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### Cross-Cultural Affect

To gather some final thoughts upon the analysis of popular pre-existing music and its shared thematic and historical material in Pasolini's film, it is worth summarising the key reasons underlying such affective means. This is required in order to not only conclude the arguments surrounding Pasolini's use of cross-cultural amalgamations in the aural world of *The Gospel*, but also to lay some basic groundwork for what may potentially *not* be happening in the initial examples of the following chapter. How does the use of such cross-cultural forms work in a wider context? Firstly, in spite of the arguments here attempting to show that the final outcome of such musical use is some form of audio-visual transcendental style, it is still one explicitly built overtly from immanence and from a framework of subtle association.

Transcendental style needs to move from abundance to stasis and this is often suggested as being achieved through the paring down of general cinematic aesthetics. Yet in what other ways can this relationship manifest itself? The unnamed cog within this mechanism is the space or gap between the two states;

one that implies a dramatic change that is at the heart of achieving this cinematic style. This is not necessarily to say that the relationship could work in reverse and still achieve such an effective outcome. Yet there appears to be some element within this formula which is traversed by virtue of such aesthetic change. The shift from an aural absence to, for example, the *Missa Luba*, presents this same negotiation of the third area, providing the transcendental aesthetic by virtue of the narrative power's ability (and perhaps universality) to fit well with music that is both from a different culture and from different era to that of the film's setting.

It is worth suggesting at this point that, in spite of the many examples of art music used also being produced far beyond the era of the film's setting, the natural relationships formed with such textural music through general cinematic encounters means that it is unlikely to appear as incongruent to a non-musicological fluent viewer. This is a common relationship that is bypassed in general cinematic experiences but something else is happening here. The sheer cultural weight and clear aesthetic clash between the scenario of the film and the music does not allow the typical audience assumptions to occur. Instead, the music forces them to accept their role as a viewer rather than attempt to draw them solely into the drama's diegetic world. Through this, the viewer is primed to read scenarios as being more than just an aesthetic recreation, creating a sensitive reception position that allows scenes to express more than their original material can when isolated from the multimedia form.

Such musical associations, building upon the themes of hardship specifically implied by differing racial and cultural practices, do not reduce a film's aesthetics

but do provide a further barrier in the film's ease of reception.<sup>43</sup> At the beginning of this chapter, Cook's arguments surrounding the sharing of attributes were given precedence and this was partly to explain and contextualise the transcendental affect created here. But one aspect has not been discussed and that is the reliance on there being two distinct areas between which aspects can be shared in the first place. The point in stating such obvious logic is that this form of aural transcendental style works within the medium as part of a dualistic relationship and not simply because the music alone has acquired some sort of transcendental aesthetic, either through its formal make-up or thematic material (as questioned earlier).

Cook's critique of this relationship via specific binaries is a key cornerstone of this entire thesis even if his point is extended by virtue of such contrary musical and visual combinations. He argues that:

The existing literature of multimedia suffers, as I see it, from two associated problems: the terminological impoverishment epitomized by film criticism's traditional categorization of all music-picture relationships as either parallel or contrapuntal, and a largely unconscious (and certainly uncritical) assumption that such relationships are to be understood in terms of hegemony or hierarchy rather than interaction. (1998, p.107).

The example of *The Gospel* would be analytically undermined if its music was attributed as existing in such simplistic terms. The transcendental affect is a complex mixture of attributes shared between the aural and the visual which are in a constant state of aesthetic and temporal flux. It is an affect created by the relationships between two forms but one also touching upon the thematic material contained within them as well. With a thematic strain required in the reading as such, this moves away from Cook's purely aesthetic attributes and requires other

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<sup>43</sup> Essentially what the paring down of a film's aesthetics is meant to achieve is a similar gap or distancing effect.

contextualisation. In the example here, this relationship is created through a clash of cultural material, whereby the viewer must unconsciously accept the overtly anachronistic aspects in terms of both aesthetics and narrative. In compelling the viewer to do so, Pasolini also provides them with a means to a more transcendental interpretation of certain scenes, allowing short fragments of ineffability to be often bookended by the aesthetically immanent, as if propped up by the more typical audio-visual scenarios and relationships, earnestly weighed down by the fantastical nature of the many narrative events. In *The Gospel*, the transcendental nature, when it arises, is not always undermined by the music but is often indebted to it.

The narrative of Christ could be read as containing the required release from dire circumstances but it feels too clichéd to suggest that it is this relationship alone that provides any form of transcendental elements in the film. On the contrary, the film occults its transcendental style in many regards because it presents such a narrative that is both fantastical and also one that easily succumbs to the aesthetic means required to tell it, as will be analysed in Chapter 2. The film, outside of the instances outlined, falls into many of the aesthetic trappings typical of attempting an immanent response to the transcendental; the final outcome of such an attempt being always impossible and trapped in a circular argument that undermines itself. It is only the shift in musical style and choice, juxtaposed against the visual and thematic narrative that ironically allows access to the affect that is at the very heart of the original narrative.

In the context of Cook's multimedia form, it is worth noting that the removal of rigid binaries does not necessarily lead to a natural outcome once music is set against another action. It must be called upon through a shared thematic

power for such a relationship to form. It is also an aesthetic ideal that is difficult to attain, even when portraying a narrative of such theological weight. In Schrader's terms, this arguably makes it *more* difficult since there is simply too much that can succumb to "abundance". *The Gospel's* popular music does at times convey this hidden spirituality through the implication of other forms of hardship and is clearly the reasoning behind such an aesthetic use on Pasolini's part.

This chapter will end where it began, with the philosophy of Levi-Strauss. His discussion of music's capacity to work on both the mind and the senses is the final point to raise in regards to how such cross-cultural audio-visual forms create a transcendental aesthetic. It is this ability, especially within an audio-visual context, where it explicitly works around both forms of media (even if at an unconscious level). He outlines the following relationship:

This explains the principle (though not the genesis and functioning, both of which, as I have already said, remain the great mysteries of the science of man) of music's extraordinary power to act simultaneously on the mind and the senses, stimulating both ideas and emotions and blending them in a common flow, so that they cease to exist side by side, except insofar as they correspond to, and are witness to, each other. (1970, p.28).

