

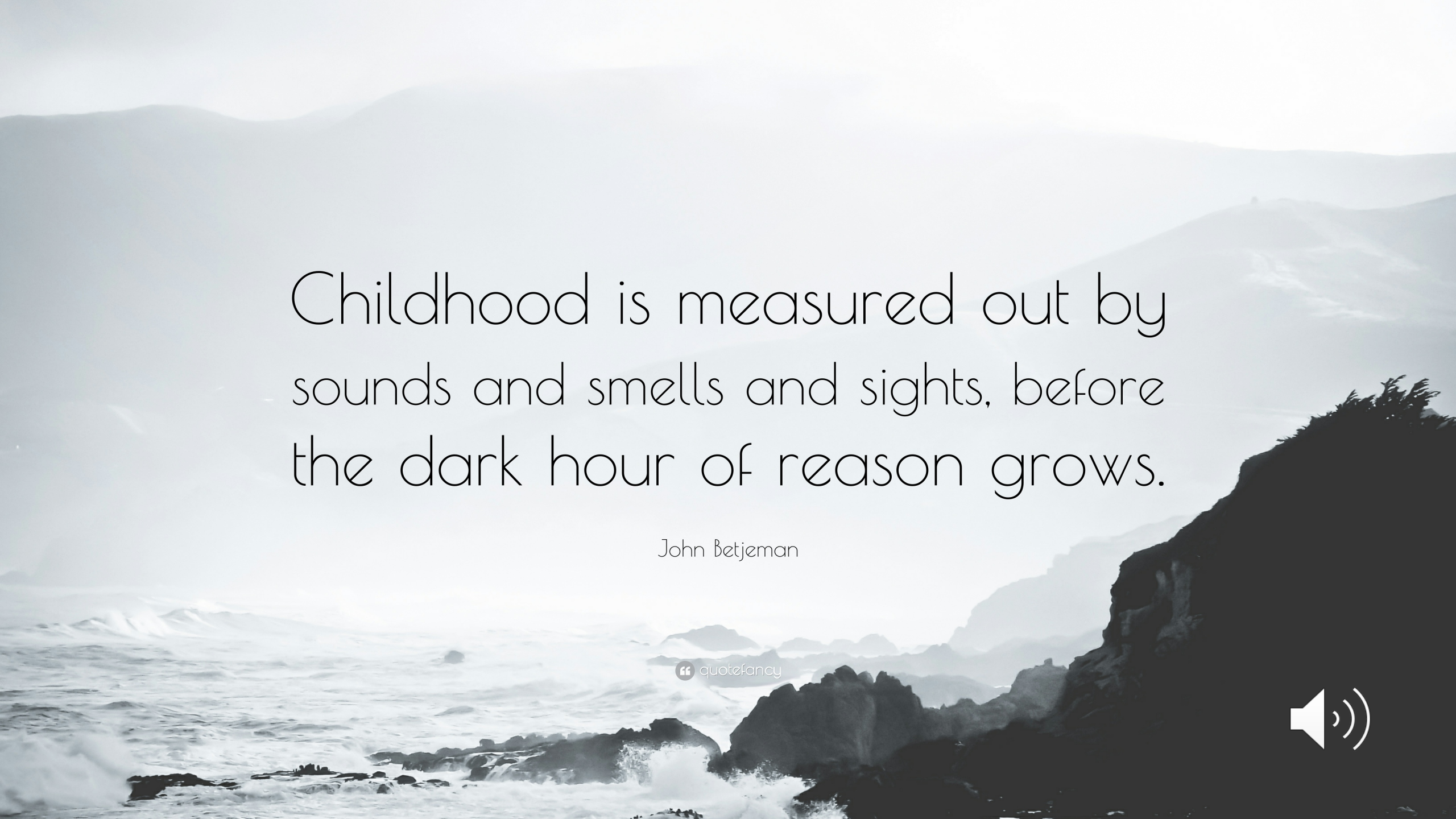
AUDIOVISUAL ANALYSIS

TERMS & TOOLS



Lecture Two

L5 RESEARCH IN CONTEXT (ADAD5003) – STORY, SOUND AND THE MOVING IMAGE



Childhood is measured out by
sounds and smells and sights, before
the dark hour of reason grows.

John Betjeman

quote fancy





Silent Light (2007)|Carlos Reygadas

We all have a reservoir of aural memory, some of which is likely to be shared by our fellow human beings but a part of that memory bank is unique to our experience.

