normally adventurous Hollywood studios to proceed with caution— previous failures with sound and vision had alienated a growingly cynical audience, and Hollywood wanted to get it right this time. Once it became possible to combine diegetic and non-diegetic sound, this was done. Not just because they could— the dominant rationale behind works associated with similar technological developments- but because non-diegetic sound was an essential part of narrative.¹⁷

¹⁷ I will deal with this issue in more detail below.

Analysis: an Introduction

This section is devoted essentially to a consideration of various theories of perception. Most of the studies of perception, particularly those rooted in semiotics, break the process down to a core action: the identification of a single element and its characteristics, the existence of which is relative to a hierarchical network of other elements. The classification of our sensual experiences this way is to render an infinitely complex process into pure form: our perceptive code, as we experience it, does not render the world as a heterogeneous pattern. Yet this concept of a perceptive process is particularly suited to the cinema; for it is the one aspect of our cognitive experiences which actually is composed of discernible associated but dissimilar elements. At the simplest level, both as we experience a film, and in the production process, there is a visual element, and sound element. As shown in chapter one, all the research and development of cinematic sound was aimed at presenting these elements as a unified whole. It was believed by Hollywood that a cinematic experience where the sound and vision were independently discernible hindered the achievement of 'realism'. Certainly, when audiences became aware of the separation of sound and vision—through a loss of synch, for example—they did not respond favourably. Yet once synchronous sound was perfected, and accidental heterogeneity ruled out, a disparate element was deliberately introduced. After spending many years presenting pure diegetic sound, as the natural way of ensuring a unity with the vision, Hollywood, as soon as it became possible, introduced non-diegetic music.

I have mentioned the immediate practical, and fiscal reasons why there was a consensus in introducing non-diegetic music. Now I want to discuss why it was conceptually necessary for the communication of a 'realistic' narrative, and how a codified use of

non-diegetic music became the key towards preserving unity of cinematic elements, thus preserving the illusion of reality. In doing so, I am relying on a variety of academic theories, whose common basis is an analysis of the processes of perception. I begin with a study of the work of Adorno and Eisler– the only theoretical work on music in film. I follow this with a summary of relevant psycho-analytical theory, which mainly relates to a deconstruction of the pleasure of hearing. Finally, in the core section of this thesis, I consider aspects of semiotic theory. The limitations of time, length and my own patience have severely restrained the possible extent of this route; the joy of semiotic theory is the apparent applicability to almost any intellectual experience. I had a choice between a speedy summation of a dozen theories, or a careful consideration of a smaller number. I settled on the latter, and here present an application of Metz's essay on the process of aural perception– 'Aural Objects'– to non-diegetic sound. In closing this section, I conduct an exercise which links semiotic theory to the ideas of Adorno and Eisler; the application of basic semiotic terminology to the most common devices of non-diegetic sound.

¹⁸ Eisler, 1898 - 1962, studied under Schönberg, then abandoned formalism to involve music in the workers movement. He composed many militant marches and workers choruses, often in collaboration with Brecht. Fascism compelled him to leave Germany in 1933, and he settled in the U.S. in 1938, to teach at the New School for Social Research. In 1940, he began a study of film music, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1942, he moved to Hollywood, where he worked on eight films for RKO, including *Hangmen Also Die*, *None but the Lonely Heart*, *Women on a Beach*, *Deadline at Dawn*, *So Well Remembered*, and *The Spanish Main*. After publication of *Composing for the Films*, he was targeted by the McCarthy commission, and exiled to the German Democratic Republic, where he composed their national anthem.

¹⁹ Adorno, 1903 - 1969, who studied composition under Alban Berg, and philosophy under Jung, was part of the so called 'Frankfurt School' of sociological philosophy in the 'twenties. He too left Germany in the early thirties, and after a stay at Oxford, took up a teaching post at Princeton in 1938. There, he started his study of reproduced sound, concentrating on radio, also funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. He returned to Germany in 1949, to teach at the University of Frankfurt.

²⁰ The issue of authorship is somewhat confused. It has been claimed by both men as their own work, with the co-authorship, in name only, attributed to political or financial expediency. Most interpreters attribute the more theoretical discussion to Adorno— they are a natural progression from earlier works on music in general— while Eisler undoubtedly had considerable say in the discussions on Hollywood technique.

Hanns Eisler ¹⁸ and Theodor W. Adorno ¹⁹ were a composer and musical sociologist, who shared a belief in Hegelian Marxism. In 1947, they collaborated on *Composing for the Films* ²⁰, under the auspices of the Film Music Project of the New School of Social Research, and financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. As a work of cinematic analysis, it was unique among the shallow 'critique' style of its contemporaries, and as a study of the perception of sound, it was years ahead of its time. The extremely subjective politics of the authors renders some of their conclusions fallacious, but the methodical study of film music which forms the basis for their arguments, is unaffected by ideology. In discussing their findings, it is essential to relate briefly the philosophy behind the analysis.

Put simply, Adorno believed art was crippled by bourgeois society. He justified this idea thus: the notions of exclusiveness, reverence, and academia suggested by the ambience of gallery or concert hall perpetuates the perception of art as a mythic, mystic and intangible experience. Western bourgeois ideas on 'culture' attempt to mutate art, he argued, and create a misunderstood object of suspicion. The 'culture industry' as he put it, was simply another means of oppression. Art created within this industry, he stated, could only create an audience reaction that was reflexive: the subject of any art work rooted in this industry is interpreted by— indeed, owes its existence to— its relationship to the history and tradition of the medium, rather than the substance of the art work itself. 'Good Art' should be a mediated totality— a work that avoids the trappings of irrational subjectivity and materialism, and realizes a structure of particulars defined only by their interrelation in the whole of the piece. Essentially, Adorno was describing that which Marshall McLuhan would later term a 'hot' medium— where the audience constructed

their own meaning.

Adorno was aware that art which had no context but the immediate would have difficulty, both conceptually and practically, in reaching a wide audience. He believed that film, as a young medium, had unique potential in creating its own totality, but realised that it had become, more than most, determined by materialistic values. Adorno and Eisler contended that film music contributed to the trivialization of music in western culture, by falsely identifying the tradition of tonality as the essence of the medium, and further simplifying this uniformity in relying on a set of devices rooted in only a fragment of western tonality's history. In **Composing for Films**, they set out to detail film music's tainted lexicon, and to study the possibility of an alternative.

They begin their study by listing the devices which they identified as comprising (and compromising) the bulk of film music's usage. While their study was based on the conventions of 1940's movies, I would argue that the list is still an accurate summary of film music function today. Here are the devices Adorno and Eisler identified as film music's modes of operation, along with the ideological difficulties they had with each.

- **Leitmotifs**— they degenerate into redundant quotation, and do not operate in a context even remotely near the musical totality Wagner postulated.
- **Melody & Harmony**— an obsession expressed in predictable airs using small diatonic intervals with the simplest of resolved harmonies, which misrepresents the material technological and asymmetrical nature of the medium they accompany.
- **Unobtrusiveness**— due to an unconsidered assertion of the visual primacy, this characteristic fosters the fallacy of complete musical identification with the image.

- **Justification**– the desire to provide a visual source for music, to promote its unobtrusiveness, and to preserve 'reality' of the narrative.
- **Illustration / Imitation**– the enforcing of the instinctive in the viewer by by musical imitation of events using clichés of instrumentation and melody.
- **'Authentic' music**– used to cognate the geographic and historical setting of a narrative, this relies upon a corruption of indigenous ideas to suit western tonality.
- **Stock music**– which relies totally on the audiences reflex associations with the work, denying it any original meaning.

This limited vocabulary, according to the authors, leads to a displacement of the process of comprehension of the work whereby the individual elements are compared to the whole– Adorno's ideal. Instead, the detail is instantly interpreted by relating the work to the cultural standard. Hence the music, like the people in that society, is suppressed. At this point, Adorno & Eisler pursue the question which is most relevant to my thesis: what is the specific interpretive process music effects in the audience, and why is this necessary in film?

They begin their study of function by asserting the dichotomy of visual and aural perception. Seeing, they argue, has developed, parallel to the culture of our industrial age, into a "highly industrialized order." ²¹ Visual perception is now a process of active selection, of editing an entirety into a series of separate yet interrelated objects. Yet, hearing is passive and indefinite– without focus. Aural perception has not yet developed a procedure of reasoning. In fact, the perception of any piece of music is delineated by a deliberately suppressed awareness of the rationalisation of abstract sound that defines western tonality. Adorno

²¹ 7, page 377

²³ This effect, and the art works insistence on its own unique presence, is called the 'aura' by some scholars, particularly Walter Benjamin. Writing on the effects on art of mechanical reproduction, Benjamin believed that music was the only medium which retained auratic properties when reproduced.

Figure 5
Return of the Jedi (1983)
Chariots of Fire (1981)

and Eisler assert that the interpretation of any sound involves a regression to a lexicon rooted in a "pre-individualistic collectivity".²² Music in a pre-individualistic collectivity was based on communal performance, at times of emotional significance to the community— keening, battle-cries, incantation. While the process of writing music has progressed to a more intellectual methodology of controlling sound, the aural perception of the layperson has not. This has led to the development of a music whose organization of sound engenders in the listener a subconscious appeal to the humanistic, the spontaneous, and the participatory.²³ This effect is the basis of the swell of contemplative sentiment felt when viewing a spectacle as a simple melodic motif is played at mid tempo in a major key: evident when viewing the glory of scenery in a western, the triumph of slow-motion running in **Chariots of Fire**, or the majesty of lumbering spacecraft in any science fiction film. Music functions in film, therefore, by offering to a medium rooted in the rational a controllable and necessary means of inducing the irrational.

Why does film, whose narrative should cultivate emotion independently in the audience, need the services of music? Adorno and Eisler believe that music is the key to hiding the contradictions inherent in the medium. Without music, film would generate a subjective uneasiness, threatening the audience's perception of the cinematic as a coherent and immediate image of existence, and revealing film's modular, structured, and contradictory reality.

The first contradiction Adorno and Eisler cite is that between a film's supposed direct appeal to a spectator, and the remoteness of the medium's execution and technical character. Music eases this inconsistency by supplying a humanistic level to a medium whose dehumanised process of creation and administration would otherwise become evident to the viewer. They make a compari-

son with the use of music in theatre and opera, where it assumes importance when the audience faces a stage that has no life—during scene changes, between the acts. Film music the authors argue, similarly distracts from a lifeless spectacle.