Although this analysis has not solved the ultimate mystery of why music's placement in cinema has such power, in this instance it has provided an argument for its thematic and aesthetic potential towards the transcendental style. It is the actuality of music's power and influence over an audience's reception that is equally as key. On the perceptive side of this, the popular music that Pasolini uses in his film provides a wealth of thematic weight which is required in order to suggest a wider universal context for narrative causation and development. The cognitive element of this builds on the narrative causation and provides an ineffable quality within the context of the film's diegetic world. The transcendental

style derives from the ability to touch upon this context with a view to audience affect; one where the transcendental is generated by an immanent awareness of history and the viewer's individual place within the moral and social communities of the world.

## Chapter 2:

### Pre-existing Music and Derridian Contrast

A loose idiomatic identification - that sounds like classical music - will lead to a particular response; the more particular the identification, the more complex and interesting the effects that can be traced. - Dean Duncan (2003, p.141).

The analysis of the use of pre-existing popular music in Chapter 1 may appear at first to have been somewhat incomplete. The film that was subject to the musical and socio-historical analysis, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According To. St Matthew* (1964), has a score of such shifting aesthetics that to analyse all of the music in one go would have undermined the argument of the chapter. For as was made clear, not all of the music used in Pasolini's film creates a transcendental effect or undercurrent. In fact, it is the music that at first logically seemed to be the least likely to express transcendental effects that eventually produced such moments. The "classical" (often) theologically conceived music of Bach and Mozart removed such transcendental potential. This was not, however, further elucidated upon as to why such combination of sound and vision removed its transcendental potential. After all, there was arguably just as much difference aesthetically and historically between this music and the film's contents as there was between the popular music and the cinematic world (which was the basis of my theoretical mechanism concerning the use of popular music).

The analysis of this chapter is going to address such an imbalance by firstly scrutinising the reasons why use of this music in Pasolini's film failed to fully evoke transcendental expressions even with theological material being within the shared thematic criteria. This must also be qualified and contextualised within the use of pre-existing "classical" or art music in cinema as a whole, especially the use of

those musical forms that were designed and conceived specifically for theological worship. This is because the multimedia combination can in some aesthetic way remove or shut off the transcendental elements present within the music. This section will refer to this as a transcendental contradiction, if only to make clear that the initial examples and musical uses in question, found again in Pasolini's film, are not fully part of a transcendental aesthetic. Their contradiction in a sense proves the transcendental potential by highlighting an opposite, and Pasolini's aesthetic fallacies represent a general norm in such use of pre-existing art music.

Perhaps this is an unfair assessment of Pasolini within an example that gave transcendental content in its other musical forms but there is another context to this. The arguments in the first section of this chapter will begin to reframe the mechanisms surrounding the dialectic between the cultural content of the film (visuals, aesthetic, themes, narrative) and the musical content (aesthetic, themes, narrative, theology) and how it is within the interrelations between the two where the transcendental style can be perceived. Perhaps it is more appropriate to say that this relationship is analysed with reference to how the differing aesthetics function *together* and around each other. The failure of the use of Bach's music in *The Gospel* to create a transcendental aesthetic must be explained in its overall causal effect, and can be furthered as a point with the context of Pasolini's others uses of such music as in his debut film, *Accattone* (1961). It is the difference between the frameworks provided within these films that will yield initial groundwork for looking at the use of pre-existing Western art music in the creation of transcendental audio-visuality.

This suggests a potentially stronger, more overtly aesthetic form of musical transcendental style to be possible. The work of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky will be the case study to build this argument upon. Tarkovsky's intensely complex methodology, filmmaking style, and use of music will be contextualised within the framework of a transcendental style of pre-existing musical uses; one where it is the chief desire to imbue universal notions of transcendental expression into the dreamlike memory-slips within his films. Tarkovsky sought this aesthetic outcome also through the use of the music of Bach (as well as several others), even using the same pieces in question that are of focus in Pasolini's films. Using Bach's music was a common practice in such forms of arthouse cinema of this period as Tobias Pontera has pointed out: "Bach was sometimes used to signify moments of revelation and intense emotionality, often in a way that was closely tied to the personal convictions, experiences, and worldviews of the filmmaker." (2014, p.7). The difference in context between the two filmmakers in question - who, when using the same music, create differing and varying levels of transcendental style - presents a gap in which certain arguments can reside.

More so than the previous chapter, this analysis will show how two differing uses of the same music can create and negate the transcendental style. The latter is initially considered as a contextual backdrop for some of the assumptions made during the previous chapter regarding the use of Bach's music by Pasolini, whilst the former will be used to highlight how such music can be used to successfully convey a transcendental audio-visuality. A shift from artefact to style, hinting at aspects even beyond discourse, is essential in understanding how the use of Bach's music essentially aids the transcendental style in some examples whilst burdening

it in others. Because a sense of difference and contrast is at the centre of transcendental creation in some way within all of the examples so far, it must also have some academic context outside of musicology.

The concept of difference as a philosophical position will be the pivot on which this chapter will turn and the examples will be assessed through the framework of the theories of grammatologist, linguist and aesthetic philosopher Jacques Derrida as well as within the more typical musicological contexts. Arguably, the musicological (and audio-visual) analysis is simply another language being decoded through subjective frameworks and so several of Derrida's ideas will be pertinent in assessing how the examples work and how the analysis of the examples works as well. This will be most fruitful in the application of the Derrida dictum of "The signifier of the signifier" or, as he put it more haphazardly in his work, *Of Grammatology*, "...a sign signifying a signifier itself signifying eternal verity, eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos." (1976, p.15): an idea initially discussing the relationship between writing and oral/aural communication and one that has great potential in the audio-visual analysis of film too. To begin this chapter, some detail is required addressing this theory of difference as well as a general situating of the argument in the debates surrounding the use of pre-existing art music in film.

### Audio-Visual *Différance*

Derrida's theories and an audio-visual aesthetic such as the transcendental style are both routed in a gap of difference or *différance*. Difference is a mixed word speaking of actual difference and a deferral of meaning. It speaks of a gap between

meaning subject created between spoken and written forms of communication. Music in film has a parallel system to that of the language and grammar of general communication, and Derrida's theory is a deconstruction through analysis of the nature between a text and meaning. The context may be different but the application of Derrida's ideas to the audio-visual form highlights the unique difference created in particular by the use of pre-existing music, the difference that eventually taps into ineffable, transcendental notions.<sup>44</sup> Derrida suggests a potential hierarchy between aural and visual communication, writing that "In all senses of the word, writing thus *comprehends* language." (1976, p.7), going further to argue that "And thus we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing.'" (1976, p.9). The signifier of the written word is the comprehended and the communicator (this order is essential) of the idea which, according to Derrida, can be found in such likenesses as "cinematography" and "music". This hints at the potential application of his ideas to other communicative forms.

