

Born into Sound

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We gestate in Sound, and are born into Sight
Cinema gestated in Sight, and was born into Sound

Walter Murch 'Foreword to Audio Vision, Sound on Screen- Chion'

Sound on film is not simply the 'translation' of visual references. The interaction between sound and visuals, as many film theorists have noted, defines the very nature of cinema. In this paper I will argue that an analysis of sound, understood as a creative extension of the filmic artistic palette, can bring us closer to an examination of 'pure cinema'. 'Silent cinema' established itself as an art-form which, from the outset, stimulated and manipulated its audience by making them sonically 'read' its visuals. The audience was encouraged to imagine the voices and sound effects they could not hear. Many historical and indeed contemporary film theorists believe that 'The cinema is a silent art (and) silent expression is its categorical rule...' (Dulac: 1988:305).

Yet as contemporary film theorist Rick Altman argues, silent cinema was never truly silent (Altman, 1996: 648-718, 2001: 232-240). Even if one was to watch a film without musical accompaniment nor pre-recorded accompanying sound, a virtual 'soundtrack' would be provided by the environmental sounds perceived via image and action. Therefore the paradox of a 'silent cinema' is obvious. Silent cinema was in reality though often accompanied by music which was initially crudely employed simply to intensify the emotional impressions of the on-screen visuals.

It is important also to remember that the introduction of sound on film had economic as well as artistic consequences since the theatres had to be equipped with new expensive technologies that would change forever the realities of the cinema experience for the viewer and also affect the economics (and therefore control) of the distribution and exhibition process.

Murch's quotation, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, reinforces the sense of the cinema 'being born into sound' but in reality the relationship is more like plastic surgery than birth since the magnetic strip of sound was physically spliced onto the plastic celluloid of the negative, extending the physical appearance of the medium as well as its creative possibility. It is also important to reflect on the metaphor of birth to underscore the fact that cinema, in relation to other art forms, is in fact still in its infancy.

This article will explore the complexity of sound on film through the analysis of a number of specific critical and filmic texts wherein sound's unique expressive potential may be observed. I use the terminology of sound 'on', rather than 'in' or 'with' film since I believe it to be important to reflect on the physical reality of the process. Critics are familiar with the basic principles of celluloid projection but very little analysis has been given to the physical reality of the magnetic audio strip which utilises separate, although similar, technological processes during projection and obviously raises valid questions that should be incorporated within any critical examination of the film experience.

Soundwaves spread three-dimensionally. The recording of a sound seeks to recreate the sound source's three-dimensional character. This distinguishes it from the photographic/filmic image since the photographic recording of an object converts the represented object into a two-dimensional still or moving image on the screen- the object is robbed of one dimension which is then represented by the convention of perspective which has dominated the European pictorial tradition since the Renaissance. Whereas sound in the cinema environment uses its own grammar it does also display some elements of the image such as perspective, framing and focus. Perspective can be translated as the spatial recreation of the environment recorded (made audible through for example reverb). Framing and focus can be compared to the selected recording capacity of the microphone. Whereas framing could be complemented with the use of an omnidirectional microphone setting which gives an overall representation of the world around the microphone, the cardioid setting could represent focus which specifically narrows its recording onto a specific sound source in front of the microphone.

Film critic Rudolf Arnheim was initially a fierce opponent of sound cinema. He immediately recognised that 'sound arouses an illusion of actual space, while a picture has practically no

depth' (Arnheim, 1933: 235) despite the attempts of Western art to simulate a third dimension via perspectival artifice and the innovation of deep focus cinematography. In Arnheim's belief, cinema demonstrates an art form that through its restricted captivation of reality (in the form of silent films) makes it 'delightful' (Arnheim, 1997: 42).