Filmmakers have to negotiate the complexities of emotional responses to sound to differentiate the personal and the universal in attempting to use sound and music to connect with the audience.

Roger Crittenden



SOUND and MEMORY



Michel Chion | audiovisual contract

We never see the same thing when we also *hear*. We don't *hear* the same thing when we see as well.

AUDIOVISUAL CONTRACT

We never see the same thing when we also hear.

We don't hear the same thing when we see as well.

- The audiovisual relationship is not natural but rather a sort of symbolic pact to which the audio-spectator agrees to forget that sound is coming from loudspeakers and picture from the screen. The audio-spectator considers the elements of sound and image to be participating in one the same entity or world.
- The result of the audio-visual contract is that one perception influences the other and transforms it. So that ...

audiovisual contract

Sound does not correspond
“naturally” to an image

The **Audiovisual Contract** is a kind of symbolic contract that the audio-viewer enters into, agreeing to think of sound and image as forming a single entity.

(Chion 1994, p216)

Diegetic sound is any sound presented as originated from source within the film's world.

Diegetic sound can be either **on-screen** or **off-screen** depending on whatever its source is within the frame or outside the frame.

Another term for **diegetic sound** is **actual sound**

Non-diegetic sound is represented as coming from the a source outside story space.

The distinction between diegetic or non-diegetic sound depends on our understanding of the conventions of film viewing and listening.

We know of that certain sounds are represented as coming from the story world, while others are represented as coming from outside the space of the story events.

DIEGETIC v NON-Diegetic



Diegetic v Non-Diegetic



The Godfather (1972) - Michael shoots Sollozzo and McCluskey

The audiovisual scene

*An image **MAGNETISES** a sound in space*

- What does a sound typically lead us to ask about space?
- Q. Where does it come from?
- Images **place** sounds (images **magnetically** attract the sound that belongs to them)



The audiovisual scene

- “The Image” = The Frame
- What the image designates in the cinema is not **content** but **container: the frame.**
- **There is no auditory container for sounds.**
- Images have a place (sound is everywhere)

syncretic sound

- **Synchresis** = “synchronism” + “synthesis”
- Synchresis – the perception of a discrete sound event and a discrete visual event as a single phenomenon
- ‘synch’ points crucial for meaning and dynamics as they emphasise actions and provide a strong sense of realism
- See **McGurk Effect**