A simplistic interpretation of this in regards to audio-visual media could be that the form is merely a conglomeration of signifiers of signifiers, all working to convey and communicate some idea, often of narrational content. This, however, excludes the actuality of the cinematic form as a dialectical relationship and the hierarchies that the two forms shift between when in flow. What, therefore, can

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<sup>44</sup> The difference in contexts is that, in examples of audio-visual art, the two forms of communication occur simultaneously whilst the difference between the written word and aural word can be both separate *and* simultaneous.

formalistic difference in its various guises actually say and communicate when the signifiers are produced from differing initiators but remain in constant communication with each other? In his analysis of Derrida, Leslie Hill writes of an ineffable quality, perhaps what could even be described as a potential within communication that Derrida recognised: "To read any text is to recognise there is always an unreadable, uninteruptable, untranslatable remainder, which is what makes reading at one and the same time possible and impossible." (2007, p.101). What if a medium, any medium for that matter, took advantage of this, perhaps highlighting and emphasising this remainder? In a sense, poetry is created by this process (and forms that are already abstract in their formal make-up such as music) and has a huge advantage in being touched by this very ideal.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps this is simplifying Derrida's *différance* too heavily but, with even greater detail of Derrida's reading, it becomes a natural and inevitable outcome.

The theory of *différance* is in itself permeable because of the grammatical play that Derrida put into the choice of the term; mixing the potential transitive and intransitive forms of the word in French to ironic effect whereby the portal to the infinite potential he sees in the written form of language is already opened by the very word used to denote it. Hill schematises this idea as follows:

Since it came from a verb that was both transitive and intransitive, *différance* could be used to indicate a movement that was itself neither active nor passive, but prior to that opposition, just as it preceded, too, numerous other similar binary oppositions: presence and absence, sensible and intelligible, nature and culture, subject and object, and so on. (2007, p.16).

This, therefore, has great potential in its application to even the most general audio-visual arguments, especially those of the more transcendental variety of

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<sup>45</sup> Poetry is apt in the context of Tarkovsky who, as the son of the poet Arseny Tarkovsky, seems to have always seen himself as a poet of the cinematic form.

music and sound theories, because the problem of analysing and breaking down musical forms is to dissect their inner workings and is almost always in a sustained conflict with the inability of description outside of mere technicalities.<sup>46</sup> Kantian transcendental notions bear some weight again on this, the overlapping of differing transcendental natures being natural but almost instantly in need of defence against arguments of misunderstanding the term and perhaps the subconscious connecting of differing ideas because of the endless homonymic character of the word. That any creative form affects us, once lowered to its base potential, is essentially *a priori*. As T.K. Seung suggests "The a priori elements are space and time. They belong not to the physical world, but to human sensibility." (2007, p.2). It is, therefore, not a leap of great lengths to see such character in time-based media forms and our perception of them in a similar light.

Returning to Derridian *différance*, the relationship between written and aural/oral communication has more bearing on the audio-visual form. Derrida writes that "By definition, *différance* is never in itself a sensible plenitude. Therefore, its necessity contradicts the allegation of a naturally phonic essence of language. It contests by the same token the professed natural dependence of the graphic signifier." (1976, p.53). To reveal how Derridian *différance* can be applied to audio-visual forms, the framework set here by Derrida need only be aligned with the common, more assumptive arguments surrounding the relationship between

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<sup>46</sup> As further context for this particular letter play, Derrida wrote that "The activity or productivity connoted by the *a* in *différance* refers to the generative movement in the play of differences. The latter are neither fallen from the sky nor inscribed once and for all in a closed system, a static structure that a synchronic and taxonomic operation could exhaust. Differences are the effects of transformations, and from this vantage the theme of *différance* is incompatible with the static, synchronic, taxonomic, ahistoric motifs in the concept of structure." (1987, p.27).

film music and the image for the parallel to be perceived. In linguistic analysis, the common assumption that Derrida wishes to undermine is "...the professed natural dependence of the graphic signifier". Many audio-visual scholars are alerted to the same relationship in their field between the sound and visual hierarchies in film: that, as was common in the most industrialised (and codified) forms of cinematic examples, the music was seen and argued as being *added*, it was an additional element, it finished the picture and so forth.

Like Derrida, audio-visual scholarship has since moved on from this basic, industry-assumed argument, if only because the scope of global cinematic musical use (replacing the largely Hollywood-grounded analysis) has rendered many such frameworks as too specific. Derrida even (perhaps surprisingly) finds analysis that accounts for what this thesis calls the codified anti-transcendental uses of music by writing that "A signifier is from the very beginning the possibility of its own repetition, of its own image or resemblance." (1976, p.91). Nicholas Royle writes on the same point when discussing Derrida and cinema, suggesting that "Deconstruction is not only about *acknowledging* difference. It is also about being open to *being altered* in one's encounter with difference. And it is about making a difference, changing the ways we think and what we think, altering the world. Film offers a powerful way of projecting these issues." (2005, p.13). The emotional guiding of spectators through such a musical and audio-visual concept as the leitmotif - the very musical practices that almost always negate transcendental style - are all finding some likeness in Derrida's linguistic analysis.

Furthermore and contrary to this pathway, Derrida sees this notion of *différance* as a key to acknowledging the infinite potential in what is often a

quantified form. In the context of music analysis, a practice governed by the almost mathematical logic of musical notation and texts, this is especially relevant; there is naivety in how divining the affective power of music through the mechanisms of its cogs alone somehow yields its overall meaning. Considering cinema as a time-period in itself as opposed to simply a creative medium, allows the character of this construction of meaning to flow unimpeded. However, analysing cinema within this framework as one concise whole is against the methodology of my thesis; the form is multivalent because it is multimedia, perhaps even fitting the description of multi-causational in its affect. The written word is the visual, the hieroglyphic, the sign and a signifier in Derrida's terms, whilst the spoken (which is the aural/oral) is the original signifier of the idea of which words convey. The former is removed twice from its potentially Kantian transcendental source rather than simply once within latter (music being included in this) being closer to some sense of source. As film is built of these two forms, the aural and visual - the audio-visual - then what does Derridian *différance* say about cinematic arguments framed through similar mechanisms? In essence it can put forward a framework which, as will be shown in later case-study analysis, is essentially an audio-visual transcendental form where associative, as well as the propagatory character of aesthetic *différance*, builds links to higher meanings, opening the gateway to the infinite and the ineffable.