In a solution to a related paradox, Adorno and Eisler suggest that the use of existing music is designed, like the 'star' system, to impart its own uniqueness and authenticity to the image, belying the mass produced and illusory qualities of cinema. To digress slightly, I would like to use this aspect of Adorno and Eisler's theory to introduce a hypothesis for the reliance, in the contemporary classical narrative, on rock music, non-diegetic or otherwise. Firstly, rock music, more than most, has a particular assertion of its own unique presence, its specific here-and-now. Additionally, as Adorno and Eisler indicated in their catalogue of film music effects, well-known music will have an immediate cognitive effect on the audience. This is, I would suggest, is an effect at a conscious level. Combined with the subconscious 'aura' of music, this unity of the perceived and the imperceptible makes for a powerful inducement of thought based in the irrational—emotion. This use of existing music, is more often than not, sourced in the diegesis. The assertion that an obviously real piece of music is emanating from a 'real' source is used to create a 'more real' kind of authenticity. Non-diegetic music is historically associated with the melodramatic and the theatrical, so to pointedly avoid its use in a certain context, is to attempt to imply a documentary reality. For instance, the apparently entirely diegetic sound track of **Stand by Me** is an assertion of its 'factual' basis. Yet, an entirely diegetic sound track would constrict the presentation of the more emotive scenes. Therefore, Director Reiner surreptitiously introduces orchestrated, non-diegetic versions of the previously diegetic music.

Figure 6
Stand by Me (1986)

²⁴ It could be argued that lesser known stock music has a dual effect—operating as normal to the bulk of the audience and with a connotative specificity to a section of the audience. However, there are perils in this, as the satisfaction in recognising a particularly obscure musical reference can distract from its actual function.

²⁵ This allows an easy creation of cinematic 'rhythm' that film makers such as Eisenstein espoused. (Discussed in greater detail below)

Figure 7
2001 (1969)

Furthermore, with existing music—of any type—a director can more accurately control the message he wishes the music to impart. To elaborate: the communication of ideas from director to composer is often haphazard, relying on generalised verbalizations of the effect desired, as few directors are musically literate. Commonly, a director will use existing music to indicate the timing and nature of the music cues. The sound-track for Kubrick's **2001**—a collection, in part, of middle-brow classical favourites—was simply a recording of the cues sent to composer Alex North, which, Kubrick decided, North's score couldn't equal. But how could he hope to? With the works that were well known, such as *The Blue Danube*, Kubrick could connote meaning beyond the generic emotive level, using the particular associations of the piece to ironic effect. The other 'stock' music, though less well known to the audience ²⁴, and removed from specific connotative messages, give Kubrick an unusual degree of control. Existing music allows the generation of a particular response, the specificity of which cannot easily be communicated to a composer. When Kubrick uses Lygetti in **2001**, although the connotated meaning is limited to a minority of the audience, he is able to give the audience exactly what he envisaged for the scene, from its inception, through its performance, and to its editing. ²⁵ Subsequent directors have found that, to a generation whose lives have an incessant background of rock, allusions to nineteenth century classicism are less effective. To use the *Blue Danube* now is to refer to dead spacemen floating in space, not waltzes in Vienna. This raises one of the main difficulties I have with Adorno and Eisler's quest for mediated totality: no matter that you have created an artwork which does not need referencing to the cultural tradition, once it exists, it becomes part of that cultural tradition, and cannot but be seen in that context.

²⁶ Adorno and Eisler are not denying a link between the theatrical and the cinematic. Instead they are pointing out the opposed languages of the system of narrative in silent cinema, and radio.

Film music, related both to the cultural tradition, and the screen image, is the antitheses of the mediated totality. Yet this is only so, the authors argue, because its form is rooted in contradiction, a contradiction implicit in the heterogeneity of cinema. The combination of the two core dissimilar elements that constitute film— sound and vision— was, they argue, the accidental result of materialistic and scientific considerations, and not a natural progression, from neither the aesthetic of the recorded image, nor that of recorded sound.²⁶ There is a persistence in pursuing direct identification of sound with vision, despite the fact that the two stimuli are, in their process of perception, contradictory. They identify the root of this fallacy as the addition of music to film at the birth of cinema. While the authors concede that this was primarily to hide the noise of the projector— and allay the uneasiness of the audience in having a machine mediate their pleasure— they suggest that it became necessary to ‘exorcise’ the ghostly screen images. The characters on screen were less than human, they argue, both because they were two-dimensional, and because they were mute. Music’s power of association with the personal, and the spontaneous allows the acceptance of the immediacy of the image, which is neither.

After the development of reproduced synchronous sound, nothing, Adorno and Eisler argue, has changed; the characters are still mute. Cinema is a medium governed by gesture, with speech merely an interruptive designator linked to moving effigies. This is obvious in the reception of dialogue in silent film, indicated by inter-titles, yet the authors suggest that this is also the case in sound film. Here, they say, division between inter-title and image is mirrored by the opposition between the qualities of the reproduced image, and the reproduced sound. The image adopts a two dimensional form, yet sound resonates throughout the auditorium. While this gives ‘depth’ to the image, the inherent-contradiction results in a perceptual gap between spoken word

²⁷ An enhancement of the Dolby System, involving the establishment of more areas of stereophonic location— including bass units underneath the seats—and an amplification system configured to each THX theatre's acoustic identity. This is the latest attempt, the first of our technological generation, to impose a bench-mark of sound reproduction standards. Currently unavailable in Ireland, it has to be heard (and felt!) to be believed.

²⁸ 7, page 382

²⁹ In certain Dublin cinemas, the very process of sound reproduction – Dolby Stereo—is triumphed in a trailer before the screening of films, with no apparent negative reaction from the audience.

³⁰ Note the contemporary use of Box Office figures to prove a movie's worth.

and image. It could be said that this gap is all the greater now that systems such as Dolby THX²⁷ further increase the perceived spatial depth, and acoustic range, of sound. Music is, therefore, still necessary in the sound film, to bridge this gap with an independent "sense of corporeity".²⁸

The core message of Adorno and Eisler's work is their dismay that music's role should be reduced to that of a crutch to film. I cannot bring myself to be shocked at this 'commodification' of music, and I feel it has introduced more music to more people than a mediated totality ever could. Yet, on the whole, I cannot deny that their analysis is very sound. The explanation of music's aura is, I feel, particularly important, in suggesting a logical basis for music's illogical qualities. I must question, however, their particular examples of the application of music's aura; I do not believe that an audience needs music to offset the bureaucratic, technological,²⁹ or mass produced³⁰ nature of cinema, although it is self evident that music is often used to mask the inconsistencies of the cinematic medium.

Let me elaborate: to be understood, cinema must echo the processes of perception. Within any one scene, the classical narrative montage is largely modeled on the way we perceive sight—a constant process of concentrating on individual elements, from which our mind constructs the whole. The perception of sound is an aid to this cognitive construction process, providing a constant, a perceptive cement to bind the fragments of sight together. Diegetic cinematic sound echoes this process, maintaining the illusion of a constant sound source within a scene containing many different camera angles. Yet, surely non-diegetic sound is contrary to our process of perception? Yes, but then so too is the overall mechanism of the movie. When, in the classical narrative, there is a change of location, time, or point of view; when the unlikely or the imperceptible is portrayed; whenever the mon-

tage diverges from the reality of visual perception, non-diegetic sound must be introduced to retain the illusion of reality. It functions as an aural constant, where diegetic sound cannot. The indirect, yet immediate nature of its identification with the visual— which so angered Adorno— is the key to our accepting this adoption of diegetic sound's function.

This, I feel, is one of the major contradictions of this analysis: Adorno and Eisler, while detailing the corrupted use of music in the classical narrative film, actually reveal how essential that 'corruption' is for the successful progress of the narrative. A film in the classical narrative tradition with purely diegetic sound could function, but would be constrained in its ability to communicate emotive, non specific meaning. A movie which conformed to their ideals, would have difficulty functioning as a narrative at all. This is not to say that the idea of cinematic music independent from the tradition of cinema and western tonality is untenable. However, to reject Hollywood's codified use of music, while accepting the associated conventions of the other cinematic elements, is something of an oxymoron. Classical narrative cinema is built on the inter-relation of codified usage of each cinematic element: to change the lexicon of only one of these elements is to destroy the artifice of narrative ³¹. If that was their intention, they were anticipating the work of anti-narrative auteurs such as Godard. Yet his work is as removed from the masses as any product of the culture industry. Not because of the disguised ideological distance between artwork and audience which Adorno and Eisler attribute to Hollywood cinema, but because of an actual physical distance, as movie goers stay away in droves. Classical narrative cinema has an enormous potential for ideological proselytising, but not at the expense of the narrative— a fact Adorno and Eisler overlook. There is an implication that music, conforming to their ideals, could have an almost salvational effect on the viewer. I believe they have proved that such music would do

³¹ And unease the audience. Hollywood's measured use of this effect will be discussed below.

nothing but alienate the audience. Perhaps this is the desired effect, as they would then overthrow the bourgeois in a fit of pique. I can't help feeling, however, that they would just ask for their money back.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Listening to music is enjoyable, a key fact which, because of its self evidence, many film theorists overlook. But then, we don't go to the movies to enjoy the music. However, our willingness to enjoy music plays an essential part in the inference of meaning by non-diegetic sound. What is the basis for enjoying music? According to psychoanalytic theory, aural perception, in general, has a basis in the pleasurable. I will apply these theories to explain the capability of non-diegetic sound to elicit pleasure in the service of the narrative.

At the heart of this capability lies what Lacan termed our invocatory drive— the aural equivalent of voyeurism. Mary Ann Douane, writing on the voice in cinema, draws on the psychoanalytic studies which originate this pleasure in our pre-cognition experiences. Each time a voice is heard, she says, pleasure is derived from the variance between two opposed perceptual processes. Primarily, vocal sounds are interpreted in order to comprehend what is being said. Simultaneously, there is a subliminal memory of the infantile period in the listeners perceptual development, when he or she derived enjoyment in the abstract qualities of the uninterpreted voice.³²

³² 6, page 169

Obviously, music, presented in its usual independent, uncontextual form, functions solely to give pleasure. However, when music operates in cinema— contextually tied to a narrative, and acting as a signifier— there is a level of interpretation required. The decoding process is simpler than with the voice, as music is not a information disseminating medium. As with the human voice, the aural information is only part of the package of communication— the visual information is considerable, and usually paramount. I would suggest, therefore, that we experience a unique type of pleasure upon hearing non-diegetic music, more subliminal than when listening to music for its own sake, and

Figure 8
The Presidio (1988)

³³ A practical proof of this memory is the generation of 'Neighbours' babies, who— with the limited awareness of the newly born— respond to the distinctive theme tune with an attentiveness and tranquillity normally reserved for their mothers own voice.