ABC TWO



Footsteps at 01:09



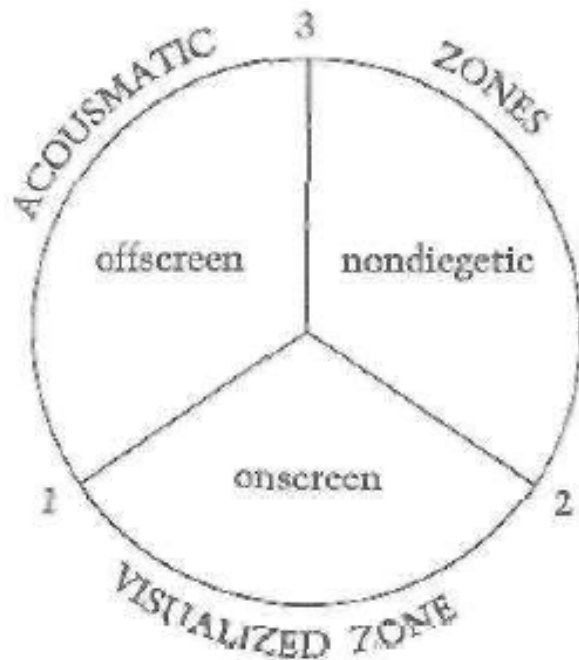
Footsteps at 00:01



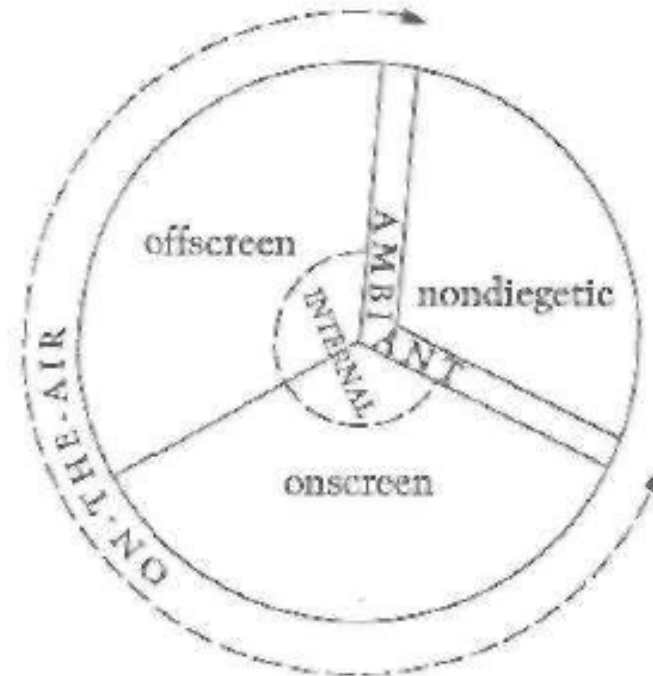
syncretic abstraction

ACOUSMAITC

“sounds one hears without seeing their originating cause.”

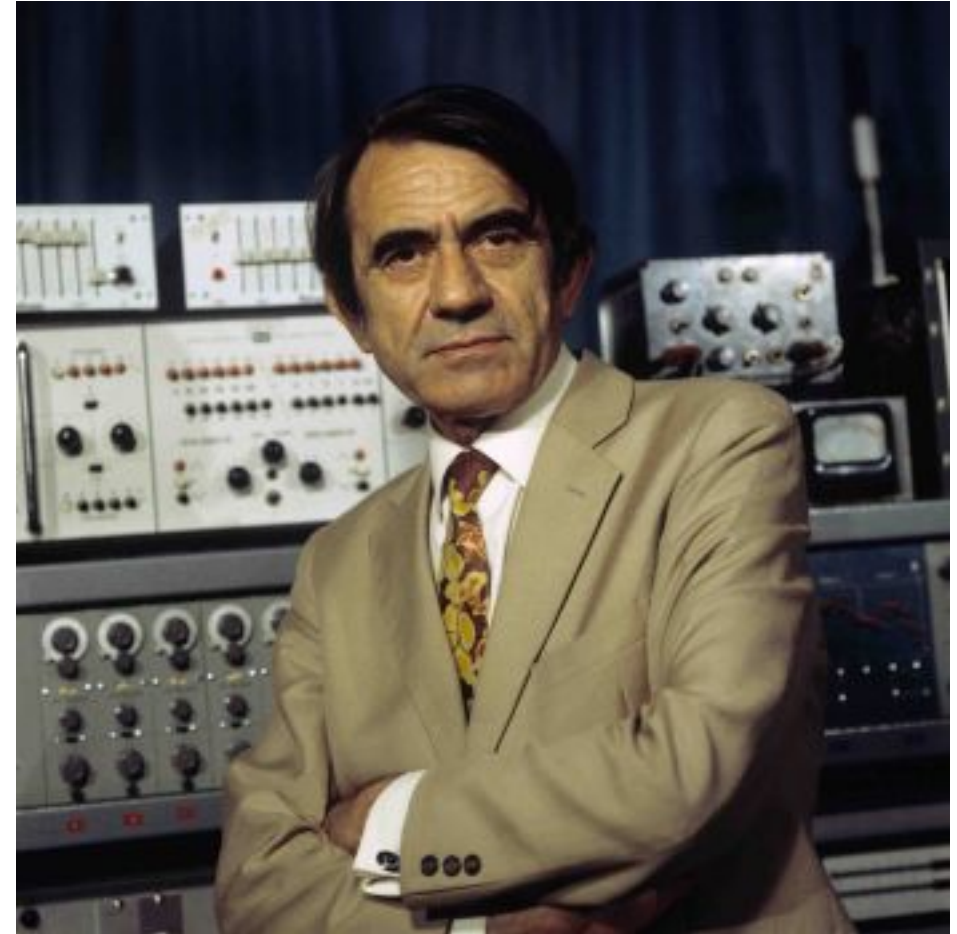


1. Onscreen/offscreen border
2. Onscreen/nondiegetic border
3. Offscreen/nondiegetic border



1. **Causal Listening** – seeking the source
 2. **Semantic Listening** – seeking meaning
 3. **Reduced Listening** – Pierre Schaeffer – sounds as themselves
- **Acousmatic** – offscreen – cant visually see source
 - **Active and Passive Perception**

the three listening modes



Pierre Schaeffer



The usual suspects (1995)| Opening 'bookend' scene

Acousmatic Sound

Acousmatic sound is sound one hears without seeing their originating cause - a invisible sound source.

acousmatic ***sound***

acousmatic sound can progress over two contrasting circumstances;

'either' sound is visualized to start with, and subsequently acousmatized,

or it is acousmatic to start with and is only visualized afterwards'.