As Arnheim and later theorists surmised, sound on film raises crucial questions about cinematic representation and abstraction. We must ask ourselves whether sound on film creates a counterpart to visual representation or demonstrates a unique method of expression and code of representation. Whereas many attempts have been made to analyse musical accompaniment in film, surprisingly few writers have paid much attention to sound's specific expressive forms and meanings. Early film directors and theorists such as the Russian constructivist filmmaker Vertov did recognise the unique creative potential of sound within film. For example, in his film *Enthusiasm* (Vertov, 1931) he sought to liberate the audio recording equipment from the studio and recorded sound on location. Ahead of his time he used common every-day sounds in his films and arranged his sound tracks in what can be described as a symphony.

It is important to remember that Vertov and his Russian contemporaries were not limited by the same economic forces and artistic codes that restricted experimentation in the dominant Hollywood model. As Russians they were economically supported and indeed expected by their state to challenge these dominant codes of practice. I believe that this liberation of sound (and therefore camera) from the studio is of central importance to critical reflections in this area. It is true that the introduction of sound initially had a limiting affect on the medium. The silent area had become characterised in the work of Buster Keaton, etc by outrageous visual spectacle and death-defying stunts that held the audience on the edge of their seats. Amos Vogel argues that: 'The transformation of film from surrogate theatre to visual art occurred when the camera began to move' (Vogel, 1974: 98). This moving camera, combined with cuts and then later with montage, gave the new art form a unique grammar that allowed artists to experiment with the language of film. The introduction of sound required actors to stand within range of fixed microphones and therefore re-confined the medium temporarily to the restrictions of the set. The fact that this restriction was temporary and motivated only by primitive technical requirements rather than any intrinsic limitations of audio as an expressive medium is a fact that is often ignored or misunderstood by critics who refer to this initial teething-problem of the sound medium as if it were an ongoing technical and artistic reality.

Rossellini in his 1945 film *Rome Open City* was credited with initiating a revolution in and reinvention of modern cinema. The term 're-invention' is of critical importance since Rossellini's Neo-Realism can be read as a technical as well as an artistic turning point since it was clearly not the first time that the film camera had been freed from the studio but rather one of the first examples of the film camera with synchronised sound capabilities being able to move freely in post-war Europe. This experimentation became an inspiration for the Nouvelle Vague in France in the 1960s and it is notable that these filmmakers and theorists also acknowledged their debt to both Russian filmmakers and the auteurs of the Hollywood studio system (both silent and sound) since it was a combination of these opposing cultural forces in the US and Russia that allowed this new freedom of the medium to exist. At its simplest, the Russians extended the artistic possibilities of the visual medium offered by the experimentations of the silent era and the Americans extended the technology to enable the liberation of both camera and sound in motion.

Freed from primitive technical limitations the unique potential of sound is in fact constantly being challenged and extended by contemporary Hollywood sound designers and editors such as Walter Murch (whose works include *The Conversation* (Coppola, 1974), *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979) who combine their practical work with critical reflections, overcoming the immensely hypercritical and artificially created gap between practice and analysis. It is remarkable that 'Although all histories of cinema allude to (the) plethora of experiments (between 1895 and 1927) to one extent or another, they don't challenge the neat division of film history into a silent period and a sound period' (Chion, 1999: 11). In my belief this fact represents a limited understanding of sound on film and reinforces the sense that the image is regarded by most historical as well as present scholars as the true nature of cinema. Altman rightly points out that this consideration of sound as a secondary phenomenon is difficult to challenge as 'it is difficult to imagine the auditory dimension of cinema might at this late stage be reinstated' (Altman in Weis, 1985, p.45) Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the debate about the presence of sound on film raises crucial questions of representation and abstraction and therefore challenges cinematic critical traditions.

My practical work seeks to explore the relationship between sound and visuals within the

language of film. I will argue that we must acknowledge that each has a unique expressive form and that effective use of sound in film requires us to respect the sonic and visual as distinct entities. This is specifically explored in my internationally award-winning short film 'The Cat' in which sound provides the key to the interpretation of the imagery. Whereas the imagery could be read simply as an old couple living happily together, the sound of the clock ticking, TV distortion and repetitive music composition translates the idea of a life without prospects and forgotten love. It is a soundtrack that does not rely on dialogue for communication.