³⁴ 6, page 170

³⁵ 6, page 171

closer to that felt when listening to the human voice. This is the root, I believe, of non-diegetic music's ability to convey great feeling. A corny piece of music can save a corny visual, simply by triggering reflex emotions— a fact on which classical narrative often relies. Equally, the lack of music, where it would be expected, can be used to great effect. **The Presidio**, a turkey on all other accounts, successfully shows the growth of love in a sexual relationship by featuring two copulative scenes at the beginning and end of the narrative— the first is silent, and the second is mired in the sound of a thousand violins.

The pleasure derived from hearing begins at a very early age, and, it could be argued, is the key to our suspension of disbelief in perceiving cinema. For nine months, sound makes up the bulk of sensory information,³³ most of it the sounds of the body, of which we retain a subliminal awareness. Once born, the omnidirectional quality of sound gives us a constant aural mirror, and an ability to discern aural information beyond the line of sight. Aural information is oriented towards the inner, the self, and a wider context of the external. Yet this information must function in congruence with visual stimulus, which is derived merely from the exterior placed immediately in front of us. Lacan states that this opposition— of the internal qualities of hearing, and the external qualities of seeing— is the basis for the imaginary structuring of the body which determines hallucinations.³⁴ Sound, therefore is necessary in promoting the hallucination that is the narrative. I would add to that statement, that mere diegetic sound would not suffice. The film theatre being a "sonorous envelope"³⁵ is, essentially, a womb- but a womb with a view. We experience basically the same range of visual information as in life, but we are given aural stimuli which reflects the self, and mediates information we cannot see. To promote the diegesis, sound in film has to be commensurate with sound in life— introspective, and without boundaries.

The hallucinatory separation of the self from the corporeal form, necessary for the suspension of disbelief, is further exploited by non-diegetic music. Writing on the voice and pleasure, Guy Rosolato explores the psychological basis of our pleasure in music. He stated that harmony in music functions by playing on the listeners conception of corporeal unity. Let me explain: when young, we form an image of our physical presence. This is, to a large extent, derived from the realization that the production of sound by the voice, and the hearing of that sound, coincide— the concept of the aural mirror, mentioned above. This image of ourselves is somewhat confused by an awareness of a previously physical, and currently imagined, union with the mother. This is expressed by the infant as pleasure derived from the abstract qualities of the mothers voice. The study the infant make of these abstract qualities, leads to the appreciation of harmony in music, says Rosolato. He goes on to suggest that the basis for the listeners response to harmony and dissonance in western music are rooted in the concept of corporeal unity. The discomfort which dissonance brings, and the aspiration to resolve dissonance with harmonic intervals, are an expression of our desire for unity of the perceptive and the physical:

The harmonic and polyphonic unfolding in music can be understood as succession of tensions and releases, of unifications and divergences between parts which are gradually stacked, opposed in successive chords only to be resolved ultimately into their simplest unity. It is therefore the entire dramatization of separated bodies and their reunion which harmony supports.³⁶

³⁶ Rosolato, in "la voix: entre corps et langage", p 82. Quoted in 6, page 170

This argument is not as far fetched as it seems. The notion of dissonance in western tonality is very clear cut. If any two successive white keys are played on the piano— an interval of one— they are said to be dissonant because as the sound resonates, the two tones are clearly distinguishable from each other: they are separate. Yet, if the keys are separated by another key— an

³⁷ There is a story, probably allegorical, that the only means of getting Mozart out of bed in the mornings was to play a dissonant chord within his earshot. Tortured by the discord, he would be compelled to leap up, and play a resolved harmonic chord.

Figure 9
Demonstration of dissonance

interval of two–, the ensuing sound is homogeneous, with the component tones difficult to isolate: they are united. When a dissonant interval is played, there is an undeniable urge to resolve the discord with a change to a harmonic interval.³⁷ Essentially, the resolved major chord is the momentum of western tonality. Any derivation from this form– dissonance is the extreme antithesis– will need resolution: the introduction of semitones, even if harmonic, compel a change to the purer whole tone major chord. The traditional association of minor chords with melancholia is an expression of this desire for simple unity.

What are the implications of this philosophy for non-diegetic music? It provides an explanation for the power of music to promote motivational changes in the narrative. The oscillation between dissonance and resolution, the core of western music, provides an energy which, in cooperation with other cinematic elements, propels the viewer through the narrative. In this function, I would propose that music has adopted some of the duties of the inter-title, which was used to “condense or summarise narrative elements, to eclipse portions of narrative time, to ‘transport’ the spectator to new narrative locations.”³⁸ – all transformations assisted by music. This is feasible because music’s implication of corporal unity is constant, which aids in disguising the heterogeneous nature of cinema’s operation. Hence, this theory provides a psychological rationale for the use of music to mask changes of scene, point of view, and time. When the narrative is at its most fragmented, when the mechanism which maintains cinematic corporeal unity is exposed, music’s persistence of coherence serves to hide this.

This argument for a musical dynamic is particularly useful in dealing with the concept of cinematic rhythm. First used by the French impressionist film makers and aestheticians– Jean Epstein, Louis Delluc, and Abel Gance, among others, this often used, rarely

³⁸ 27, page16/17

defined term was derived from the writings of Wagner, and adopted by Eisenstein, in particular, as an ideal at which to aim. The concept of cinematic rhythm was simply an idea based on a musical analogy of the pattern of montage over time. They believed that cinema was an art of temporal process, with cinematic time having a variegated flow of accent and restraint which sets the perceived 'pace' of the film. By itself, this visual rhythm initiates a certain appreciation of temporality. However, the use of music, to alternately emphasise the visual modulation and create a coordinated alternation of emphasis, creates a 'fusion' which heightens temporal awareness. I would supplement this theory with Rosolato's concept of music's internal dynamism, which undoubtedly adds to the synergistic properties of sound / vision interrelations. How does the concept of rhythm relate practicality to film? The use of Penderecki in Kubrick's **The Shining** typifies this tight interleaving of music and montage. A more common example of a rhythmic fusion of montage and music is in the portrayal of motion, such as trains. Especially when they approach a heroine tied to the track. Almost any of the action dominated films that have taken over the cinema in the last decade display elements of this rhythmic fusion.

Figure 9
The Shining (1980)
Back to the Future 3 (1990)

The role that pure pleasure plays as part of the cinematic package, and the degree to which that pleasure is mediated by pre-natal experience, cannot be underestimated. The experience of going to the movies³⁹ is an exercise in controlled sensory deprivation and overload. The audience sits in (some) comfort, in a dark, warm coloured room⁴⁰, at a regulated temperature, sealed off from the outside world, feeding on a mass of concentrated sensory information, and enjoying it. Who wants to emerge, blinking and acquiescent, into the real world? It is hardly surprising then, that film theory has a surfeit of psycho sexual analysis. Regardless, I am convinced of the necessity of explaining our experience of pleasure, especially when it is 'tapped' by

³⁹ We no longer 'see a film',
we 'go to the movies'.

⁴⁰ I state this only from experience, but I
have never seen a cinema whose decor was
anything other than red / orange / brown.

Hollywood. We exist in such a Dionysian society that without understanding why we enjoy ourselves, we could enter a state of ecstatic soporificity.

At this stage, I would like to discuss the answers semiotic logic can offer to the questions this thesis asks: why are we able to interpret the combination of image and non-diegetic sound in the first place? There is no situation in life where the sound we hear is the product of something which we cannot perceive. Yet, in a movie, we accept sound which makes no attempt to explain where or how it is produced. Why, and how do we accept sensory information that is palpably unreal in a medium which strives so hard to maintain the illusion of reality?

This, Christian Metz would argue, is because sound is a 'secondary' quality. Writing on the process of perception⁴¹, Metz identified the procedure of naming– the categorisation of our world into identifiable objects, guided by a lexicon unique to our culture– as the crux of our method of understanding. If any of our senses are stimulated, we 'name' that which affected us– it is thus defined, and is an 'object'. However, the concept of an aural object is rather incongruous. Sound, according to Metz, is like smell, taste, and colour– it functions solely as an attribute for an already defined object, which we recognise using basic visual and tactile stimuli. I would argue that this concept can be applied to our understanding and acceptance of non-diegetic sound: if perceived as an aural object, non-diegetic sound is irrational, and uncontextual; once 'sourced' to an object– a character, for example– it becomes simply another expression of that character's qualities.

Is there justification for stating that aural information is generally secondary to visual and tactile information? Metz bases his argument in western linguistic conventions, which I find easiest to explain by example: imagine somebody trying to explain a noise they heard. They perceive a "roar", but without knowing its source, what do they comprehend? "I heard a noise. A roar-

⁴¹ "Le Perçu et le Nomme", from *Essais Sémiotiques* (Paris: Editions Klincksiek, 1977). I concentrated on the latter section, frequently reprinted under the title "Aural Objects".

ing sound." There are two things about this statement which are of interest. First, in most western communication, linguistic signifiers for aural qualities are used in the syntax as qualifiers for an established object— even when the object is unknown, we will err towards applying the aural attribute to a generic object— 'sound'— rather than express that sound's linguistic signifier— 'roar'— as the subject of the sentence. In the context of cinematic sound, Metz points out the primacy of the visual over the aural by indicating the inconsistency of the term for sound which originates beyond the camera's plain of vision— 'off-screen'. As he makes clear, the sound— the aural object— could never be described in terms being on or off the screen, as the laws of physics dictate that the sound is diffused throughout the auditorium. Yet we persist in using a linguistic signifier whose basis is in the source of the sound, and not the sound itself.

