

#3

FUNCTIONS OF SOUND (CONTINUED)

TARKOVSKY'S TIME-PRESSURE

March 20th 2020

There Will Be Blood

Paul Thomas Anderson (2003)



All examples can be found at:
www.tomashendriks.com/inmics3

20/3/20

| | Image | Sound | Music | Comments/what do we learn |
|-------|--|---|--|--|
| 00:30 | Title + first shot of desert | | Cluster A: <i>pp</i> , crescendo and glissando to unison <i>ff</i> , glissando back to cluster (parallel to fade in image) | No dialogue for 14 minutes |
| 00:52 | Inside the pit: hacking | Close: hacking, grit falling, soft wind | Fade out | Rhythm of hacking: shot starts exactly at first impact |
| 01:52 | Climbing outside | Wind increases | | |
| 02:00 | Outside. Dusk. Tent, fire, lighting in diistance. 1898 | Heavy wind | | |
| 02:19 | Inside the hole: hacking. Stone spit: looking at it. | Close breathing. Soft wind | | Face very dark |
| 02:36 | Stick of dynamite | Sniffing/breathing | | Can't see face. Just briefly with lighted match |
| 03:25 | Climbing outside | | | |
| 03:33 | Outside. Sun | wind, crickets | | can't get bucket up |
| 04:14 | Explosion | Hard bang! Grit falling | High cluster B <i>ppp</i> after explosion | Intensity of the bang, makes me jump up |
| 04:45 | Ladder fractures. Daniel falls. Black (3sec) | Crack - loud thud. Soft moaning just before complete silence (3sec) | Stops with impact of Daniel's fall | Complete fade out (image and sound both) |
| 04:52 | Daniel lying on bottom of pit | Heavy breath in. Dead silent before breath out. | | Reverb of small space, sounds as if I'm close to everything; slightly claustrophobic |
| | Finds stone, takes it | " <i>There she is. Yes</i> " mumbling | | Quick breathing, intensifies rhythm, experience of time |
| 06:00 | Climbing outside | | Fade in cluster A | Ouch. Freshly broken leg.. |
| | Crawling away. Pan to first shot of desert | | Cluster A: <i>pp</i> , crescendo and glissando to unison <i>ff</i> , glissando back to cluster (parallel to pan) | First shot in changed context. From Daniel to wide shot: point of view changes, we take distance from him |
| 06:30 | Selling silver (342 dollar). Leg splinted. Name: "Daniel Plainview" | | Music continues this time. High cluster B joins. | Music is remarkable, especially in relation to neutral image. |
| 07:20 | "1902". Travel in to well. Daniel working in well with someone else. Intoxicating air. | Soft crunching/creaking. Hacking inside the pit. | Sext: C starts when camera enters well. Chord arises. Music changes. Glissandi more regularly now | Travel in feels like point of view, but who's? Jump in time. Glissandi match with camera movement "together into the well" |
| 08:30 | Baby of colleague. Daniel drawing a construction. | Soft crying of baby. Pencil. | Continues | Music dominates in volume. Baby sound is sudden new sound, blends beautifully with the strings. |
| 08:50 | Travel in to new pit. More employees. | | Continues | Again feeling of POV. Jump in time |
| 09:10 | Hoisting pile | Hoisting | Continues | Hoisting sound remarkable, kind of creepy, never heard before |
| 09:30 | Rope slips. Pile crashes into pit. Starts bubbling. | THUD (like falling). Silence 1 sec | At impact pile: music stops. | Music stops, we can breath again |
| 09:56 | Prying loose pile. | | Music back, more movement. When camera framed at pile: glissando to unisono | |
| 11:18 | Hoisting up pile. Black hand Daniel | Crying baby | Music continues. Low tone at hoisting 11:20 | Music is dense, something is pending.. Oil! |
| 11:45 | Stocking oil in buckets | Hoisting, oil | Dissonant tones in strings (synched on 11:56-58) | Jump in time (short). Pouring oil in the pool is punctuated with string-clusters, amplifying nausea? |
| 12:20 | Inside the pit. Bucket falls. | Oil spats, no sound on shot of falling, blub blub | Climax (strings rising, persisting), stop, crack | Intensity of impact! Silence after the storm. First blood is drawn. |
| 13:16 | Baby | Wind, baby starts crying. 14:07 fade in train | | |
| 14:10 | train | Voice starts | | |