Music is considered to heighten the visual form and narrative of a film but what if it took on wholeheartedly the character of the Derridian *différance* instead, whereby the music was not actually communicating specifically to the pure source of narrative meaning as conveyed in the visual elements of the cinematic world, but was effectively drawing its affect from somewhere else because of its

character, its pre-existing nature and because of the thematic questioning raised by its place in the film at the hands of the director? Such musical choices are resistant to the negative connotations that Derrida draws. For example, Derrida writes that "If art operates through the sign and is effective through imitation, it can only take place within the system of a culture, and the theory of art is a theory of mores." (1976, p.207). This ties the potential codified (the signified) practice of creative forms (in cinema, let's say, for example a Max Steiner score) to the Adornian culture industry. It is commodified, producing a subsequent analysis of "mores" rather than transcendental/theological critiques. Transcendental audio-visual examples resist this too, operating through a mode of aesthetic reproduction that clashes together the new with the already existing, the overall output producing affective responses that have no potential for imitation purely derived from signs because its desired expression is beyond pure representation.

The aural communication within cinema can act to both communicate the central idea and, as in these examples of transcendental style, add questioning elements whose presence shifts the potential reading. Derrida predicted the latter outcome because of the potentiality within this communicating/questioning binary, Hill summarising it as follows:

Thus, whether or not it is "signified" or "expressed," whether or not it is "interwoven" with a process of signification, "meaning" is an intelligible or spiritual *ideality* which eventually can be united to the sensible aspect of a signifier that in itself it does not need. Its presence, meaning, or essence of meaning, is conceivable outside of this interweaving as soon as the phenomenologist, like the semiotician, allegedly refers to a pure unity, a rigorously identifiable aspect of meaning or of the signified. (1987, p.31).

It is fitting that Derrida finds a connection between intelligible meaning and a spiritual character of ideality as this is exactly the gap that certain pre-existing musical uses in film takes advantage of. It is also of interest to consider Hill's point

on its lack of "need"; the lack of necessity for intelligible meaning made sensible through a signifier. It seems an almost ironic point when considering creative media, not simply because of its consistent multivalence, but because meaning is now at the forefront of art theories generally.

This has had negative effects for certain scholars, most notably Susan Sontag who writes in her essay "Against Interpretation" that "In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art." (1967, p.7). She instead highlights an opposite to art made in the context of this era that actually requires meaning, suggesting that:

*Transparence is the highest, most liberating value in art - and in criticism - today. Transparence means experiencing the luminousness of the thing in itself, of things being what they are. This is the greatness of, for example, the films of Bresson and Ozu and Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*. (1967, p.13).*

Sontag is discussing a key element of the transcendental style, where the conceptual object in itself is unmarred by the weight of its subject but which (because of a lack of perceived subject) can evoke reception that is pure in character. In other words, the work is not entirely dependent upon its subject for the creation of affect. Though pre-existing music suggests a potential post-modern slant, one that would logically go against this reading, the examples retain the essence of Sontag's value by confidently but subtly extrapolating such ineffable elements and expression from music. This isn't interpretation or reading but, especially in the examples she cites, a far more subjective, personal, emotional and even spiritual teleology present.

In a sense, films that use pre-existing music to achieve transcendental ends actually combine elements of both Derridian and Sontag-like thinking. The

transparency is created unconsciously and contradictorily by association and contrast (or *différance*). Sontag mourns more primitive forms of art reception, though in some ways transcendental film style can still attain to its purity. She writes of how "The earliest experience of art must have been that it was incantatory, magical; art was an instrument of ritual." (1967, p.3) but descriptions of certain films and their effects seem to share these same elements. Through Derridian *différance* between cinematic signifiers, the examples within this chapter also retain some of this magical, ritualistic element as music often goes through several processes and scenes before fully attaining a cumulative transcendental effect.

Still, Derrida too sees some elements of Sontag's argument in the very act of writing itself. In his essay "Force and Signification" (1978) from the volume *Writing And Difference*, he speaks of the pivotal starting point of the creative act and the pathway traversed if reducing creative work down to pacifying the notions that Sontag suggested:

If creation were not revelation, what would happen to the finitude of the writer and to the solitude of his hand abandoned by God? Divine creativity, in this case, would be reappropriated by a hypocritical humanism. (1990, p.12).

He summarises the relationship further when discussing the writing of Marcel Proust where "Teleology here is not a product of the critic's projection, but is the author's own theme." (1990, p.22). This is true of transcendental cinema as well where the creator has imparted a number of signifiers, hints and other aesthetic relationships which, in the hands of the right viewer or critic, become something higher but, if in the hands of a general viewer, will most probably seem at the very least odd and intriguing (perhaps hinting at a subconscious level of transcendental

understanding) or at the most being uncomfortable and difficult to consume passively.

Derrida saw this inherent mechanism in the works of Antonin Artaud too, calling it the "Subjectile" where the dual functionality of a work was always present but the function of which depended upon the reception of the viewer actually perceiving it:

The subjectile: itself between two places. It has two situations. As the support of a representation, it's the subject which has become a *gisant*, spread out, stretched out, inert, neutral (*ci-git*). But it doesn't fall out like this, if it is not abandoned to this downfall or this dejection, it can still be of interest for itself and not for its representation, for *what* it represents or for the representation it bears. (2004, p.134).

In terms of cinematic subjectiles, the examples in question contain a narrative the aesthetics of which are that very subjectile. The narratives in question are often simple when broken down; the haunting by a lost loved one or the downward spiral of street pimp. These narratives require little reading to understand and to perhaps enjoy their linear progression, but the music, and to an extent some other cinematic functions, provide it with the dual characteristics of the subjectile. It has the potential to convey another dimension to the situation because of the aesthetic difference or *différance* created. In the case of the examples here, the dimension is not simply metaphorical but essentially expressive of ineffable forms; higher feelings and places, the presence of something Other and aspects that are beyond typical aesthetic representation for conveyance alone.