This is a consistent bias western languages have. To demonstrate, allow me return to the discussion of a 'roar', mentioned above. If, to discover more about the sound, the listener is asked to describe it, there will usually be a reliance on simile: "It was like an animal." If the listener chooses to impersonate the sound, it marks a regression to primitive onomatopoeic denotation— a means of interpreting the aural unknown particularly evident in children.⁴² This is the origin of most linguistic signifiers for sound— such as 'roar', and 'whisper'. Such words assume a secondary status once the source of the sound is identified: the listener is no longer concerned with the aural attribute, but the object which produced it. The discussion on the unidentified animal like roar, mentioned above, would reflect this: "It was a lion. I heard a lion."

Once the source of the sound is known, the sound itself assumes secondary importance, and can even be dispensed with. For instance, when speaking of 'a rumble of thunder', it is acceptable,

⁴² While mimicry is the response because of linguistic shortcomings, it also represents an attempt to control the unknown. As a child controls a car through 'brmm, brmm' noises, or speaks for a stuffed animal, so it hopes to gain the same command over the unknown sound through its imitation.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the

author to the editor of the journal.

2. The second part is a letter from the editor to the

author, in which the editor expresses his

appreciation of the author's contribution to the

journal and wishes to express his

regret that the author's paper could not be

published in the current issue of the journal.

3. The third part is a letter from the author to the

editor, in which the author expresses his

regret that his paper could not be published in the

current issue of the journal and wishes to

express his appreciation of the editor's

kindness in accepting his paper for

publication in the next issue of the journal.

4. The fourth part is a letter from the editor to the

author, in which the editor expresses his

regret that the author's paper could not be

published in the current issue of the journal.

5. The fifth part is a letter from the author to the

editor, in which the author expresses his

regret that his paper could not be published in the

current issue of the journal and wishes to

express his appreciation of the editor's

kindness in accepting his paper for

publication in the next issue of the journal.

6. The sixth part is a letter from the editor to the

author, in which the editor expresses his

regret that the author's paper could not be

published in the current issue of the journal.

7. The seventh part is a letter from the author to the

editor, in which the author expresses his

regret that his paper could not be published in the

current issue of the journal and wishes to

express his appreciation of the editor's

kindness in accepting his paper for

publication in the next issue of the journal.

Figure 10
Apocalypse Now (1979)
Wilt (1989)

if not preferable, to say 'thunder'. Yet to simply say 'a rumble' causes confusion. Let me give an example in cinematic terms. If **2001** had been re-released with Alex North's original score, it would be described as 'the same movie, with different music'. Yet consider Coppolla's **Apocalypse Now**, and Mel Smith's **Wilt**. Both feature a scene, the lynch pins of their respective plots, with Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries booming in the background. To describe this situation as 'the same music, with different movies' seems wrong. They are 'two different movies, with the same music'. Once 'music' is moved from being the subject of the sentence, to its predicate, the tone moves from the ridiculous to the rational. These examples support Metz's argument. Our conventions of grammar, he asserts, indicate the immobility of a secondary element: language cannot adequately cater for its use as a primary function— even purely theoretically.

It is clear that conventions of western linguistics do not readily allow a reference to sound without relating the sound to a source. The same is true, says Metz, of our process of perception. These linguistic conventions, he argues, are the symptoms of an ideology of perception which prevents aural stimuli from being interpreted as a named object. However, the naming process requires the independent objectification of sound: in the time frame between the hearing of a sound, and the identification of its source, it must be an object itself, as perceptual stimulus which is unnamed is effectively unknown, and so cannot be qualified. There is therefore, a friction between instinct and logic when perceiving unsourced sound. This perceptual conflict is used for many purposes in film, principally as a means of stimulating the irrational mind of the audience. It provides a window on the psyche, which allows us to be reminded both of our pre-cognizant experience— to refer to Doune's theory— and the pre-individualistic community— to cite Adorno and Eisler.

Figure 11
Silence of the Lambs (1991)

The aural objects dichotomy is particularly evident in the function of non-diegetic sound as a catalyst of fear. This secondary status of aural information, and the desire to identify the source of a sound, is one of the main reasons for the effectiveness of non-diegetic sound in inducing tension. Abstract non-diegetic sound, in particular, will create a conflict within the viewers subconscious; awareness of the sound itself, coupled with a difficulty in 'naming' the source causes a subliminal discord, which is usually perceived as fear. The low growling, rumbling sound which accompanies Clarisse's meetings with Hannibal, in ***Silence of the Lambs***, is a typical example.

It is less straightforward to instil fear with music, especially within the 19th century romantic conventions which forms the vocabulary of most film music. One of the simplest means is to depart from this form, abandoning the conventions of intervals, melody, and instrumentation, hence creating an abstract and difficult to source aural object. This technique, when still practiced in the language of the romantic orchestra, most commonly featured highly pitched, atonal string glissandos, and syncopated staccato blasts from bass instruments. Similarly, music which strives towards ideals similar to Adorno and Eisler, and consciously spurns the context of western tonality, gains its widest exposure in the thriller and horror genres. There is an acceptance of the use of Penderecki in ***The Shining*** which is vastly disproportionate to his neglected status as 'concert-hall' composer. In fact, the lexicon of the modernist movement in music has been largely appropriated by the cinema, and contemporary composers are more likely to write for the movies as for the concert hall. This would perhaps indicate that music outside the 19th century romantic tradition has finally found an outlet. The nature of cinematic music—necessarily rhythmic, with a subservience of melody to function, and a relationship to other stimuli—compensate for the structured minimalism of contemporary music, which can make

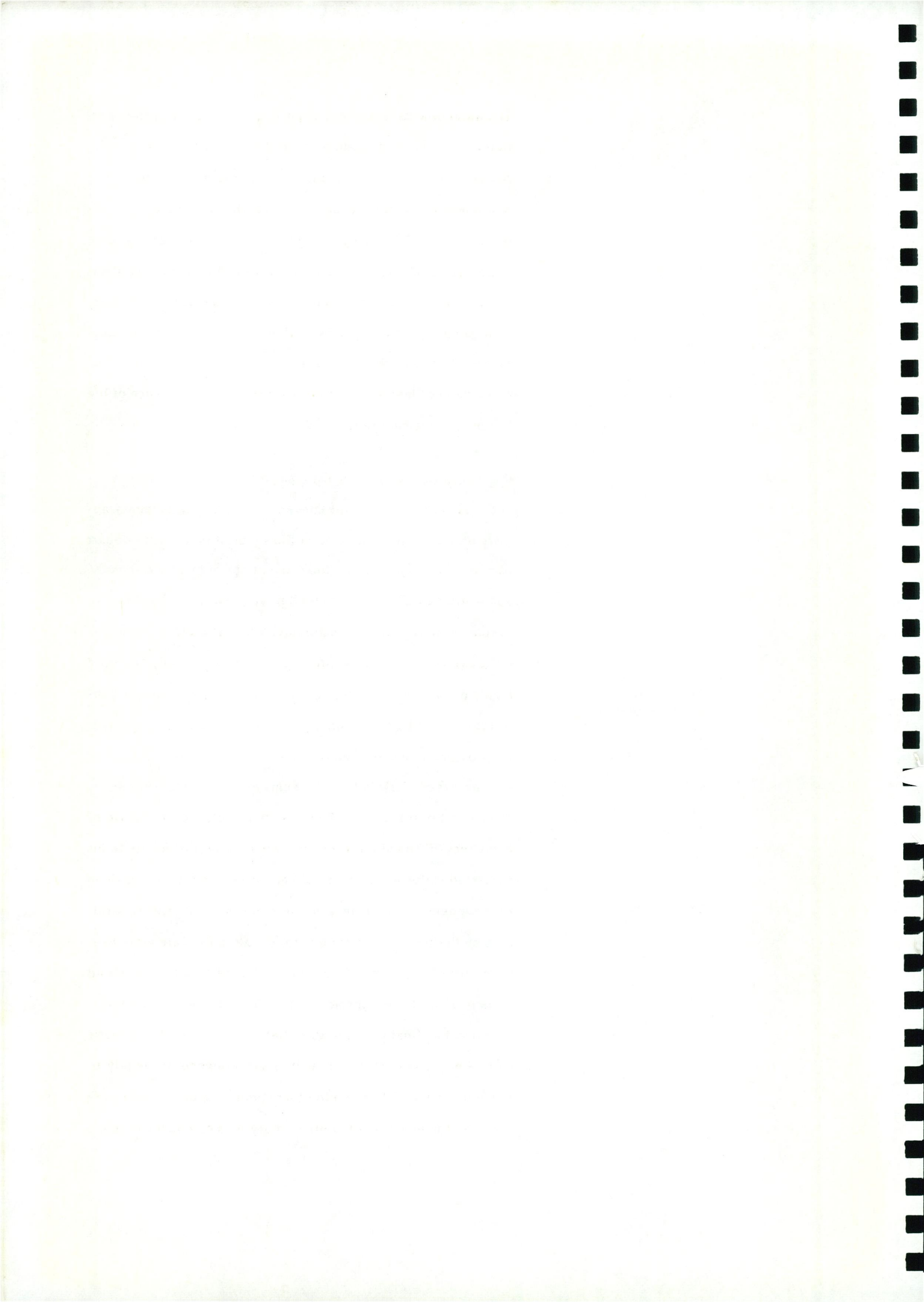


Figure 12
Hallowe'en (1979)

a concert performance something of an endurance test. However, mainstream Hollywood cinema, since the development of electronic instrumentation, has come to rely on this new musical genre for the horror / thriller genre. Repetitious short sequences of percussive sounds now dominate the execution of this technique. For example, consider John Carpenter's electronic score for **Hallowe'en**, and the occasional use of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells in **The Exorcist**.

In effecting tension, I would argue, it is not just the arrangement and performance of non-diegetic music that deviates from the norm, but also the process of identification. In classical narrative, non-diegetic music is aligned with the character who controls the point of view— the music assists the audience in the assimilation of the character's feelings. Yet, in scenes introducing tension, the crises of naming, described above, leads the viewer towards a more indirect process of identification. This is, perhaps, a consequence of the continual oscillation between voyeurism and narcissism in the horror / tension genre. An adequate explanation of non-diegetic sound's function in inducing tension requires a brief discussion of the identification process in the horror genre as a whole.

In a narrative where the motivation of the plot is the brutalisation of one character by another, there is an oscillation between identification with the 'victim', and pleasure derived in seeing him or her suffer. The audience identifies with the victim while he or she is being stalked, or at least rejects identification with the aggressor. Yet there comes a point where the audience stops wincing in sympathy, and starts to feast their eyes on the ensuing carnage. The ever more important role of violence in this genre could lead to the assumption that identification with the violent act has superseded identification with character. This is not the case. While 'gratuitous' violence does have a greater func-

⁴³ In the Psycho shower scene, we never see the knife entering Janet Leigh's body.