There Will Be Blood

Some patterns emerging after first analysis:

| Visual themes | Sound palette | Musical |
|--------------------|---|-----------|
| Falling | Nature (wind, crickets) | Glissandi |
| Inside/outside pit | Grit in pit | Clusters |
| Camera forward | Hacking | Sustained |
| | Cracking wood | |
| | Baby crying | |
| | Hoisting | |
| | Oil | |
| | Close Daniel (breath, pencil, mumbling) | |

- Three times something is **falling into the pit** (Daniel 4:45, pile 9:30, bucket 12:20). Each time the music stops at impact. These are three distinct accents.
- There are several **ellipses** or **alternations** to be found. We're going inside a small dark place, and back outside into the wide open sunny world, back inside, etc. The sound also alternates between close-up and very wide/open. We start with a shot of mountains/desert and return to the same shot after 6 minutes, when Daniel is crawling into it.
- Three times the mining operation is enlarged: first it's just Daniel with his pickaxe (1898), then it's in a muddy pit and with three partners and a baby (1902), and finally with even more people and a bigger construction.
- The physical action of working the earth, with pickaxe, dynamite and into the well with a pile.
- Camera travels in toward the well 7:05 and 8:50

There Will Be Blood

The film music in this example is remarkable from the start, it adds to an alienating atmosphere.

But how does that work?

- Disorienting
 - Lack of clear rhythm / harmony / direction
- It's like a sound field, a bed
- This causes a sense of discomfort when compared to image
 - Image: nothing special going on. Establishing shots, actions clearly visible.
 - Nature of music makes us aware of discordance between image and music.
 - Music comes into foreground, becomes an independent layer

There Will Be Blood

Example of distance between image and music:

06:20 – 09:38 (Daniel crawling away until drop of pile in well)

- From physically very close to Daniel, to very far from him:
 - Story time goes faster, jumps in time
 - Music continues over these scenes (adding tension to non-dramatic close-ups)
 - Becomes omnipresent, filling up the sonic space.
 - All other sounds become *embedded* in it (crying baby, hoisting)

The music changes the viewer's attitude towards the image.

Questions arise: why this music? Is something in the image giving reason for it? It doesn't seem to fit. The images become infected/affected by the music.

There Will Be Blood

Sound

There are 4 clear 'accents' in the soundtrack:

- the sudden explosion (4:14),
- Daniel crashing into floor (4:45),
- the impact of the pile in the well (9:30) and
- the deadly impact of the bucket (12:20)

All these sounds are short abrupt and loud sounds, that briefly stop the rhythm of the film. Especially Daniels impact is mixed really loud, directly followed by a quick fade out in both image and sound, staying black and silent for 3 seconds – awaiting the first sign of life.

The whole situation comes unexpectedly and the sudden intensity of the sounds increases the physicality of the viewing experience.

Second step: functional analysis

What does the soundtrack (sound / music) tell us about:

- Time
- Space
- Character
- Audience
- Story
- Syntaxis of image

Functions of the soundtrack: Time

- Film being an art of time, definition of time happens on different levels:
 - Time *in* the film (story, historic context)
 - The way time is shaped (in editing: through flash-back/forward, cross-cutting simultaneous scenes, in succession)
 - Time *outside* the film: experienced by the viewer
- The way time is experienced is largely dependent on the influence of sound on the image:
- Temporalizing the image (Chion)
 - Temporal animation of the image: the effect that placing a sound under static images has (think of *Persona* morgue: static shots of dead bodies become interlinked through dripping water)
 - Synchronous sound imposes sense of succession.
 - Sound vectorizes or dramatizes shots, orienting toward goal/future/forward, creating feeling of expectation. Oriented in time.

Functions of the soundtrack: Space

The soundtrack can refer to a visual space in three ways:

■ On-screen

- Auditory setting (décor sonore), for example: faraway barking dog, ringing phone next door, siren. These sounds define the space.
- Ambience: a representation of the space in continuous sound
- Acoustic effects (reverberation)
- Orientation of the character in space (subjective microphone placement). The more subjective it gets, the more it will tell us about the character rather than the space

■ Off-screen

- Bresson, *A Man Escaped*: prisoner planning his escape, listening to activities outside of his cell, connecting him to the outside world. (see 2nd fragment on Examples page [/inmics2](#))

■ Mental/internal

- Where the character is in thought (for example, voices in *Nostalghia* fragment)

Functions of the soundtrack: Character

Sound and music can be involved with the character in several ways:

- Gives information about the character
 - Inner movement
 - Feelings
 - Mental space
 - Context of where character is
- Representation of character's perception
 - What does he hear, from which perspective?
 - How does he hear it?
- Character trait
 - Following tempo, movement (music)
 - Sound of clothes
- Symbolic function
 - Musical theme or leitmotif / sound accompanying character