Fig. 1. Still from 'The Cat'.

The early American film industry soon sought to incorporate the technology of sound into cinema. Hollywood's corporate investments in sound technology were of course primarily aimed at increasing profits. America was by the late 1920s ready for a narrative based commercial cinema of 'talkies'. (Bordwell, 1985: 298-308). Through the use of synchronised sound the spectator was now provided with an enhanced acoustic realism (primarily focused on actor dialogue) turning the cinema into a multi-media experience employing pre-recorded sound as well as visual images. In the first stages of sound technology on film the technical restrictions were immense. Microphones required very special recording conditions, the size of the recording machine was huge, the noise of the camera had to be taken in account, etc. These restrictions of technical advancement are wonderfully demonstrated in the film *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen & Kelly, 1952).

It comes as no surprise that the incorporation of sound technology within film resulted in fierce critical confrontations. Yet nearly all the early critics of sound such as Arnheim spoke out against the dialogue –orientated cinema (the talkies) rather than against the use of sound in general within film.

Soviet film directors Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov published a joint statement on the sound film in a Leningrad magazine in August 1928. The statement reveals uniquely Eisensteinian concerns- especially that for 'neutralisation'- which translates as the neutralisation of a represented object (for example photograph/image) by cutting it off from all surrounding reality. This method of denaturalising the cinematic image results in the achievement of a 'complex sign' which then can be used creatively by placing it in various contexts by the editor. This was Eisenstein's central critical and creative tool- the method of 'montage'- an approach which had an immense impact on cinema; montage has been considered as being in opposition to realism. Most Soviet filmmakers adopted this method of montage. Editing was no longer considered as 'a means of articulating a story but was a dynamic practice in its own right' (O'Pray, 2003: 29).

With the combination of sound and image- the image gains in the 'independence of its meaning' and thus 'its inertia as a montage piece' (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, 1928). Yet the contrapuntal use of sound on image enables image and sound to 'function as neutral fragments of material whose potential meaning is realized in a montage sequence' (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, 1928). According to the Statement, talking films are dismissed as naturalistic and therefore as non-aesthetic. Yet we must note that not all Soviet directors agreed with the dismissal of sound in film (see Vertov). In 1929 Pudovkin wrote that in contrast to Eisenstein he considered asynchronous sound an enrichment to the image rather than its neutralisation. The image gained in complexity and became dimensional which resulted in 'a more exact rendering of nature than its superficial copying' (Pudovkin, 1929). Pudovkin believed that the sound cinema resembled human perception and when creatively used and manipulated it could enhance its effectiveness in terms of the cinema experience. It seems obvious that Eisenstein's sound theories remained concerned with a staunchly dialectical assembly of the visual image in montage sequences, whereas Pudovkin's had established his sound theory beyond Eisenstein's constructivist concerns, embracing the new sound-on-film technique and turning it into an additional creative tool of cinema by making sound part of the cinematic montage.

Pudovkin was not the only director at this time reconsidering the creative use of sound. The

film director Rene Clair was at first a strong believer in 'pure cinema'. During his visits to London where he witnessed the early sound films, Clair adjusted his point of view, rejecting the talkies yet celebrating the asynchronous use of sound. Clair like many film makers of the period considered that bringing the wordiness of the theatre to the cinema was a threat to

'pure cinema' which expressed itself through its poetic montage. Yet through the evocative use of sound and images via precisely cut and mixed asynchronous sound, he believed the cinema could employ an additional creative tool and provide itself with a new approach to expression.