⁴⁴ Socio-psychologists would argue that such perfect endings only functioned during the cold war, where every 'mysterious alien force' was a metaphor for communism— which had to be seen to be defeated. Contemporary examples of the genre orient themselves towards the enemy within, as exemplified by the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series.

⁴⁵ A true reflexive response to tension/suspense music, consistent with normal viewer response to sound, would be "Go on, kill the bitch!" This is not to say that such a reaction never occurs, but that it represents a minority; either there is an unwillingness to suspend disbelief, the fear is being denied, or the heckler is a psychopath himself.

tion in the narrative than before, it is a passive one, offering a catharsis, a release from the tension which precedes it. The increase in the amount of violence, and the representation of that which was previously imagined⁴³ is mainly due to the difficulty the genre has in offering a release from the unease it induces. Acceptance of perfectly resolved happy endings is very low, both because of the lure of the sequel, and the cynicism of this genre's audience.⁴⁴ Yet the audience needs a release from the collectively held breath which this genre invokes. Violence, presented for their enjoyment, provides a 'pleasurable' antidote to the fear which prefaced it. Non-diegetic sound, and the aural object dichotomy in particular, plays a key role in allowing this transgression of identification.

During such scenes, the point of view is dominated by the aggressor— either the shot is seen through their eyes, or they are the focus of attention in an otherwise innocent frame. Usually, the non-diegetic music conforms to this point of view: whether signifying a shark, or an axe murderer, it communicates confusion, conflict, dissonance, aggression, determination— all applicable qualities. However, the 'atypical' characteristics of such music— it usually departs from 19th century musical conventions— create the aural object dichotomy, preventing the audience from attributing the music to the character / event that is feared. They do not wish to share the feelings that the music communicates.⁴⁵ Although the scene is presented, both aurally and visually, from the point of view of the 'killer', the audience identifies with the 'victim'. In a departure from most other non-diegetic sound, there is a suggestion of an emotion which is not assimilated, but rejected.

However, this use of non-diegetic sound rapidly assumes the intuitive norm: where such a conflict of the aural object is used to induce fear or tension, it only does so for a limited number of

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

5. The fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

6. The sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

7. The seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

8. The eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

9. The ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

10. The tenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

11. The eleventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

12. The twelfth part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

13. The thirteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

14. The fourteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

15. The fifteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Treasury.

16. The sixteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

17. The seventeenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

18. The eighteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

19. The nineteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

20. The twentieth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

21. The twenty-first part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

22. The twenty-second part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

23. The twenty-third part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

26. The twenty-sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Treasury.

27. The twenty-seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

28. The twenty-eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

29. The twenty-ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

30. The thirtieth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

31. The thirty-first part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

32. The thirty-second part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

33. The thirty-third part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

34. The thirty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

35. The thirty-fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

36. The thirty-sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

37. The thirty-seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Treasury.

⁴⁶ Or, in the case of false suspense, the release is an intimation of normality which contradicts the effect of the aural object dichotomy. This is discussed further below.

⁴⁷ These are known in the music business as stabs. I have been unable to ascertain whether this term existed before *Psycho*, as I would imagine that this scene is linked to the words origin.

occurrences. The link between a character or event and the 'atypical' music which accompanies them is eventually established through repetition— the sound becomes familiar, and is 'named'. Nevertheless, the fear continues, as the character or event which the music has been sourced to is known to be unpleasant— hence, a Pavlovian response. The fear that is induced, whether reflexive or learnt, is released by a voyeuristic observation of that which the music signposted— the act of violence, or its consequences⁴⁶. However, the 'atypical' music must be resolved before identification with the aggressor, and the consequent release of tension, can occur. This genre, therefore, sees a continuous change between directive non-diegetic sound, and emphatic non-diegetic sound.

For example, take the actual murder in *Psycho's* shower scene. In the brief period when the unknown assailant stalks the shower, the sound is purely diegetic, emphasizing the 'reality' of the situation, and the unheeding demeanor of the Leigh character. As the curtain is pulled back, the music starts, supporting the visual action. The rhythmical dissonant string shrieks ⁴⁷ perform two functions. Primarily, they are adjectival, adding an exclamation mark to each incision.— they audience derives a heightened perception of the violence and pain that the visuals show. Similarly, the score combines with the heightened diegetic sound to create a graphically violent sound image, of an intensity that the visual can only suggest.

Secondly, the score supports the identification process— somewhat complicated by the anonymity of the killer. The music departs from 19th century musical conventions— it is perceived as 'atypical' by the audience. As the music accompanies the stabbing, and not the stalking, the aural object dichotomy effectively prevents identification not only with the killer, but also with the act itself. The resolution— the universal exhalation of held breath—

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Hitchcock originally had no music cue for this scene, and disappointed with the results, had decided to demote the project to television. Herrmann, on his own volition, wrote for the scene, and had little difficulty in persuading Hitchcock to use it!

Figure 13
Psycho (1969)

comes as 'Mother' has left the room, and Leigh collapses to the floor. The music has changed: it is slow, low and sustained, and communicates conclusion and finality. It allows the derivation of voyeuristic pleasure in observing Leigh's langourous form slide to the floor. ⁴⁸

Why should the audience believe what 'scary' music implies? There is an almost reflexive acceptance of any message communicated by music, especially in the horror / suspense genre. This is partly due to the secondary status, as Metz would have it, of aural perception: film makers exploiting the fact that the interpretation of aural information is essentially passive. However, the narrative veracity enjoyed by non-diegetic sound cannot be solely attributed to a lazy ear. When aural information is separate from the diegesis, the notion of sound's secondary status is supplanted by its invisibility. We are willing to accept the truth of what the music says, precisely because it cannot be seen. Non-diegetic sound has the same authority of the voice over—the disturbing quality of its 'faceless' presence lends it the status of an oracle, a prophet.

Like the voice over, it can be contradicted, as evident in the use of non-diegetic sound to create false suspense: the crescendo of agitated double basses in *Jaws* engenders fear in the audience, but often the actuality of an obviously non threatening situation is then confirmed with visual information. False suspense uses the apparent independence of information mediated by non-diegetic sound for ironic effect. This would appear to support the theory—related to Metz' assertion that visual stimuli dominate the hierarchy of interpretation—that a cinematic visual cannot but relate the truth, either confirming or contradicting what other elements in the narrative communicate to us. However, I believe one of the motivating forces of the narrative, certainly in the horror / suspense genre, is the 'flux of integrity' between

the cinematic elements. Certainly, information intimated visually dominates the narrative. Yet, whenever the emotional level is being raised, at speed, and to peak level, non-diegetic sound briefly supersedes this authority. It communicates information that the visual either contradicts, or does not supply: it needs no visual amplification to justify or validate its message. Non-Diegetic sound, briefly, becomes interpretative as opposed to reflexive— a hot medium. This does not last: either the cathartic violence, or the ironic visual contradiction, restores the primacy of the visual information.

Figure 14
Jaws (1975)

The motivation of this dissertation thus far has been to analyse the functionality of non-diegetic sound in the narrative, by attempting to explain how an unreal element can support the impression of verisimilitude, and relating this to its method of conveying meaning. It would be logical, therefore, to conclude this analysis with a summation of the functions of non-diegetic sound in the classical narrative film. In attempting to do so, the generic principles of semiotic classification will be used as benchmarks, both as a means of classification, and to further explore the communicative properties of non-diegetic sound.

In essence, the core terms of semiology encapsulate the articulative attributes of non-diegetic sound that this thesis has identified, and indicate the limitations of that articulation. Semiotics, as Saussure defined it, was the science of signs. As such, it should be an ideal vehicle to summarize the paradox of non-diegetic sound in narrative film. Effectively, it is a sign— an abstract medium interpreted as a logical expression of meaning. A derived category of the sign is the icon: an expression of meaning interpreted as representing a precise object, due to shared perceptual qualities. A photograph is iconic, as is representational art. However, music— which makes up the bulk of non-diegetic sound— is generally regarded to be a system of non-communicative expression and connotation, which Metz compared to architecture.

It was these qualities which film makers sought to exploit in using music, and that type of discourse which naturally dominates cinematic music. Nonetheless, the interpretation of certain non-diegetic sound contains elements of the icon. Since onomatopoeic words are evidently iconic in function, as resemblance is the essence of iconicity, it is reasonable to assume that onomatopoeic sound is also iconic. 'Mickey-mousing', although an evolved form of onomatopoeia, could be termed an icon. Furthermore, it could

be suggested that the concept of leitmotif, while quintessentially connotative, is iconic in its implication of shared attributes between the music, and the subject of the music.

The concept of the index— a further subgroup of the sign— and its applicability to non-diegetic sound is somewhat clearer. An indexical sign indicates a causal relationship between the sign, and the object, with the existence of the sign entirely dependent on the object. The theorists' dismissal of non-diegetic sound was probably due, in part, to the belief that cinematic music was entirely indexical in function. The nature of composition for the films— relative to an existing visual— supports this notion. Certainly, much film music is an measurement that indicates a quality, or the relative strength of that quality, present in the narrative— a barometer of tension, or romance, for example. However, as this dissertation argued, non-diegetic sound does not merely act as a passive indication of narrative atmosphere, but in many cases, also plays an active role in engendering it.

This function can be further categorised as metonymy— the representation of an object or an idea by providing a substitute inherently associated with the original— or synecdoche— effecting the same task by furnishing an immediately recognisable detail of the whole. These two terms encompass most of the typical musical devices which Adorno and Eisler detailed. For the most part, music imparts meaning as synecdoche. Illustrative and imitative music ('mickey-mousing'), 'authentic' music, and stock music are all synecdoche ⁴⁹. The use of characteristic themes is the only purely metonymic function, although once synecdochal music has been named, it subsequently operates metonymically.