These both affect the perception of the diegesis in very contrasting manners.

de-acousmatized - switch between *off-screen* and *on-screen* spaces

active off-screen - *The audience member extracts information from 'non-diegetic' sources to generate the emotional information he or she needs to make a coherent story in the diegesis.*

topological and spatial perspective

SOUND INFLUENCES THE PERCEPTION OF SPACE

- **Ambient Sound** (Territory Sound)
- **Internal Sound** (mental interior of a character – objective internal (breathing etc./subjective internal- mental voices)
- **“On the Air Sound”** – radio, telephone – not subject of natural laws of sound propagation

Three aspects of temporalization

influence of sound on the perception of time in the image

- 1. **Temporal Animation** of the Image – sound renders perception of time
- 2. **Temporal Linearization** – sound implies succession
- 3. Sound **vectorizes** or dramatizes the shots – orientating them towards the future

Chronography

Sound Cinema

Perception of time in the image

Eg. **Persona** – *atemporal* static shots are inscribed into a time continuum via the sounds of dripping water and footsteps

- How is sound sustained?
- How predictable the sound is as it progresses.
- Tempo.
- Sound Definition.

*Visual **microrhythms** – rapid movements on images surface caused by smoke, snow, rain, flame – trembling temporality*

Conditions necessary for sound to temporalize the images