Rudolf Arnheim was of course one of the most vigorous opponents of the sound cinema. His belief was that sound as well as the introduction of colour and modified aspect ratios undermined cinematic expression. The uniqueness of cinematic expression involved a sympathetic distortion of reality, according to Arnheim, which was to be cherished rather than eliminated. Yet his opposition to sound does not indicate Arnheim's rejection of forms of musical accompaniment or film scores. Arnheim acknowledged the compatibility of image and sound within film (Arnheim: 1997:47-49) even though his insistence on the beauty and psychological power of the 'silent screen' seemed to outweigh this concern. Similarly Bela Balazs also initially argued against the use of sound within film in forms which underestimated the silent qualities and expressivity of the cinematic image. In contrast to Arnheim, Balazs adjusted his theory in the 1920s and spoke out for a cinema that used sound as a 'sound-montage' rather than using it as a way of bringing cinema mimetically closer to reality. For Balazs the aspect of 'visibility' was always his prime concern, concluding in a cinematic creation/visibility of a new world, drawn attention to by the use of close ups and montage. In Balazs's belief the silent cinema had created a uniquely aesthetic expression which made sound visible through silence. Cinema itself represented for the first time an option to achieve a more realistic captivation of reality than any other technical or artistic advice before (painting, sculpture, photography etc.) Therefore in the silent film the spectator observed moving images that were so strong (and realistically proximate) that they perceived sound in their own mind. The silent revelation of the visual reference to the sound sources were therefore so powerful that our desire for synchronised sound faded. With the increasing sophistication of sound technology throughout the 1920s Balazs continually reflected on sound in film, and as synchronised sound became more and more common, Balazs repeatedly drew attention to his original belief that 'the visibility of sound' was

essential for the cinema as an art form. Yet again he had established that if sound was to be artistically used, liberated from its realist synchronicity, it could be incorporated to serve 'new degrees of visibility', new degrees of cinematic forms. By the late 1920s he had drawn

attention to the sense of silence within the sound film which through its collaboration of silence and sound could result in an even more expressive cinematic form. To pay Balaz's theory justice, one should remark that his reflections on sound are primarily reflections on silence in film. Not only is the silence of cinema for Balazs a cinematic effect, it is the vacuum that occurs amidst sounds. It is the opposition to sound without which it could not exist. 'Silence is when the buzzing of a fly on the window-pane fills the whole room with sound and the ticking of a clock smashes time into fragments with sledge-hammer blows' (Balazs, 1952). Balazs saw a possibility that the sound film could now produce silence, whereas the silent film had been incapable of doing so. Therefore the sound film symbolises the only art form which is capable of creating silence, the most powerful and endearing use of space of them all. It seems impossible to write about sound cinema without mentioning that sound cinema's paradox is that it gave great power to silence, which now was optional rather than being an unavoidable element.

The use of silence is a central concern of my internationally exhibited experimental film '*God Bless America*'. Here I recall the event of Veterans Day 2005 in New York City through moving image and sound montage. The images are provided with a continuous voice-over and a sound-scape that uses silence as a reflection on thought. Silence within this particular experiment is powerful when placed in juxtaposition with the images of brass bands, armed forces and a crowd of people. The use of silence in combination with war and the celebration of war is specifically powerful as these images are conventionally synchronised with loud sounds of guns, soldiers marching on the concrete and an applauding crowd of spectators. In this experiment, silence indicates reflection and feeling alone in a crowd due to the mixed feelings in regards to the Iraq war held by the narrator.



Fig. 2 *God Bless America* makes innovative use of silence

The challenge to dominant cinematic conventions that the creative use of sound represents has been analysed by the French theorist Michel Chion. Chion's central argument in terms of audio-visual perception is the concept of the acousmetre: 'a kind of voice-character specific to cinema that in most instances of cinematic narratives derives mysterious powers from being heard but not seen' (Chion, 1994:221). Chion argues that the acousmetre (the silent film) 'allows us (again) to dream the voices' (Chion, 1999:8-9). The acousmetre dimension in films such as *Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) disrupts the illusion of audio-visual synchronicity.

In *God Bless America* the voice-over is used in this tradition of the acousmetre, in which the illusion of audio-visual synchronicity is disrupted by the use of silence and voice-over. My character 'derives mysterious power from being heard but not seen' (Chion). Off screen voice-overs have been used extensively in film noirs such as '*Kiss me Deadly*' (Aldrich, 1955) in which the villain remains out of frame until the last sequences of the film. This results in his voice being more mysterious and overpowering (an effect that I wanted to use for *God Bless America*).