Functions of the soundtrack: Audience

- Perspective of listening, point-of-hearing
 - for example in *Wings of Desire* Wim Wenders, library scene: we hear what the angels are hearing: the thoughts of all the people in the library.
- Guiding the eye's attention
- Tempo
 - Sound determines the speed and involvement of viewers' perception
- Foundation for empathy
 - Music can participate in a scene by adapting to it according to cultural codes and conventions (Chion distinction between *empathic* and '*anempathic* music': music that doesn't follow along with the emotional implications of the scene)
- Determines how we should engage the film
 - The intensity of the accent-sounds in *There Will Be Blood*: they are mixed in such a way that it engages us physically
- Punctuation
 - Helps audience to process a lot of information in smaller portions (heavy-packed fighting or actions scenes are made easier to understand with a few well placed accentuations)
- Disorientation
 - Music in *There Will Be Blood* takes away our grip, our sense of control.
- Alienation
 - False expectations, when instead of sound remaining subtle and hidden, becoming apparent (many of Godard's soundtracks for example: leaving out crossfades, so sound-cuts are heard, using less tracks, using unpolished sounds (wind in mic) etc.)

Functions of the soundtrack: Story

- Interpretation
 - Music tells us often how to interpret a scene
- Informative
 - Disclose what is not seen (space or action off-screen, but also: thoughts of people, as in Library scene *Wings of Desire*)
 - Indication of where we are (auditive setting)
 - Indication of historic time
- Structuring
 - Amplifying connections in the plot, referring to other moments in film
- Punctuation
 - Silent film: gestures, intertitles
 - Synchronization is a way of underlining things, or separating a visual sentence (dog barks, clock ticks)

Functions of the soundtrack: Syntaxis of image

Image syntaxis? Analogy with language grammar:

Frame = still image (Letter)

Shot = single continuous recording made by a camera (Word)

Scene = a series of related shots (Sentence)

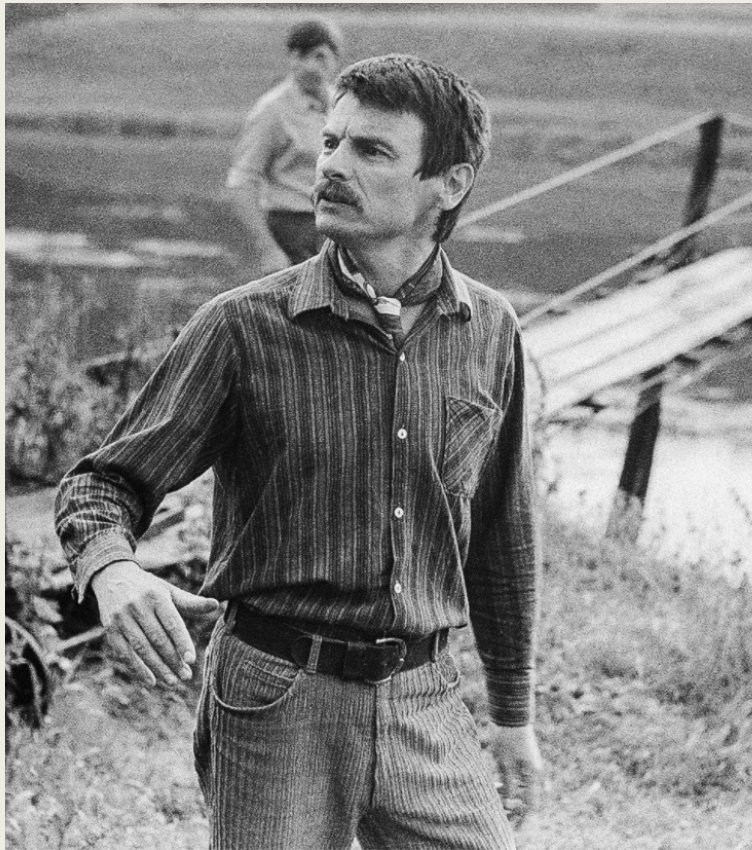
Sequence = a series of scenes which together tell a major part of an entire story, such as that contained in a complete movie. (Paragraph)

Punctuation = transitions between scenes (use of spacing, conventional signs etc. as aids for understanding written text)

- Connection of images into a unified sequence
- Hide or purposefully show editing (Godard *Hail Mary* opening)
- Help guide the eye
- Place accents
 - Synchronized with camera movement
- Underline movements

Andrei Tarkovsky

Russian filmmaker (1932 – 1986), who has strong ideas about the processing of time in film, elaborated in his book *Sculpting in Time* (1986).