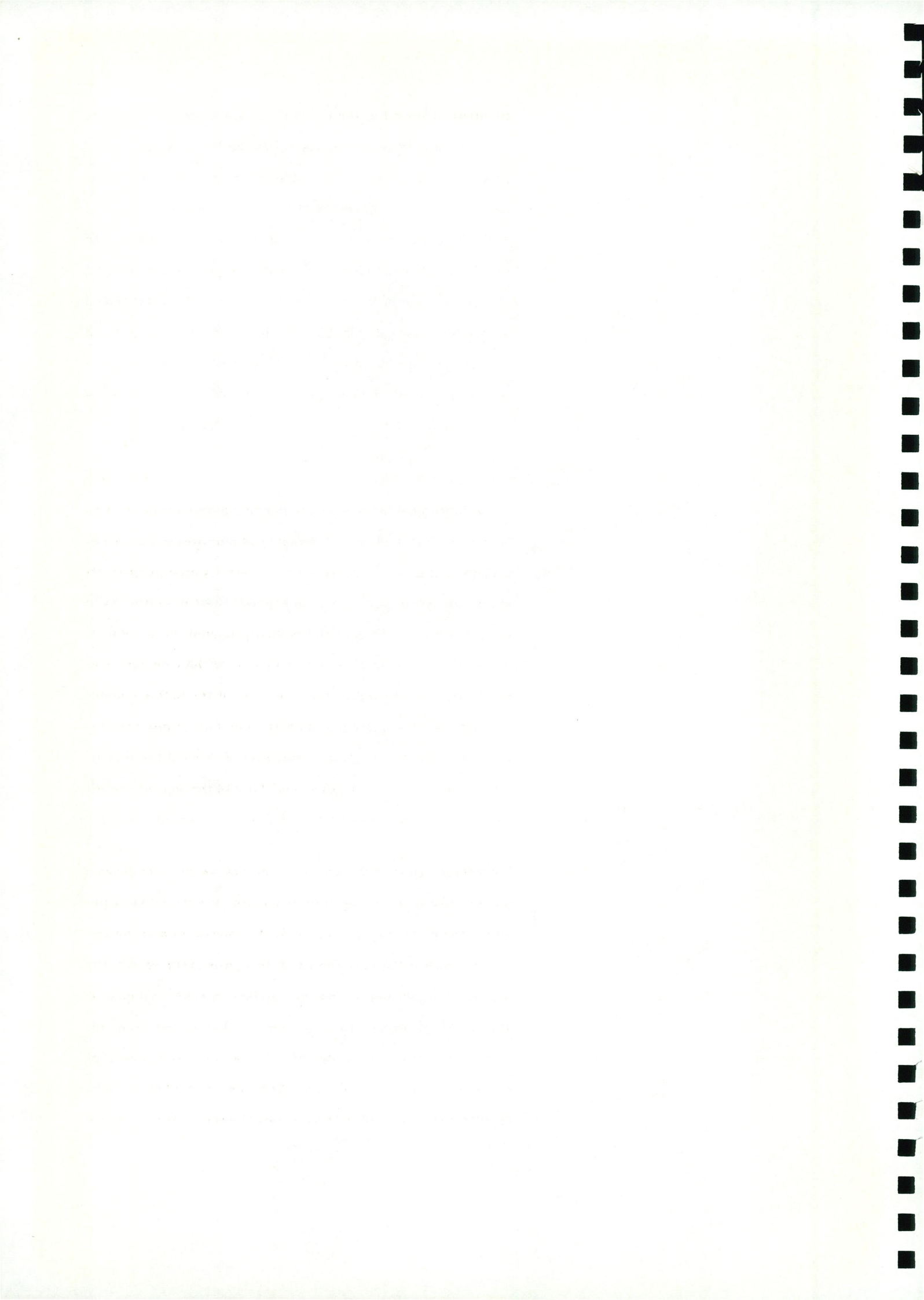
⁴⁹ It should be noted that none of these terms are mutually exclusive. After all, as American philosopher C.S. Pierce pointed out, the photographic image, though indisputably iconic, is also an index, in that without the reaction of film emulsion to reflected light on the object, the photo would not exist.

Finally, there is the dimension within the sign known as the symbolic: the symbol is tied to the object it signifies due to linkage of ideas or familiar association. This term perfectly delineates those functions of non-diegetic sound which rely on the many

traditions involved in the cinematic process. At an immediate level, the use of existing music to invoke the ideas associated with that music, is symbolic. In the wider context the connotative use of traditions drawn from the culture of music, of film, and of the history of the audio visual experience in general—termed paradigmatic connotation—is symbolic. Therefore, the very use of a western harmonic model, and the effects it creates, could be described as symbolic. Equally, the information connotated from the relationship of non-diegetic music to a specific scene—syntagmatic connotation—is operating symbolically, with the interpreted linkages and associations confined to the narrative, rather than the cinematic medium as a whole.

These conceptual terms were the building blocks established by Saussure, which Metz used for analytical purposes in the specific context of cinema, concentrating his efforts on de-constructing the process of signification in general. There is a difficulty, if one is to remain truthful to Metz's theory, to apply his arguments on the *Grand Syntagmatique* to only one of the cinematic elements. He is concerned with the signifier of the heterogeneous cinematic whole—where non-diegetic sound is but one communicative element among many. However, as a basis for analytical summation it is useful, as the limitations of the applied analysis can illuminate the limit of articulation of the element studied.

The core principle of the evolved semiotics which Metz devised was the division of the sign into two parts. Every sign has a signifier—the method of putting across the message—and the signified, which is the message itself. In non-diegetic sound, the signifier is usually music, and the signified an emotional quality. This is a generalisation, I admit—perhaps a better description for the signifier would be 'a state based in the subconscious ir-rationale of the viewer'. This disparity between signified and signifier differs from the norm in cinematic image, where they are



generally one and the same.

How has music come to communicate the particular emotion identified with the character we 'source' it to? The signified element of a statement is further broken down into denotative and connotative elements. The issue of denotation in sound is not straightforward; when you take a picture of an object, the resulting image denotes that object. It would be logical to assume, therefore, that non-diegetic sound will denote, or represent, its 'source'. Hence, if an orchestra is recorded performing Samuel Barber's Adagio for strings, and I put the tape in my walkman and press play, it denotes 'Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings'. If I am unaware what the piece is, it denotes 'music', or 'orchestra'. Yet when I watch **Platoon**, the same music denotes the psyche of the Charlie Sheen character. As Metz asserted in 'Aural Objects', we must name the source of every sound; if I saw on the screen an orchestra, or a stereo system, the sound would still denote 'Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings', and provide a connotative commentary on the scene. Finding no acoustic source in the diegesis, I attribute the sound to the scene's central character. I am aware that it is not humanly possible to produce this sound, so, with a subconscious knowledge of cinematic and musical code, I interpret the music as a reflection of mood, with which I am invited to identify.

Figure 15
Platoon (1986)

However, this logic of musical denotation is far from certain— it is more rational to suggest that the Barber piece connotes all the attributes the listener applies to its source. To separate the denoted and connotated components of the signified element in music is to test the limits of the semiotic model. The key difficulty is deciding where reality and music meet. A photograph of something, is a denotation, mediated in a representational medium, of a physically real object. While it is clear that recordings of music denote the music itself, what does live music denote? It is not a

real, physical object, it is an abstract, non communicative, non representational codified medium of creative expression. The primary purpose of non-aligned music is not significance, but usually pleasure. This partly explains the difficulty– if not the impossibility– of further separating the signified element of a musical sign using Metz's model. The linguistic origin of the semiotic term 'denotation' implies a precision that an imprecise medium such as music cannot emulate. If denotation is said to be to the definitive meaning content of a communication, and connotation the ideas associated with the communication, then music cannot denote, having no definitive meaning content.

Yet if such strict guide-lines are to be imposed on the application of semiotic theory, then it could be argued that the cinematic medium itself cannot denote. Dudley Andrew, a theorist historian, criticises semiotics on this issue. In seeking to prove how the separation of denotation and connotation is a false science motivated by ideology ⁵⁰, his arguments can be used to prove that non-diegetic sound's communication transcends connotation. Firstly, he argues that the cinematic medium as a whole cannot only denote– even the simplest form of denotation will have a connotative element. Our recognition of an image on screen, as an icon / index of an object, would be impossible without a knowledge of western culture of visual representation, and the cinematic tradition– a process of connotation.⁵¹

Secondly, in a correlation of his first assertion, he argues that the root of connotation is denotation. Citing a model formulated by Roland Barthes, Andrew defines the process of connotation as a single material signifier– a denotation, in other words– producing a series of related signifieds:

⁵⁰ In "Concepts in Film Theory", during a chapter on signification, under the sub-heading 'A Critique of Semiotics'.

⁵¹ Metz did acknowledge that the cinematic language could not be broken down beyond the third level of linguistic articulation– the phrase, which he compared to the shot. (Cinema cannot say 'Dog', only 'Here is a dog') However, in admitting the lack of cinematic phonemes, he obviously felt this did not preclude the purely denotative capabilities of the cinematic phrase.