As Chris Marker demonstrated in '*Letter from Siberia*' (1957) sound can 'actively shape how we interpret the image' (Bordwell & Thompson, 1985). Marker played back the same footage while providing each playback with a different soundtrack. The audience interprets every version in its own unique way. Sound can draw our attention to specific objects on the screen.

In the beginning of the so-called 'sound era', some directors had challenged the use of sound, creating 'sound-montages' rather than using it simply as a tool to establish realism within the cinematic world. These creative innovations in regard to the use of sound technology within cinema were achieved by works such as *Blackmail* (Hitchcock, 1929), *Applause* (Mamoulian, 1930), *Enthusiasm* (Vertov, 1930), *A nous la liberte* (Clair, 1931), *M* (Lang, 1931), *Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (Lang, 1932,) and *Vampyr*, (Dreyer,1932) as well as in the documentary tradition (see '*Song of Ceylon*' (Wright, 1934)).

Noel Carroll argues that all these films are 'from a penchant for asynchronous sound based on a paradigm of montage juxtaposition as a means to manipulate, to interpret, and to reconstitute pro-filmic events' (Carroll, 1998: 93). This overlap of commercial filmmakers incorporating avant-garde artists and theorists' creative use of the cinematic sound medium throughout the 1920s and the 1930s was due to their intimate exchanges with each other's ideals. Never before and never after has there been such an intimate, challenging and rewarding cooperation and exchange taking place between cinematic entertainment and the cinematic arts.

Some influential directors of entertainment merged successfully with avant-garde artists. Hitchcock desired to involve Len Lye in the production of an animated sequence for *Secret Agent* (1936), collaborated with Dali on *Spellbound* (1945). Lang collaborated with Ruttmann on Part 1 of *Die Niebelungen* (1924) and with Fischinger on *Die Frau im Mond/Woman in the Moon* (1929)- Lang's last silent film.

Yet through the increasing use of narrative-orientated/dialogue-led/ sound-synchronised cinema, the symbiosis between the arts (painting, music, theatre, poetry) and film had been jeopardised, resulting in a cinema of crude realism rather than a cinematic art. Heinrich Wofflin argues that 'it is a mistake (for art history) to work with the clumsy notion of the imitation of nature, as though it were merely a homogeneous process of increasing perfection' (Wofflin, 2002). Bazin's realist aesthetic argues that 'sound, like camera movement, is used by realists to record rather than to reconstitute reality (Bazin, 1967).

The emergence of cinematic sound undoubtedly facilitated the establishment of new film conventions such as continuity, narrative and genre. The cinema of images belonged to the past whereas a new cinema of narration, plots and the spoken word was established. The sound cinema moved initially closer to a recording of a theatre performance rather than a cinema with its own vocabulary for artistic expression.

Yet avant-garde/ experimental filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Andy Warhol, Michael Snow, Stan Brakage and Nathaniel Dorsky referred back to a cinema of images hidden within a tradition of synchronised sound. Deren used sound sparsely in her work (see *At Land* (1944), *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1945-46)), yet *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) was in 1959 commissioned by Deren to be provided with a soundtrack by Japanese composer Teiji Ito. Its soundtrack excludes conventional approaches to soundtracks and consists of various sound effects put together as a rhythmical musical piece. Its imagery is similar to *Meshes*, in that its soundtrack suggests rather than shows; while also incorporating the image in sound-montages. Deren's close friend Stan Brakage whose works include *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), *The Art of Vision* (1961-1965), and *The Riddle of Lumen* (1972) claimed that he considered 'music' as a deep source of inspiration to him as a filmmaker. His frequent statement that he makes silent films because sound tends to dominate image is important in this regard: the absence of sound gives the images, and all their subtleties, a new priority in the viewer's consciousness, and allows them to speak with their own unique, music-like rhythms (Brakage (1960:65-67, 2001:78-84). I have tried to incorporate some elements of his thoughts in *God Bless America* by editing the mute scenes rhythmically like a symphony.