It is now essential to contextualise this theoretical framework within the actuality of pre-existing art music in film and its various analyses. Dean Duncan, whose quote opens this chapter, is one of the few audio-visual scholars to move the analysis of pre-existing art music away from the usual, industrialised (and

admittedly often negative) readings. If the *différance* created is to be shown to derive readings beyond such pure representation, then the very use of art music must be reassessed. Duncan suggests that "Though one can argue about more or less successful music, my contention is that all music enhances, if we take enhance to mean that it inflects and affects, whether for unity or multiplicity." (2003, p.21) and this must be the first analytical position to be taken if transcendental readings of the examples are to be attained.

Adorno and Horkheimer are two of the many scholars that Duncan lists as being reactive to such musical uses, due in part to the political and social era in which they lived. In *Dialects of Enlightenment*, they give numerous examples of recontextualisation of work for mass culture, the effects of which are in their view dangerously negative:

If one branch of art follows the same formula as one with a very different medium and content; if dramatic intrigue of broadcast soap operas becomes no more than useful material for showing how to master technical problems at both ends of the scale of musical experience - real jazz or a cheap imitation; or if a movement of a Beethoven symphony is crudely 'adapted' for a film sound-track in the same way as a Tolstoy novel is garbled for a film script: then the claim is done to satisfy the spontaneous wishes of the public is no more than hot air. (1969, p.122).

They question the role of such art forms being mass marketed by their editing, linking such ideas to the very removal of the questioning of the human condition. Yet they lived through an era where examples of pre-existing music in film often *are* there for more commercial reasons than creative reasons, before such a practice would become more expensive due to the rising costs of copyright usages. It is also an analysis conducted in an era which was arguably only just beginning to fully convey the thematic potential of using particular pieces of art music, not just

for transcendental means, but for other intellectual agendas too.<sup>47</sup> So often, however, such uses are not expressed through the sheer thematic means alone but within the model of form. It is a certain combination in the framework and the context of the *gesamtkunstwerk* that allows such examples of transcendental cinema to arise.

Sontag writes along similar lines in her essay on this more ineffable style of cinema, "Spiritual Style In The Films Of Robert Bresson" (1967). She suggests that an emphasis on form is where both affect and its subsequent analysis lies, writing:

Ultimately, the greatest source of emotional power in art lies not in any particular subject-matter, however passionate, however universal. It lies in form. The detachment and retarding of the emotions, through the consciousness of form, makes them far stronger and more intense in the end. (1967, p.181).

Analysing pre-existing musical use forces the analyst to confront two other key areas outside of these challenges of analysis. The first and more obvious element is the contextual baggage that the music brings with it, whether historical, technical or perhaps even personal. But the second and more relevant area is the position in which the music sits as well as the audio-visual form that the combination itself creates. The differences between such pre-existing uses and originally composed scores are of form rather than simply context. The whole process of thinking is different and has to account for thematic content that is far less malleable.

Duncan accounts for this difference by suggesting that "The fact is that music resists semiotic elaboration more than most modes of communication. In music the link between the signifier and the signified is not direct or causal, as in many other systems... This is not to say that music is not a signifying system."

(2003, p.86). This brings the argument back to Derrida and to earlier arguments

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<sup>47</sup> For examples of pre-existing music used intellectually, see any number of films by Jean-Luc Godard and many directors of various "new waves" of European cinema in the early 1960s.

surrounding music's abstract form. The logic for using an element that is in itself an ineffable entity rather than a purely "signifying system" to signify objects and subjects in cinema is flawed. And yet, through industrial practices and cinematic normalisation, perhaps even in musical forms such as operatic and programmatic music before it, it does work on many receptive levels in a practical sense.

Derrida argues, and in a sense finalises, this point of a fixed dialectic that cannot be ignored or simply reduced within analysis:

According to a general rule which is important for us, attention to the signifier has the paradoxical effect of reducing it. Unlike the concept of the supplement which, of course, *signifies* nothing, simply replaces a lack, the signifier, as it is indicated in the grammatical form of this word and the logical form of the concept, signifies the signified. (1976, p.208).

In other words, the analysis of the music alone is pointless (and would drift solely into the area of classical musicological analysis) as it is within the context of a signifying relationship where its whole content is being amalgamated into a form that also requires analysis of its whole; that the difference or *différance* perceived in the examples within these first two chapters - differences of themes, culture, history and other such elements - are only different as such when in an overtly dialectical form as audio-visual media. By reading such musical uses as working through differing methods, evidence of which is provided within the frame of the "signifier of the signified", areas can be opened up whereby thematic content can be seen to be produced through collisions. In communicative art forms, this can only be described properly through Derridian *différance* and seen to be a form that explicitly creates a number of transcendental audio-visual aesthetics when apparent in cinema.

### Pasolini's Transcendental Contradictions

Pasolini's use of Bach's music rarely elicits a transcendental moment in *The Gospel According To St. Matthew* in spite of still retaining some difference to the visual core of the film. This difference is one of temporality where, even if the viewer is unaware of music history, the instrumentation (yet alone the musicality of any number of Bach's pieces) is anachronistic in the context of the film's period setting. Normal audiences will not register this and it is a common occurrence in any number of historical films. In terms of Pasolini's own creative oeuvre, this would have little consideration at any rate and the presence of the other forms of music analysed in the last chapter should highlight how little Pasolini cared in regards to historical accuracy. His emphasis was instead on intuited feeling, reaction and emotion more than the sheer technicalities of storytelling. And yet, with hindsight of the examples to be analysed, it is not strictly the fact that it is Bach's music that removes the transcendental aspect but the context that it sits within; that of the audio-visual form.

To account for these moments where transcendental potential was not fulfilled, analysis alone of the use of Bach's music in this film is not enough. Therefore, a comparison must be made between the uses of Bach's music and other classical examples in *The Gospel*, to the use of Bach's music in another of Pasolini's films as it can highlight the music's position without becoming muddled by the theological tautology found specifically in this film. The film in question is *Accattone* (1961) and the comparison between the two films should highlight some basic methodological likenesses in regards to thematic and aesthetic content, where it is not simply cross-cultural difference or even a general *différance* which is

absent and contradicts the ineffable being expressed, but rather a genuine, almost avant-garde shift of the material in regards to wider cultural issues within Pasolini's filmmaking. By concentrating on this audio-visual example, it also removes the problematic theological elements which muddy the account of the transcendental style. Though *The Gospel* appears to have been the culmination of the first cycle of the director's filmmaking towards attaining some sort of "religious style", *Accattone* is where the director started to probe gritty narratives with theological content rather than vice-versa as in *The Gospel*.