S^r	S^d	
$S^{r'}$		$S^{d'}$
$S^{r''}$		
		$S^{d''}$

S^r = Signifier

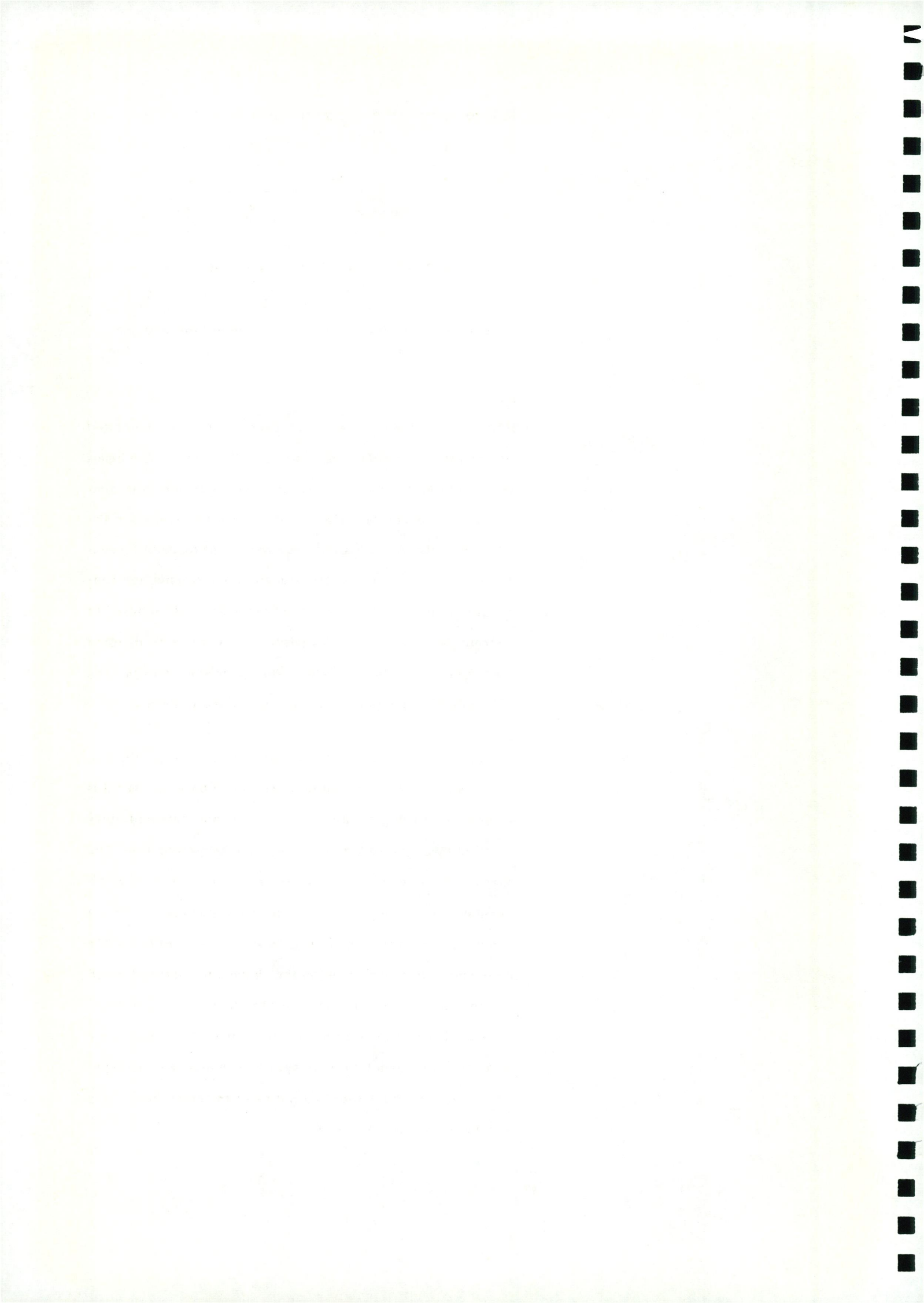
S^d = Signified

The immediate mental concept as given by the signifier is not what we attend to; rather it becomes a signifier itself of a more distant concept, which, in its turn, can also function as a signifier triggering a still more distant (and generally more abstract) concept. ...All these signifieds derive from a denotative base. ⁵²

52 1, page 70.

Thirdly, the desire to separate the denoted and the connotated are indicative of a modernist obsession with purity, which belies the paradoxically homogeneous heterogeneity of cinematic communication. Metz's particular brand of semiotics evolved in the late sixties, and, Andrew asserts, was part of the modernist movement. As such, his ideological inclination was to envisage connotated information as separate from a denotative base. To conceive of connotated knowledge as an addition to denoted information would be antithetic to the ideals of modernism— the equivalent of validating decoration stuck onto a building.

The difficulty in applying this formulation to non-diegetic film sound is to decide where music's denotative base lies. What is recognized as being signified, prior to the connotated interpretation of this signified that is derived from its presentation? The simple answer would be 'music'. However, this is too generic a denotation to be taken seriously— the cinematic image does not denote 'vision'. Although music is, in an independent context, a non-communicative medium, in the cinema, it is dependant on related visual information, and is used to impart meaning. It must, therefore have a more specific denotative base. Naturally, as the meaning music connotes is normally of an emotive and non-specific nature, the denotation will not be of the clarity associated with denotation in other media.



⁵³ See the earlier discussion of dissonance.

⁵⁴ In earlier scenes, the same music was used with different specificity—implying futility, dignity, and sorrow.

⁵⁵ Andrews uses the word 'collaboration' in the context of wartime France as an example. The denotative base is 'working together', but the second level of meaning, which assumes primacy, is 'sympathy with Nazis'.

Take the Barber / **Platoon** example cited above. It could be argued that the base denotation is the information derived from a symbolic / iconic process: relating the music to musical tradition ⁵³ provides us with associations of melancholia, solemnity and separation. [symbolic] These qualities are shared by the central character, so we interpret the music as representing his emotional status. [iconic] The connotated information derived from the context of the music in the narrative [syntagmatic] provides the second level of denotation. The death of colleagues, their brutalisation of the vietnamese, and the emotional behaviour of the character immediately implies grief.⁵⁴ This provides for a less ambiguous derivation of meaning, and is the level of denotation which is most immediately accepted.⁵⁵ Finally, there is the derivation of meaning from paradigmatic connotation—the implications of using this type of music, or, in the case of pre-scored piece, the implication of using particular music, in the context of the narrative whole. Here, it highlights the repulsion of the situation by contrasting the perceived beauty and classicism of the music with the disgust and disorder of war. This level of meaning is not strictly necessary for the maintenance of the narrative, and is not therefore interpreted by the entire audience.

The difficulty of a formal analysis of music's function in film is evident. This is mainly because in our culture, music is not a medium developed to impart information, but a codification of abstract sound. The code is devoid of any logic outside its own context—it could almost be said that the codification of sound which we know as the 'nature' of music is a mediated totality. Yet the entirety of the code which has developed in musical accompaniment of a separate visual stimulus appears to be antithetic to this. It is exceedingly difficult to see beyond the lengthy tradition of music in spectacle—so much of music's function in a specific narrative can be immediately compared to an earlier usage. The same could be said of the classical narrative tradition of mon-

tage, but it has a perceivable structure, which can be analysed, shot by shot, for an effect beyond the connotative. This, I believe, is the sole reason why non-diegetic sound— indeed, cinematic music in general— has been largely ignored by theorists. Music is difficult to analyze on two levels: studying the 'archaic', uncussed, process of aural perception is problematic; applying such a study to a medium which already has such an established code is more so. The ease of finding connotative qualities in non-diegetic sound is both a result of this difficulty, and indicates a weakness in the semiotic principle of separating the denoted and connotated elements.

A lexicon of non-diegetic sound's causality and effect.

In the final section of this dissertation, the information already provided, which was orientated towards identifying the cause of non-diegetic sound's function, will be reorganised, in order to summarize those functions. Subsequently, the functions identified will be explained in the particular context of an example. I am using Demme's **Silence of the Lambs**, with score by Howard Shore. Principally, this is due to the high number of music cues in this film— nearly forty. This eases the selection of scenes to analyse, when the basis for selection— admittedly artificial— is the presence of non-diegetic sound performing a singular, or at least comparatively dominant, purpose. Secondly, the film falls in the horror / suspense genre, which I have discussed in some detail. Finally, for a film of that genre, there is an unusually high definition of character, which allows analyses of that aspect of non-diegetic sound's function. It should be made clear that none of the examples I discuss exemplify any one narrative purpose to the exclusion of others. Any piece of non-diegetic music will display a complex combination of key functions I outline below, but for the sake of brevity, I have limited my comments to a singular function in each scene.

Function	Causality	Example
Promoting a bond of contemplative spectacle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music's link with the 'pre-individualistic collectivity'; subconscious recollection of communal performance • Tradition of music in the ceremonial and the ritualistic. • The invocatory drive. • Paradigmatic connotation. • Metonymy • Symbolic identification 	<p>Starling's first trip to the prison</p> <p>This is an interesting pair of scenes. First of all, there is a twenty second pan, from Clarisse's point of view, of the guards office. This is presented with absolutely no extra-diegetic sound. Primarily, this decision is part of Demme's consistent device, in this picture, of presenting a documentary reality. His use of 'typewritten' geographical information, and diegetic pre-scored music (discussed below), are further examples. In this particular sequence, as in many others, he uses a heightened sense of auditory 'reality' (unnaturally loud ambient noise) to foreshadow a scene of heightened emotion, where non-diegetic music again assumes primacy.</p> <p>The subsequent collection of shots show Clarisse— still proceeding with uncharacteristic slowness— walking down the corridor to Hannibal's cell. The music invites contemplative observation of the spectacle, through a slow, melodic, and uncomplicated repeated motif. Yet because the scene which we are being invited to consider in is not a pleasant one. the music is in the lower register, in a minor mode, and is not 'hummable'.</p>

Function	Causality	Example
Generating identification with character or event / generation of a specific emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical involvement of abstract sound with the spiritual. • The connotative qualities of existing music. • The introspective nature of aural perception • Music as an expression of corporeal division and unity. • The need to name the 'source' of sound– the paradox of the 'aural object'. • The 'oracle' like quality of an unseen messenger. • Paradigmatic and syntagmatic connotation. • Metonymy • Onomatopoeia • Iconic identification • Indexical identification • Symbolic identification 	<p>Hannibal's Escape</p> <p>Once again, Demme precedes a scene of great drama with purely diegetic sound– in this case, a slow movement of a Bach piano concerto, playing in Hannibal's tape recorder. This ordered, calm music also functions as a support for the cool portrayal of events, and Hannibal in particular: long shots, and little movement combine with the music to suggest both serenity and methodical intent.</p> <p>The horror / thriller identification process discussed earlier is applicable, though the circumstances are different. There is something of a role reversal, in that the killer is clean / in white / civilised (Bach) while his victims are scruffy / in black / boorish ("Son of a bitch"). However, the flux of identification is still there: the cold, calculating implications of the music (and an awareness of Hannibal's character) do not readily allow identification either with him, or the values the music represents. However, identification with the uncouth guards is equally unlikely– hence, a feeling of unease.</p> <p>With the snapping of the handcuff onto the guard, there is a complete change of pace. Out of nowhere– interrupting a resolution of the final cadence of the sonata– comes a dissonant blast of horns and timpani, matching the frenzy of Hannibal's attack. With the attack finished, the dissonance is resolved, and the sonata returns, now sprightly and carefree.</p>