Sound Cinema is **Chronography**

*Visual microrhythms
are 'sonified'*



SOLARIS (1972) | OPENING SCENE | TARKOVSKY

СОЛЯРИС

ЧАСТЬ ПЕРВАЯ



Interstellar (2012) | Miller's Planet | Nolan



added value

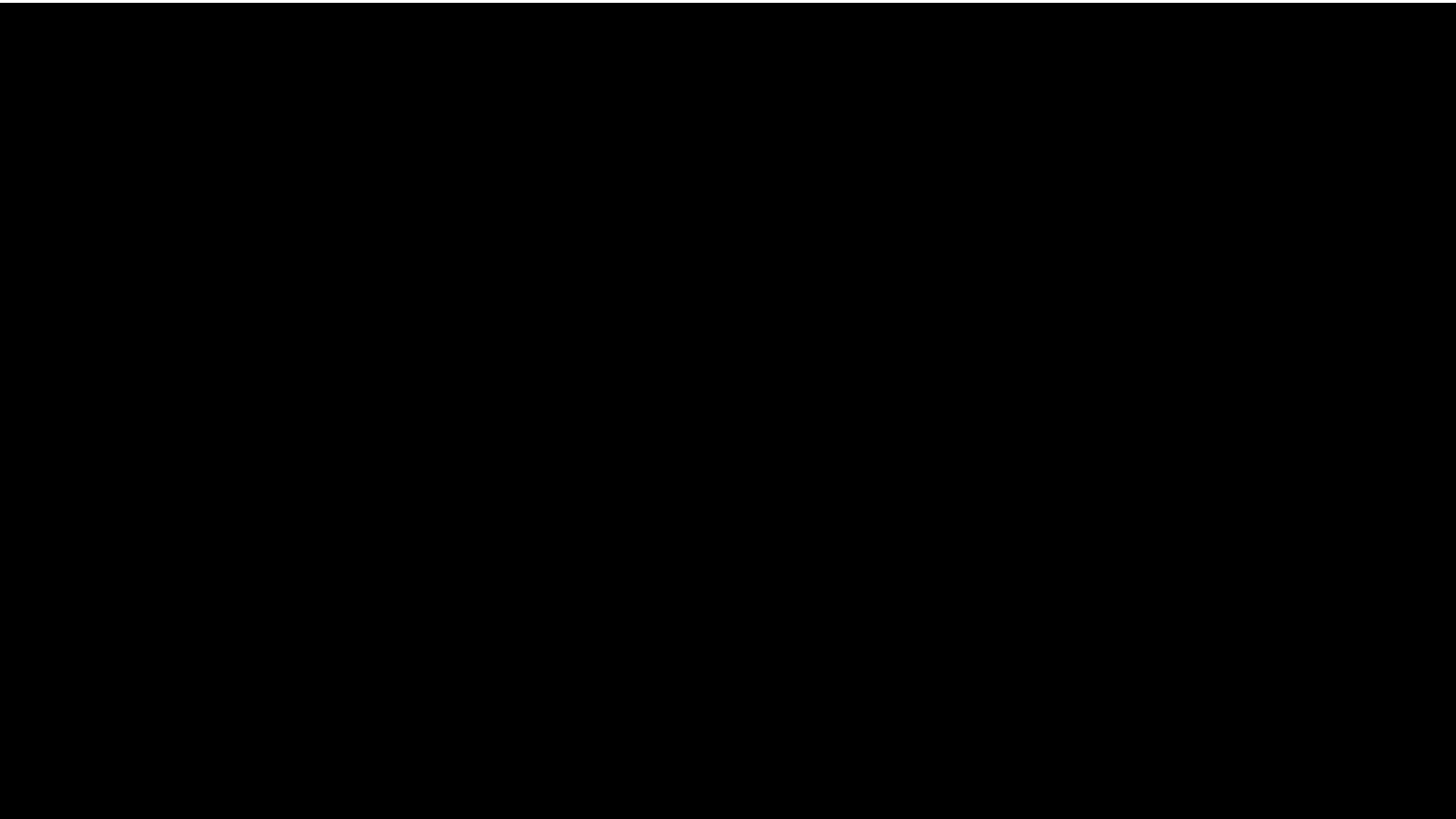
sound infuses the image

- The expressive and/or informative value with which a sound enriches a given image, so as to create the definite impression (either immediate or remembered) that this meaning emanates "naturally" from the image itself.
- **Added value** is what gives the (eminently incorrect) impression that sound is unnecessary, that sound merely duplicates a meaning which in reality it brings about, either all on its own or by discrepancies between it and the image.
- Walter Murch about added value
- ***"Whatever virtues sound brings to the film are largely perceived and appreciated by the audience in visual terms - the better the sound, the better the image"***



sheperds tone

DUNKIRK (2017) – Christopher Nolan





Blade Runner 2049 (2017) – Opening Scene

Extension of the sound environment is the designation for the degree of openness and breath of the concrete space suggested by sounds, beyond the borders of the visual field, and also within the visual field around the characters.

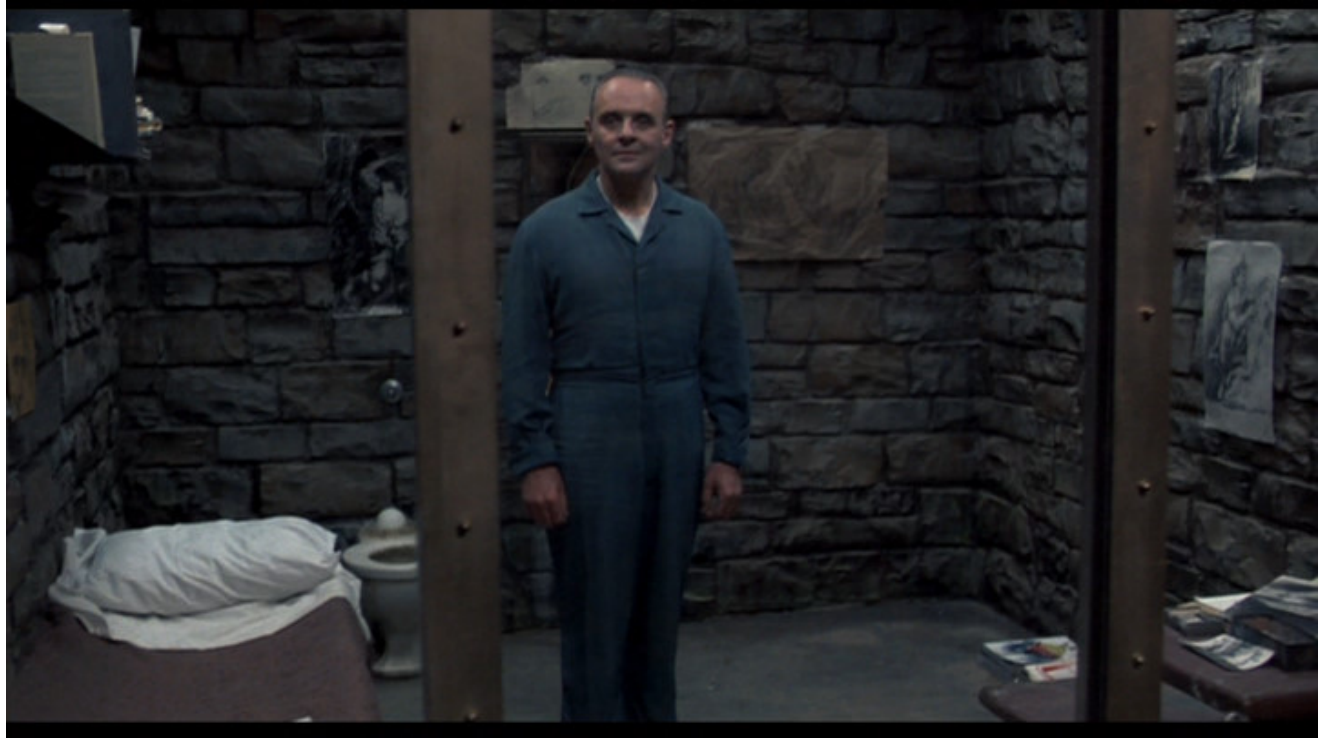
Eg. *Blade Runner* - where rumblings of the city behind the characters in the frame constantly remind the viewer of the presence of a huge spatial context.