*Accattone* follows the life of a pimp (Franco Citti) living in the poorer areas of Rome whose reliance on his prostitute (Silvana Corsini) for an income becomes the undoing of him. She is put in jail for a year after being beaten by a group of her pimp's rivals and subsequently arrested and sent to jail. With no money to buy food and no desire to work, *Accattone* roams the streets, watching his social and emotional life gradually disintegrate. He meets another woman (Franca Pasut) who offers to sell her body for him but he instead opts to attempt to work, failing in various, laborious jobs before finally stealing a motorbike and crashing it whilst trying to escape its owner. From this description alone, it is clear that the narrative tendencies in this film are far removed from the magical, but still equally hardship-ridden, world of *The Gospel*. Pasolini is clearly attempting to create moments of transcendental style (not least with the various symbolism of the main character as a Jesus figure), both in terms of the thematic nuances in the film and, most importantly, through the oddly stifled use of music. It is this latter aspect that acts as the control for how such musical usage can stumble.

In discussing the filmmaking process of Bresson, Sontag suggests that the spiritual character of his drama derives from conflict, suggesting the following: "The nature of drama being conflict, the real drama of Bresson's stories is interior conflict: the fight against oneself. And all the static and formal qualities of his films work to that end." (1967, p.187). Though Pasolini neglects the more formal qualities that Bresson uses, *Accattone* does immerse itself in various conflicts, both inner and outer. The various tragedies that we see befall the main character sit alongside the tragedies hinted to have already happened to him such as the loss of his first wife and child to another man. But in regards to the inner conflicts, Pasolini opts for an audio-visual method of conveying this ineffable aspect, one that is both musical and an attempt at the transcendental in terms of affect. The majority of the music used in *Accattone* is again a segment from Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, specifically cutting around the final C Minor chorus, "We Lay Ourselves With Weeping". The cutting of the short fragment of music is as harsh as the visual aesthetics of the film, sometimes cutting midway for very specific effects such as when it plays consistently in the background during a long take following the pimp and a recent lover along a street. Once the walking has begun, the scene does not cut visually until the characters separate, and Pasolini follows the pair as the pimp chastises her for various (and pointless) misdemeanours. What is the director attempting to say by putting such music in the background? The music has a thematic gap but is cut too abruptly to be of genuine effect. The scene is not transcendental but, in the clear attempt to highlight the more tragic background of the scene - the main character's self-destructive qualities, for example - Pasolini's use of the music at least betrays an attempt to create such an effect.

That such a liturgical piece of music should be used for a story regarding a down-and-out pimp in modern day Rome is in itself an audacious exercise, but the use also varies in its own transcendental output for many scenarios of the film's soundtrack suggests a release from an (admittedly self-induced) diegetic stasis for the character with a theological escape implied by the music (and ultimately the character's death). This glaze did not work in the transcendental sense for *The Gospel* as its narrative was already tied to an immanent theology and so the addition of such a recognisably aural theology was unnecessary and removed any potential transcendental character by falling into aesthetic and thematic overabundance. *Accattone* contradicts itself on another, more basic level. The music becomes the sort of shorthand in the vein that leads Schrader to initially discard it as a transcendental aspect of cinema.

Duncan suggests that the music actually balances out the very rawness of *Accattone's* subject matter writing, "Similarly, it is the religious nature of the *St. Matthew's Passion* that allows its closing chorale to frame and then (apparently) redeem the naturalisms of Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961)..." (2003, p.138). Bach's music is most overt in the film's scenes of violence where street scuffles between groups of pimps are contrasted with the overt sacredness of their soundtrack. In the examples of cross-cultural transcendence, it was the cultural aesthetic difference belying a communicative universality rather than the thematic difference that created the transcendental moments in *The Gospel*. In *Accattone*, the opposite is the case, where a thematic difference in regards to the film's and the music's subject attempts to create a gap for potential transcendental readings. In the films of Tarkovsky, this is the gap where transcendental moments find

success, whereas Pasolini is too assumptive of music's power and conveyance of thematic theology. He can, to use his own ideology against him, no longer cheat the content. The fact that the character of the music is itself theological aids his attempt at receptive deception in some ways but it is in the overall contrast between the use of the same music over the differing subject matters (and how those subject matters are realised) where the transcendental *différance* can be perceived, at least in its potential though not in its overall outcome.

When Duncan talks of redeeming the naturalism of the film, it is an analysis discussed from a perspective of class; that there is a spiritual difference between the classes of the thematic content of the music (i.e. the transcendent is beyond class) and the thematic content of the film (which is explicitly highlighting class in the tradition of the Italian neo-realist style). Pasolini, however, is a director who has always sought to blur the lines in this regard, finding spiritual interest in more grounded ethnographies and using traditional aesthetics to argue against their negation from society and from artistic culture as a whole. In doing this in such a musical way, he also attempts a musical transcendental creation through the assumed sharing of Cookian attributes.<sup>48</sup> When the music clashes with such moments as in several fight scenes or, even more surprisingly, when Accattone has fallen for a woman and is following her down the street, the moment is clearly some attempt to realise transcendental elements (through musical scoring) because of the emotional frame of the scenario, where hardship is almost sacrificial to Pasolini's overall narrative drive.

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<sup>48</sup> For more detail of Cook's theories, see the Introduction for greater detail.

Therefore, the difference between *The Gospel's* and *Accattone's* use of the same piece of music is built around two concepts. The first is that there is a thematic gap present in *Accattone* which does not call for transcendental justification and the film attempts to access deeper levels of drama where the everyday mundane is treated as sacred. This also ties in with Pasolini's previously aired views on social classes from the last chapter and gives weight to the director's own political stance on the working class. The second difference is that *Accattone's* narrative does not require a transcendental expression in the first place unlike *The Gospel* which naturally attempts some sort of ineffable expression because of its source text. Yet, in spite of Pasolini's predominate interest in theological styles of filmmaking, his haphazard methodology usually muddies his brief moments of transcendental expression with his other more overtly immanent thematic interests, often political in nature.