Function

Aiding the suspension of disbelief

Causality

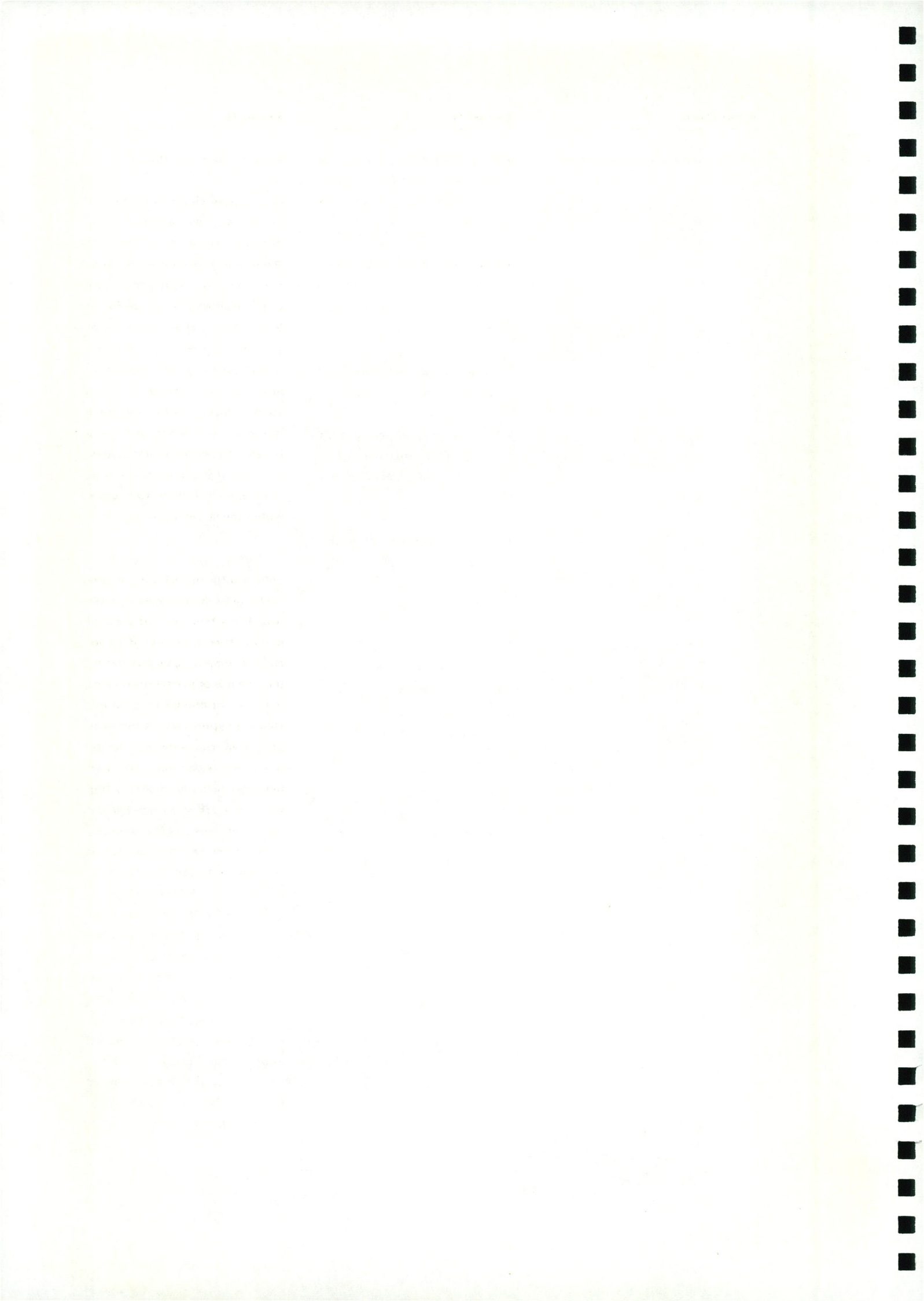
- Music's link with the 'pre-individualistic collectivity'; supplying a humanistic 'aura' to a mechanical process.
- Non-diegetic sound as 'sonic cement'— a reflection of the unselective process of aural perception.
- Existing music's assertion of its own uniqueness and reality.
- The role of aural perception's opposition to visual perception in the determination of hallucinations.
- The constant nature of music's exploration of corporeal unity.
- The 'secondary' nature of sound.
- The 'oracle' like quality of an unseen messenger.
- Paradigmatic connotation

Example

Outside the Court House

Most scene changes in this, or indeed, any film, are masked by non-diegetic sound relevant to scene one finishing early on in scene two, or vice versa. The example chosen here is useful, in that there is a change in point of view (through focus), in addition to a change of scene and mood. From the end of the previous scene— a flight over the city— there is a music cue which underpins the subsequent two brief scenes, including the change in signification from Dr. Chilton to Clarisse within the street scene.

Yet Demme more often wishes to point out the mechanism, to suggest a form of documentary realism. From the point of view of sound, this is reflected in unmasked jump cuts, and, in particular the use of pre scored diegetic music. In "Something Wild", Demme supported his message almost entirely with rock songs, and they play an important part here— particularly in contrasting the characters of Buffalo Bill and his victim. She, as the tape she listens to in her car indicates, is an "American Girl". She listens to a recognisable American rock icon — Tom Petty. Bill, on the other hand, whose every move in the lair is accompanied by diegetic rock music (he is not dignified with a Shore score), chooses avant garde punk and dance music. His music is anonymous, of minimal appeal, and largely unmelodic. While the existence of this music enhances his veracity, their nature rule out identification.



Function

Effecting transition (of time, location, point of view) in the narrative

Causality

- Non-diegetic sound as 'sonic cement'— a reflection of the unselective process of aural perception.
- Existing music's assertion of its own uniqueness and reality.
- The role of aural perception's opposition to visual perception in the determination of hallucinations.
- Paradigmatic and syntagmatic connotation
- Synecdoche
- Symbolic identification

Example

Clarisse remembers her Father

Both of Clarisse's flashbacks are effected with non-diegetic music. The earliest- after the first visit to Hannibal- is introduced with simple arpeggiated minor chords which 'mask' the initial confusion as to what is being represented. With the appearance of the young Clarisse, there is a 'resolution' to a sustained melodic minor chord as she runs to her father. However, the music rises in a scale of minor progressions, as the scene cuts back to the Foster character. This cue is abruptly ended with a jump cut to the rifle range.

The second flash back , in the funeral parlour, is somewhat more dramatic. While the diegetic organ music acts as something of a transitional device, the impending flashback is suddenly introduced with a progression of minor chords in strings and woodwind. This rises in a crescendo to the point where Clarisse the child momentarily replaces Clarisse the adult. The return to normality is more gradual than before, using a cross-fade of the string motif, and the diegetic organ.

Function

A motivational force in the narrative

Causality

- Music expressing the modulation between corporeal division and unity.
- The 'fusion' of the rhythm of music and the rhythm of montage

Example

Hannibal's Escape / Swat Team arrives

This genre of film, and this composer are less likely to exemplify the driving, insistent thrust of montage & music that this term describes. (Demme's *Something Wild* more often did- such is the nature of a road / action movie) However, the arrival of the Swat Team following Hannibal's attack, and, in particular, the attack itself, display a restrained version of this technique.

The comparatively speedy montage of Hannibal's attack- positively frenzied compared to the editing of the build-up- is supported by the peaks of the orchestral / timpani blasts. They do not echo every cut, but rather display a kind of independent energy. The syncopated peaks and troughs of the montage and the music drag the audience through the scene with urgent intensity.

Conclusion

⁵⁶ Vinyl, Cassette, Compact Disk, DCC, DAT, and Mini Disk.

We live in an age of near constant aural stimulation. The walk-man, piped music, twenty-four hour music radio and television stations, and the existence of six different media for storing recorded sound ⁵⁶ indicate the importance to our culture of abstract non-communicative sound. This is reflected in the picture palaces of today. No longer will you see vast amounts of time and money spent on lavish decor. The modern cinema is an holistic temple of all the senses. If anything, the sound amplification technology of today is far in advance of projection systems, in terms of perceptual depth, and clarity of reproduction. The quality of non-diegetic music in the cinema today is enormous and all-enveloping— an opulence of aural stimuli.

The nature of contemporary non-diegetic sound reflects this. It is analogue, relative to the digital nature of cinematic montage. In other words, non-diegetic sound is a sensual constant, analogous to the segmented reality of montage and the flickering single frame origin of the moving picture. The self evidence of this, a parallel to the visual orientation of our perceptual process, underlines the essentially supportive nature of non-diegetic sound. Despite my conviction as to its active role in mediating information, I do not argue that it is an originaive force in the narrative. It is, however, an intrinsic part of the story telling process. As such, its function as a harbinger of consequence is at its greatest in the classical narrative, which remains closest to the story telling tradition. Non-diegetic music is born in the tradition of the opera— the ultimate melodrama. As such, the impression of verisimilitude which it fosters is rooted in the theatrical, the sensational, and the sensual extreme. While this tradition limits the usefulness of the non-diegetic sound in representing an earthly reality, anything which transcends this reality cannot function believably without it.

⁵⁷ Exemplified in "The Mission", "Dances with Wolves", and anything scored by John Williams.

Not that its usage need be as reflexive as it has become. The rise of melodic, simple, and oft repeated single themes ⁵⁷ has superseded the equally tired technique of the leitmotif. This is indicative of the battle between the commercial viability of the sound-track album, and the integrity of the cinematic whole. The result has not been a loss of coherence on the part of the narrative, but the loss of possibility for an audio-visual excellence. This dissertation, a logical analysis of one part of a complex whole, was largely based on Modernist pretences towards separatism. The existing process of film making is entirely vertical—the script is written, then the film is shot, then the scenes are edited, then the music is written. The very fact that this dissertation was able to undertake a logical parsing of musical use—despite the basis of the irrational at the heart of music's essence—is indicative of the creative automatism that this work method engenders.

⁵⁸ The mold-breaking work of Nyman & Greenaway on "Prospero's Books" is a current example.

In this holistic, post-modern era, the potential for a 'horizontal' creative process should be tapped. At very least, the involvement of the composer / sound designer at an earlier stage of the creative procedure would allow the degree of control that directors enjoy with pre-scored music, but with the benefit of original music. The avant-garde film auteurs have been working in collaboration since the late 1960's. However, in their search for a new *Gestamtkunstwerk*, narrative has consistently been superseded.⁵⁸ The narrative tradition itself is entirely valid, and would richly benefit from an adoption of the work practices, if nothing else, from the avant-garde tradition. At the moment, the majority of non-diegetic sound in the classical narrative merely functions: yet it has the potential to relate to the narrative and the audience in a transcendence of form and technique, creating an inseparable and accessible audio-visual synergy.

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