extension

vococentrism

- **The privilege of the voice over all the other sonic element in audiovisual media.** The voice hierarchizes everything around it. In movies and other audiovisual media there are voices, and then everything else. In every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception.
- The level and presence of the voice have to be artificially enhanced over the sounds, in order to compensate for the absence of the landmarks that in live binaural conditions allow us to isolate the voice from ambient sounds.
- In production mixing is really the taking of voices in most cases and the other noises are reduced as far as possible.

empathetic sound



The silence of the lambs (1991) - Clarice meets Hannibal Lecter



anempathetic sound



Psycho (1960) - 'The Bathroom', 'The Murder' (Shower scene)



materializing sound indices

- Sonic details that "materialize" or "de-materialize" the sound of moving images.
- Abundance of ***Materializing Sound Indices (M.S.I.)*** can pull the scene toward the material and concrete. **[THE HAPTIC IMAGE]**
- Scarcity of ***Materializing Sound Indices*** can lead to a perception of the characters and story as ethereal, abstract and fluid.

The Haptic Image

Materializing Sound Indices



Turin horse (2011) | Opening Scene | – Bela Tarr





audiovisual analysis

Michel Chion

- Aims to understand the ways in which a sequence or whole film works in its use of sound with its use of images.
- Aesthetic refinement
- What do I see? What do I hear?

Methods of Observation

Audiovisual Analysis

- Masking
- Forced Marriage



NOUVELLE VAGUE (1990) Jean-LUC GODARD



MASKING – WHAT DO THE SOUND AND IMAGE DO ON THEIR OWN?

standard outline for **analysis**

- Dominant Tendencies and Overall Description
- Spotting Important Points of Synchronisation
- Comparison

Dominant Tendencies and Overall Description

Standard Outline for analysis

- 1. **What's there?**
- Itemize the different audio elements present. Is there **speech? music? noise?**
- 2. **What is dominant and foregrounded?**

Spotting Important Points of Synchronisation

Standard Outline for analysis

- Locate the key points of synchronisation, the primary such points that are crucial for meaning and dynamics.
- In the case of synch dialogue, for example you might find thousands of synch points, but only certain ones are important, the ones whose placement defines what we might call the **audiovisual phrasing** of the sequence.

Comparison

Standard Outline for analysis

- It is often illuminating to compare the ways that sound and image behave with respect to a given **formal aspect of representation**.
- Eg. **Speed (tempo)** sound and image can have contrasting speeds, and this difference can create a subtle complementarity of the rhythm.
- Eg. **Materials and definition** – a hard detailed filled sound can combine with an unfocused and imprecise image or vice versa.
- **Rendering** – How does the soundtrack behave in relation to scale and depth?

What do I
see?

- What do I see of what I hear?
- *...I hear a street, a train, voices....*

What do I
hear?

- Are the sources visible? Are they **off-screen**?
- Are they suggested visually?

negation and the *poetics* of cinema

- **Negative sounds** – the images call for them but the film does not provide them
- **Negative Images** – ‘present’ only by the soundtrack that we hear...
- These sounds artfully ‘outline’ (imply) the form of these **‘absent’ presences** – these sounds and images, which in their very negativity, are often the more important.