In Christian Metz's belief there exists an un-compromisable difference between sound and imagery. Metz demonstrates this belief through the example of 'off screen sound'. 'Off screen sound' in this case 'off screen voice' is defined as a voice which 'belongs to a character who does not appear visually on the screen' (Metz, 1980: 24-32) (in this case the voice of a young man). Yet the nature of sound is to diffuse itself within the entire surrounding space. Whereas off screen objects are possible, off screen sounds are either audible or don't exist. According to Doane, voice-over indicates a space 'in the fictional world which the camera does not register' (Doane, 1989: 47-56). 'We claim that we are talking about sound, but we are actually

thinking of the visual image of the sound's source (Metz. 1980: 24-32). Metz similar to Altman and Doane all state that sound cannot be compared to visuals as their nature varies immensely. Similar arguments have been made by Gianfranco Bettetini: 'The essence of the cinema is basically visual, and every sonic intervention ought to limit itself to a justified and necessary act of expressive integration' (Bettetini, 1973: 111). Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz (and then virtually the entire Paris school) had adopted the visual metaphors of Jacques Lacan describing the film-viewing experience as a 'mirror stage'. Rick Altman argues

that this metaphor could be easily applied to sound in terms of Echo (Altman, 1977: 257-72). Yet the mirror analogy was considered restricted to the visual experiences.

Conclusion

Sound on film has often been dismissed as nothing more than a technological distraction that somehow dilutes the uniquely expressive power of the cinematic image. It is accused by theorists of being directly responsible for the 'dumbing down' of the artistic medium and with very little supporting evidence has been condemned without a fair trial to the footnotes of any serious academic study of the cinematic art. It is true that when synchronised sound was first introduced to the medium it was guilty of restricting the free experimentation of the moving camera and allowed film, which had been gradually liberating itself from theatrical narrative, to once more be confined to the studio interior and therefore divorced from 'pure cinema' but this was a temporary technological reality that was soon outgrown.

It must be remembered that the cinema is still a new art form. It is only in the first half of its second century and therefore absolutes about the medium have to be regarded as premature. The digital revolution in cinema highlights many of the arguments and concerns expressed at the arrival of sound and this new development will provide new insights into previously held absolutes concerning what the cinema is, how it is created, how it is distributed and even (since creators can now use the same machines for multi-discipline content creation) what the difference is between image and sound?

The cinematic silent era was characterised by visual experimentation and an exploration of the

unique qualities of the medium. Russian filmmakers like Vertov, Eisenstein and Pudovkin continued to extend these experiments in splendid isolation from the economic restrictions of the Hollywood studio system. Post-war European filmmakers like Clair, Lang, Vigo, Rossellini and others challenged sound and revealed its unique expressive potential within the cinema environment and more recent artists such as Godard, Straub, Duras, realised greater sophistication through using sound creatively. Mavericks working within the

dominant Hollywood system from Hitchcock to Coppola have continually experimented with the unique qualities of sound and this experimentation is continued today in the work of studios like Pixar and Dreamworks. Yet synchronised, dialogue-led sound remains the most dominant representation in cinema. Is this because the audience cannot understand an alternative that extends beyond the dialogue-led theatrical plots of the dominant model or is it because filmmakers have been so forced-fed by a critically accepted notion that pure cinema is dead that they therefore conclude that experimentation with the modern medium is futile?

I am presenting my practice-based PhD as a written, critical body of work combined with examples of creative practice. While this combination is relatively new to the discipline of Film Studies it cannot be seen as a departure from the critical tradition of the medium since the majority of theorists included from Eisenstein and Vertov, to Murch and Chion work practically in the medium and this informs their critical reflections. I strongly believe that practice can inform theory and vice-versa and although critics may sneer at my inclusion of Eisenstein and Vertov with Murch and Chion (who are not recognised as part of the canon of critical Film Studies) it is of central importance to my research that I am able to reflect on theorists who understand the contemporary technological realities of the medium without relying on outdated notions of how film used to be made.