The divinity of his films must also fulfil his other more immanent criteria and it is in his use of music where such a dual mixture of transcendental and modernist approaches to his cinema is most apparent. His style is not transcendental overall because the theology he wishes to access is one grounded in the sociology and politics of the everyday, even when he is filming the theological story that is most relevant to his own country and set two-thousand years in the past. Pasolini's transcendental contradictions are not in themselves a failure to tap into the ineffable (or to do so through music which has been previously shown to occur at several points) but to sustain itself over his narratives. The mechanism is there (hence why it included within this thesis), its affect is simply not sustained. Pasolini's cinematic output is largely one of an unrealised transcendental style (one

that has many of its elements but is laboured by too many grounding elements) rather than a fully realised one but the fact that it is largely attempted through musical assumptions and audio-visuality makes it important to the framework of the audio-visual transcendental argument.

Bach scholarship in general has touched upon a number of these similar themes in the music before its recontextualisation has occurred. It is equally essential to discuss this to begin the groundwork for the analysis of Tarkovsky's cinema. In more traditional analyses, Wilfred Mellers' for example, Bach's creative practice is read as suggesting that the transcendental nature of the composer's music actually derives, not from people, but from expressing the very divinity of nature itself. Mellers writes that "With Bach the celebration of Nature's creativity is a manifestation of the divine." (1980, p.27); Pasolini's attempts are too grounded in humanity by comparison. This is also in the context of Mellers' treatment of Bach with an almost God-like reverence. Other scholars are more objective in their reasoning but still conclude upon some sort of transcendental potential in Bach's music. When assessing the influence of Lutheran thinking and belief upon Bach's work, Robin Leaver suggests that the treatment of music as a transcendental artefact is incredibly prescient when considering the assumptive treatment and power that belies Pasolini's use of the music:

Unlike other Reformers of the sixteenth century, who were rather cautious and circumspect with regard to music, Luther understood music as a *donum Dei*, a gift from God, rather than a human invention, and made frequent references to the interconnections between music and theology. (1997, p.40).

This natural interconnection is what has been assumed when picking out the music to use in the films.

John Butt accounts for a transcendental reasoning also, highlighting the parallel between cinematic and musical teleology, suggesting of Bach's treatment of music that he "...saw the very substance of music as a constituting a religious reality, that the more perfectly the task of composition (and, indeed, performance) is realised, the more God is immanent in music." (1997, p.46). Wendy Heller also puts forward a useful reception potential for the thematic content of Bach's music and again shows why it is difficult to automatically tap into its material when recontextualising it in film. She suggests that "Bach's cantatas pose something of a puzzle to the modern listener, who is likely not to be familiar with their function and meaning within the Lutheran service." (2014, p.257). This absence of function and meaning to the cinematic listener may also be present in Bach's Passions and essentially could be what undermines Pasolini's use of the music. The music is cut abrasively in such a casual manner as to render it a mere aesthetic component rather than an ineffable presence.<sup>49</sup> However, its mystery combined with its obvious affective power may also account for the success in achieving such transcendental moments found in the examples of the next section.

It is here where the movement away from Pasolini's transcendental contradictions to more successful uses of accessing such attributes within Bach's music is essential. Such a feat is always a potential but it takes a director of another kind to achieve it. Its balance between the theology of the music and not creating an overabundance (the creation of cross-media *différance*) through its narrative is immensely important. When discussing the use of Bach's music by the Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman, Per Broman hints at more successful uses of the

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<sup>49</sup> The ineffable presence is something that Sontag in particular would read positively as it would aid a potential transparency.

composer's music, suggesting that Bergman has a "...Schopenhauerian understanding of music as the elevated art that can raise even the naive to the sublime." (2012, p.25). To finalise his point, he seeks to contextualise Bergman with other directors, suggesting that he differs from the Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni, but has a musical/theological likeness with two other directors who are said to have "...utilized Bach in several films..." (2012, p.16). One is Pasolini who does indeed utilise Bach as has been shown but to very little transcendental effect. The other director Broman mentions is Tarkovsky and it is in his films where Bach's transcendental material can be shown to be tapped and used to create some of the most effective and complex transcendental moments in cinema; where *différance* created in the audio-visual relationships forces the viewer to confront the ineffable.

### Transcendental Use of Bach's Music in the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky

Through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form. - Tarkovsky (1986, p.37).

Tarkovsky's relationship with the cinematic medium was of a theological and spiritual character. For the director, the form was not simply one that conveyed a narrative or even expressed ineffable emotions, but one that explored the ideas of memory and time itself. The latter aspect was specifically the element he most sought to define in his films, calling the practice of filmmaking "*Sculpting in Time*", the name of his own 1986 book analysing the process of his work and methodology. The opening quote of this section hints towards the potential of treating time as the raw material of cinema and audio-visual media. It is the formalisation of the infinite, the spiritual and the inexpressible. In other words, it is

ripe for producing transcendental style, where aesthetic forms and relationships are born of an immanence suggesting more ineffable notions and ideals.

Tarkovsky made seven feature films in total over a period of less than 25 years, often being critically acclaimed and winning various festival prizes. The fact of his limited number of examples made over such a period of time should suggest the mentality of the director and his overall cultural aims, at least in simplistic terms. His films are not the Adornian commodified products typically assumed of the medium. They are not put together at speed and commercialised but constructed slowly over a number of intervening years where there is planning for every scenario and concern for detail and philosophy. In regards to the artistic image - a cross-media ideal that he often slips into in his writing, using poetry, painting and other forms to frame his own work - Tarkovsky writes that such a form has the capacity to enable interaction and engagement with the infinite, itself an overtly transcendental and ineffable concept. He suggests that:

And so there opens up before us the possibility of interaction with infinity, for the great function of the artistic image is to be a kind of detector of infinity... towards which our reason and our feelings go soaring, with joyful, thrilling haste. (1986, p.108).

With such an engagement at the very core of his creative endeavours, it is of no surprise to find Tarkovsky's own filmmaking producing varying and powerful moments of transcendental style.

These moments take on both the character of theology and emotion, where there is often a link built between such emotional anguish and a Schraderian escape from stasis, the torrent of emotional turmoil being a key moment in many of his films. But in spite of this being an overtly narrative phenomena, the moments are again within the context of the cinematic time-tapestry where their affect is

augmented by Tarkovsky's temporal-based practical emphasis. Elizabeth Fairweather makes the connection between this theoretical position and the transcendental effect that it has on the overall cinematic product aesthetically, writing that:

One of Tarkovsky's contributions to film scholarship was his development of a structuralizing theory of cinema that he called "sculpting in time." This refers to the idea that the audience's sense of time and place is subject to manipulation, and the resulting illusion in a way amounts to a means of artistic expression in and of itself. The theory of "sculpting in time" acknowledges that human feeling and emotion are timeless and, ultimately, transcendental. (2012, p.32).