SON OF SAUL (2016)



blurring the boundaries
*Drifting between score and
sound design*

*The border between sound effects and music is the
most beautiful area*

–David Lynch

blurring the boundaries
*Drifting between score and
sound design*

- In his book **Noise, Water, Meat**, Douglas Kahn identifies this fluid boundary between noise and music as a central tenet of the twentieth-century musical avant-garde.
- “The line between sound and musical sound stood at the center of the existence of avant-garde music, supplying a heraldic moment of transgression and its artistic raw material, a border that had to be crossed to bring back unexploited resources, restock the coffers of musical materiality, and rejuvenate Western art music.”

blurring the boundaries
*Drifting between score and
sound design*

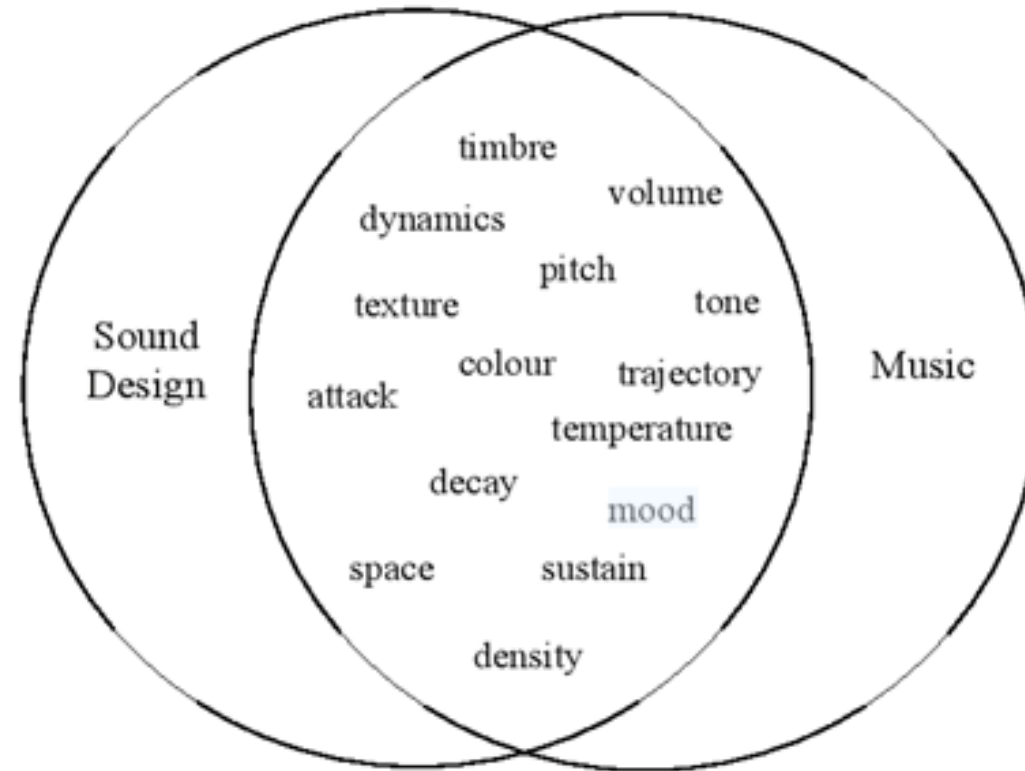


Figure 5.1. Shared sonic territory and conceptual overlaps between music and sound design