Whereas many film theorists argue that the absence of sound is the presence of cinema, I argue that the artistic palette of the cinema has been extended by the uniquely expressive qualities of the soundtrack. Cinema's original motivation was to stimulate or even manipulate its audience. Undoubtedly silent cinema's representation of the world was uniquely fenced in by its technological (in)capability and therefore the filmmaker had to establish a cinematic language through imagery which the audience learned to interpret. The audience learned to

imagine what wasn't heard. The audience of the past was excited by this futuristic experimentation of moving objects on a screen (as an extension of photography) and therefore were motivated to confine their imagination to the visuals shown. Yet today 'we are supposed to find the art of the past no longer makes sense to the average person' (Arnheim, 1966 :7). Referring to Arnheim's quotation on art, the majority of today's audience would find little enjoyment in silent films. It is assumed that the synch-sound film has caused an elimination of the audience's imagination and the convenience of unchallenging cinematic entertainment results in the readiness of the spectator to exchange convenience for challenge.

Yet theorists seem to ignore the audience's newly gained codes of perception which are a result of the multi-media world we now inhabit. Never before in history has the world been more aware of cinematic traditions and conventions. The cinema is a learned language and the addition of sound on film can lead only to an extension of the grammar of this language. The extension of this grammar offers an insight into ideas of a 'pure cinema' since it is here that the essence of cinema can be seen in its opposition to other art forms. For example, television (coming from radio) does not require that we see and hear its content simultaneously. If we can hear the sound of a soap opera but cannot see the images we are still able to follow the plot. This is not true of 'pure cinema' where to remove either image or sound would result in qualitatively different meaning. A 'pure cinema' is therefore not a cinema that removes sound but rather a cinema that uses the extended palette of sound and image to communicate on a new and unique level. This 'pure cinema' is to be glimpsed in sequences that transcend dialogue but move forward plot and meaning by communicating only through images and dialogue-less sound. If the cinema is a unique language then I would argue that it is here that it reaches its greatest sophistication in the communication from artist to audience. It is perhaps merely coincidental that the most memorable sequences in cinema, such as the combination of slow motion photography and animal noises from *Raging Bull* (Scorsese, 1980) are seen as evidence of sophisticated filmmaking when one may struggle on occasion to recall the complexities of the plot.

Similar to the avant-garde/ experimental filmmaking tradition, mainstream cinema needs to continually reinvent itself; embodying contemporary cultural and technical developments and advancements. When asked to define the avant-garde, film critic Greenberg stated 'You don't define it, you consider it as a historical phenomenon' (Interview with Clement Greenberg conducted by Edward Lucie-Smith, 1968). In my belief cinema has to remain indefinable,

unpredictable so that it does not continually reflect upon a specific time/fashion/movement of expression from the past.

In contrast to many theorists I would strongly disagree that it is valid to consider the cinematic art as an historical phenomenon and not as a living force. Extending Murch's quotation at the beginning of this paper I believe that we have to embrace the new born sound-cinema and allow it to gestate within a evolving, sophisticated and innovative cinema environment. I agree with Bela Balazs that 'the demand is that sound film should not merely contribute sound to the silent film and thus make it more like nature, but that it should approach the reality of life from a totally different angle and open up a new treasure (Theory of the Film, Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972, p.197). It is this innovative approach that allows it the means to continue to develop and move towards a notion of 'pure cinema'. Cinema is still a new art form. It is an art form that is dependent on technology. The advances in film technology can initially be seen to deprive or restrict the unique power of the medium but technology by its very nature is in a constant state of evolution and the informed critical and practical response to this evolution will, I believe, result in an extension of the artistic palette of the filmmaker and bring us closer to the essence of what is 'pure' in cinema.

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