“Time, captured in its factual forms and manifestations: such is the supreme idea of cinema as an art, leading us to think about the wealth of untapped resources in film, about its colossal future. On that idea I build my working hypotheses, both practical and theoretical.” (1986, p.63)

“The cinema image, then, is basically observation of life's facts within time, organized according to the pattern of life itself, and observing its time laws. Observations are selective: we leave on film only what is justified as integral to the image. Not that the cinematic image can be divided and segmented against its time-nature, current time cannot be removed from it. The image becomes authentically cinematic when (amongst other things) not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it, even within each separate frame.” (1986, p.68)

Time pressure

- Tarkovsky pays a lot of attention to what happens between the beginning and end of a shot. He almost considers a cut within one and the same situation impossible.

The dominant, all-powerful factor of the film image is *rhythm*, expressing the course of time within the frame.

(...)

One cannot conceive of a cinematic work with no sense of time passing through the shot, but one can easily imagine a film with no actors, music, decor or even editing.

(p.113)

- It's the passing of time which he considers the most important aspect of cinema. He poses the concept of **time pressure**:

Time, imprinted in the frame, dictates the particular editing principle; and the pieces that 'won't edit'—that can't be properly joined—are those which record a radically different kind of time.

(...)

The consistency of the time that runs through the shot, its intensity or 'sloppiness', could be called time-pressure: then editing can be seen as the assembly of the pieces on the basis of the time-pressure within them.

(p.117)

Time pressure

- Rhythm is caused by this time pressure, by the way time passes:

Rhythm, then, is not the metrical sequence of pieces; what makes it is the time-thrust within the frames. And I am convinced that it is rhythm, and not editing, as people tend to think, that is the main formative element of cinema.

(p.119)

Nostalghia

Andrei Tarkovsky (1983)



All examples can be found at:
www.tomashendriks.com/inmics3

Synopsis

Andrei, a Russian writer, visits Italy researching an 18th-century Russian composer, but is stricken by homesickness.

He befriends a disturbed man, Domenico, notorious in his village for having locked up his family to protect them from the outside world. Both Andrei and Domenico share a feeling of alienation from their surroundings.

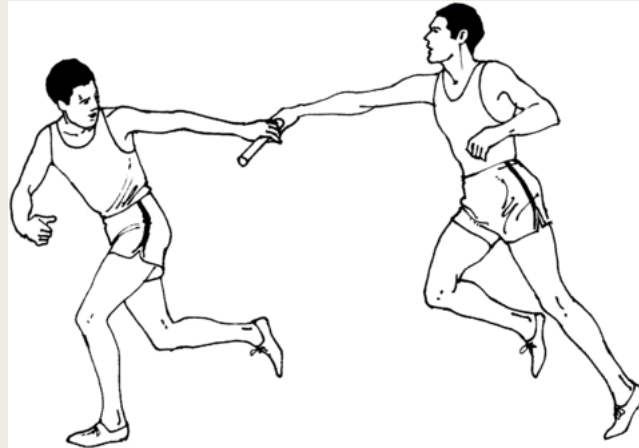
Situation of fragment

A dream sequence in which Andrei walks down a street and discovers Domenico's reflection in a mirror.

- Note the movements in both image and sound

Nostalghia

Note how in this fragment there is not one moment of immobility. It's like a relay race, where the baton is passed.



Can you identify the moments where the movement is passed on?

Nostalgia: breakdown of single shot

| | image | sound |
|-------|--|--|
| 00:36 | Andrei gets up | Dripping water |
| 00:40 | Andrei walks toward camera; Camera moves backward | Footsteps, buzz saw * |
| 01:20 | Camera stops; Andrei stops | Footsteps, buzz saw |
| 01:37 | Andrei walks back | Footsteps, buzz saw |
| 01:55 | Andrei stops; Camera tracks in | Voice over starts |
| 02:35 | Face turns toward closet; Camera follows his gaze | |
| 02:51 | When pan near completed: Hand enters frame | |
| 02:55 | Door opened; Domenico's face appears | Door creaks (acoustics of small chamber) |
| 03:15 | Door slammed shut | Door slams shut |

* The 'buzz saw' is a sound that's been heard before in the film (during the first encounter between Andrei and Domenico), but its cause is never shown.