essay question

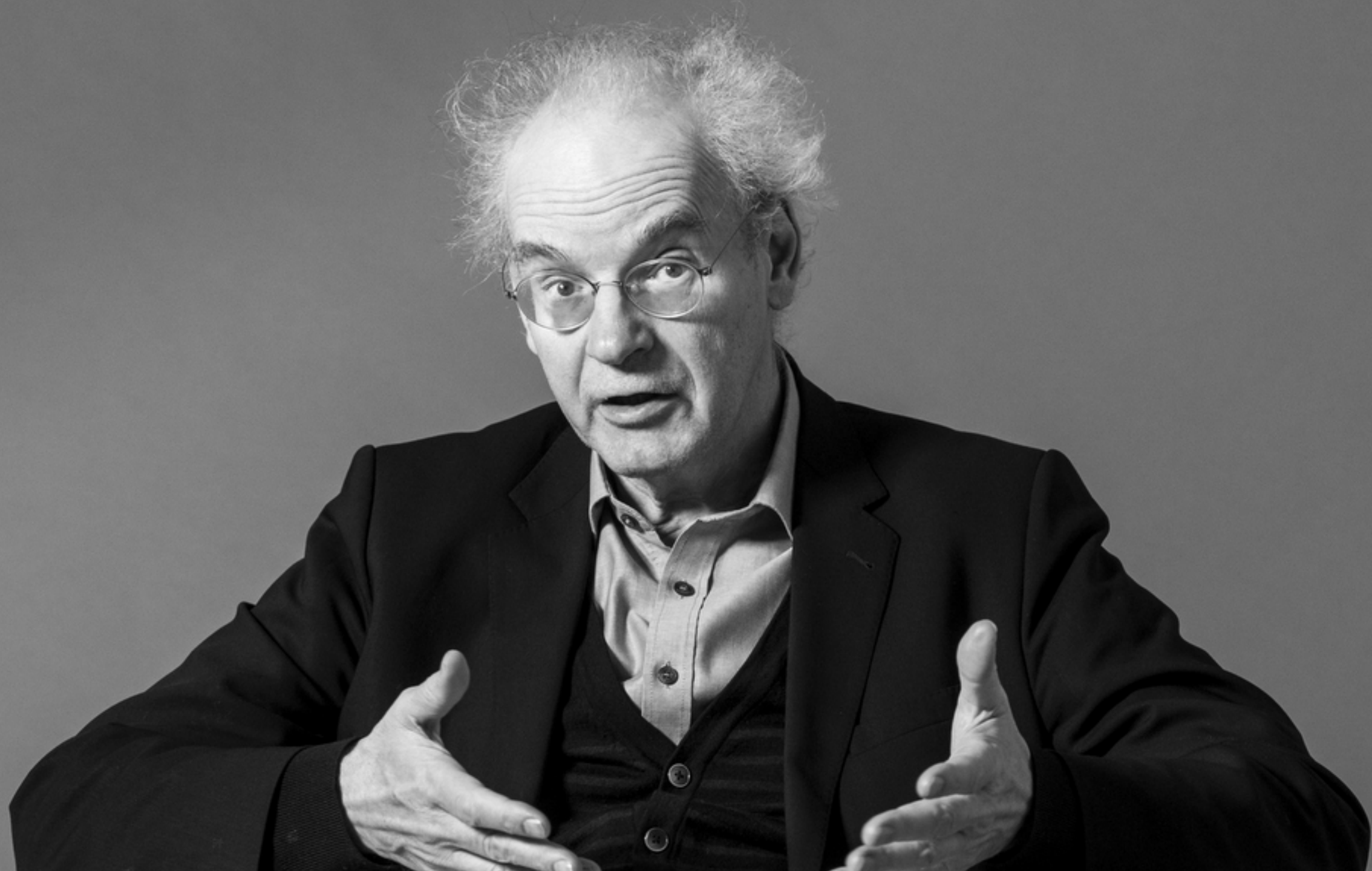
[EXAMPLES]

Question 1: *“The most powerful person in the world is the story teller. The storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.”* (Steve Jobs, 1994)

Using this quotation, compare and contrast the stories of two or more visionary storytellers and discuss the visions, values and agenda in relation to the contemporary moment or a historical moment of your choice. You may wish to focus just on the context of the stories themselves or alternatively you could **explore the function of film an/or music** in how these **stories** are presented and disseminated within the societal context.

Question 2: Using at least three examples, consider how storytellers have utilised film and/or music/sound design to explore at least one of the following: **sublime, weird & eerie, transformation conflict, the self, silence, leitmotifs, symbolism, archetypes.**

Question 3: From the film & music cluster lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists or designers that relate to your practice or interests, and construct a ‘**essay**’ (i.e. **2,500-word, audio, visual**). Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.





The School of Sound (2019)

The School of Sound presents a programme that explores sound in all its forms, creating an awareness of how sound works throughout the arts and audio-visual media. It is as relevant for the sound designer and composer as it is for the director, writer, choreographer or installation artist. Anyone who works with sound will find the programme a stimulus and inspiration for their work.

Past programmes have included presentations by opera director Peter Sellars, choreographer Siobhan Davies, film sound designers **Walter Murch**, Randy Thom, Kristian Eidnes Andersen and Ren Klyce; directors Ken Loach and **David Lynch**, theorists **Michel Chion**, Laura Mulvey, Rick Altman and Ian Christie; sound artists Hans Peter Kuhn, Christina Kubisch, Scanner and Bernhard Leitner; and Sami yoik artist, Ánde Somby. Each School of Sound is a wide-ranging programme that is essentially about listening.