Nostalghia: breakdown of single shot

| | image | sound | comment |
|-------|--|--|--|
| 00:36 | Andrei gets up | Dripping water | Sound from shot before |
| 00:40 | Andrei walks toward camera; Camera moves backward | Footsteps, buzz saw | Sounds take over the rhythm of the water dripping from shot before |
| 01:20 | Camera stops; Andrei stops | | |
| 01:37 | Andrei walks back | Buzz saw | |
| 01:55 | Andrei stops; Camera tracks in | Voice over starts | Camera takes over movement |
| 02:35 | Face turns toward closet; Camera follows his gaze | | |
| 02:51 | When pan near completed: Hand enters frame | | Hand takes over movement |
| 02:55 | Door opened; Domenico's face appears | Door creaks (acoustics of small chamber) | Mirror takes over movement |
| 03:15 | Door slammed shut | Door slams shut | Echo continues into next shot |

- It's not the duration of the shot that determines its time pressure, but what happens inside the shot in relation to its duration.
- Note how in the next fragment each shot ends in immobility or stasis, like a full stop closing a sentence. That immobility is a sign of completion of the shots' necessity: what had to be said has been said.

Stalker

Andrei Tarkovsky (1979)



All examples can be found at:
www.tomashendriks.com/inmics3

Synopsis

A guide (Stalker) leads two men (Professor and Writer) through an area known as the Zone to find a room that grants wishes.

In the Zone, nothing is what it seems. Only by following the Stalker's lead can the two men hope to make it to the the room.

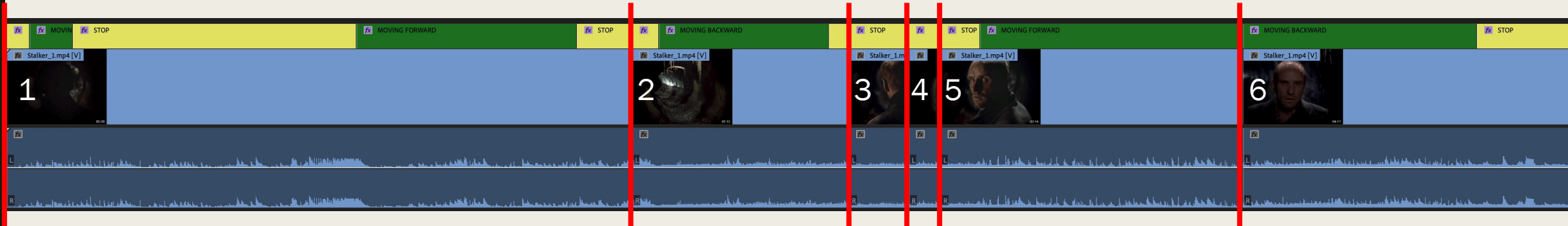
Situation of fragment

After having drawn the shortest straw, Writer is first to walk carefully into a tunnel that seems to be endless.

- Note the movements in both image and sound

Stalker

| | timecode | duration | action | camera movement |
|---|----------|----------|---|--|
| 1 | 00:00 | 2'10" | Writer walks into tunnel, Prof and Stalker follow | stasis – forward camera movement – stasis |
| 2 | 02:10 | 0'45" | Prof and Stalking following | stasis – backward camera movement – stasis |
| 3 | 02:55 | 0'13" | Writer looks over shoulder | stasis |
| 4 | 03:08 | 0'06" | Point of view | stasis |
| 5 | 03:14 | 1'01" | Following along with Writer on his back | stasis – forward camera movement (cut in action) |
| 6 | 04:18 | 1'04" | Following along with Writer on his face | backward camera movement |



Time pressure in *Nostalghia* & *Stalker*

- Relay race: the pressure is relayed / passed on
- Becoming aware of time pressure is in my opinion perhaps some sort of *reduced viewing*:
 - because you have to look beyond (or rather ‘before’) what the filmed image means (or intends to mean) to become aware of the pressure or weight of it’s recorded time

Summary

- First analysis: neutral breakdown of audiovisual elements
- Second analysis: What does the soundtrack (sound / music) tell us about:
 - Time
 - Space
 - Character
 - Audience
 - Story
 - Syntaxis of image
- Time pressure:
 - Great way of discovering flow in film, perhaps we could call it 'reduced viewing'?

Assignment for Tuesday 24th

- Next session: Walter Murch
- To do:
 - Practice analyzing opening sequence of *Time of the Wolf* (Haneke, 2003)
 - Read Walter Murch: *Dense clarity – clear density* <https://transom.org/2005/walter-murch/>