Theoretical concepts here have the potential to link ineffable human feeling with a cinematic formalism; a conjoining that seems almost unique when considering the various attitudes towards film as a codified form built by commercial powers.

Consider for example, Adorno's early critical definition of any potential transcendental elements within mass culture: "The tremor lives off the excess power which technology as a whole, along with the capital that stands behind it, exercises over every individual thing. This is what transcendence is in mass culture." (1991, p.63). Tarkovsky works around this by actually building his methodology upon both musical and poetic forms where each action is, in a sense, a mapped-out stretch of time. In doing this, he has the potential ability to augment the viewer's awareness of time passing and, through doing so, holds long shots of images in oneiric cascades which hint towards the ineffable through their aesthetic form being in total and harmonious control of the thematic essence driving the films forward.

By "sculpting in time", Tarkovsky brings together ideas of memory - especially those built from emotional occurrences - and manages to translate them into a language that is understandable, at least in the sense that an underlying

intuitive, perhaps even uncanny, character is perceivable. A parallel can be perceived in T.K. Seung's writing on Kant's conception of beauty: "Aesthetic Ideas are not transcendent, but immanent because they belong to the aesthetic imagination and sensibility. They are created by articulating the transcendent Idea of Beauty for the phenomenal world." (2007, p.xv). It is an articulation through immanent materials that is the key point with Seung further outlining that "Space is outer sense, time is inner sense." (2007, p.14). This is an apt point when discussing Tarkovsky's emotional time sculptures where inner emotion is channelled through aesthetic relationships with time.

There is also a Derridian side to this element too. After all, Derrida does suggest that "*Différance* is articulation." (1976, p.66). This language is, of course, not simply visual but quintessentially audio-visual and Tarkovsky is one of the few directors working within a transcendental audio-visual framework to acknowledge and write about his various and idiosyncratic relationships with sound and music in detail. In *Sculpting In Time*, he dedicates a whole, if brief, chapter to the subject:

Furthermore, music can bring to the material filmed a lyrical note born of the author's experience. In the autobiographical *Mirror*, for instance, music is often introduced as part of the material of life, of the author's spiritual experience, and this is a vital element in the world of the film's lyrical hero. (1986, p.158).

Here, Tarkovsky is suggesting the potential Derridian character in music when applied in his films. There is a clear difference in thematic content creating *différance*, not purely from the music's theological slant, but from the director's own experiential material commenting upon the film's narrative.<sup>50</sup> This is another form of audio-visual *différance* creating transcendental style, one that might be

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<sup>50</sup> Applied is the wrong word in some senses as it is clear that Tarkovsky built and edited several of the transcendental scenarios around the pieces of music and didn't simply "apply" them to a finished image and narrative.

called a Personalised *Différance* as opposed to the cross-cultural transcendence of the previous chapter.

Even when in an overtly autobiographical film of Tarkovsky's such as *Mirror* (1975) - a film that follows three generations of women, starting with his mother then leading to his grandmother and great grandmother (albeit played by the same performer) - the director's presence is felt through its music being recontextualised via its placement and scenario, almost always creating some ineffable and transcendental affect by implication as the examples will later show. Tarkovsky looks to the music of Bach again (as well as others) to build these links. Such a creation of difference leads ultimately to a spatio-temporal permeability within his films, even resulting in such intriguing aesthetics as differing time-scales between the aural and the visual world. In his analysis of Tarkovsky, Nariman Skakov suggests this to be one of the director's key tools in his cinematic output: "Space and time intersect and form a complex spatio-temporal web. Tarkovsky refines this artistic device throughout his career, and perfects it in later works such as *Mirror*, *Nostalghia* and *Sacrifice*." (2012, p.21). It is fitting that all three examples mentioned use pre-existing music throughout, especially music by Bach, to achieve such a complex spatio-temporal structure. The former two films even opt to use Bach in their climactic scenes, usually then slipping into a quiet moment of aural absence to end the film.<sup>51</sup>

Skakov does not, however, go into detail regarding the affective quality or result of such a "web", one that is often created by a unique emphasis on the soundworld built from an idiosyncratic relationship with diegesis that rarely follows

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<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on natural sound will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 5.

the formal rules associated with its typical binaries. Tarkovsky's Personalised *Différance* comes largely from a hyper-specificity in regards to his musical choices which rarely change even when his films switch between genres such as War, Science-Fiction and Family Drama.<sup>52</sup> This aspect is highlighted further when Tarkovsky dismisses most uses of music in other films, where he suggests that "I have to say in my heart of hearts I don't believe films need music at all." (1986, p.159). Previously, he had argued against the simple tagging-on of music to film (specifically in film before the coming of sound), which is useful in that it highlights his own distance from the typical codified forms of film music, whether it be especially composed or pre-existing: "It was a pretty mechanical and arbitrary way of tagging music onto the picture, a facile system of illustration, with the object of intensifying the impression made by each episode." (1986, p.155). Whilst Tarkovsky himself seeks to intensify his own personal cinematic impressions, his specificity within the music and the difference it creates in his films means he almost never falls into his own critique of simple illustration.

Furthermore, Tarkovsky treats music in films often as a refrain which, when looking at his own description of the term, bears some similarity, albeit with marked differences, to the leitmotif:

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<sup>52</sup> These genres are listed for pendency as it is clear to any viewers of Tarkovsky that they rarely conform to the genres in question but often use them as a starting point for higher questions and personal exploration.

I find music in film most acceptable when it is used like a refrain. When we come across a refrain in poetry we return, already in possession of what we have read, to the first cause which prompted the poet to write the lines originally. The refrain brings us back to our first experience of entering that poetic world, making it immediate and at the same time renewing it. We return, as it were, to its sources.

Used in this way, music does more than intensify the impression of the visual image by providing a parallel illustration of the same idea; it opens up the possibility of a *new*, transfigured impression of the same material: something different in kind. Plunging into the musical element which the refrain brings into being, we return again and again to the emotions the film has given us, with our experiences deepened each time by new impressions. With the introduction of the musical progression, the life recorded in the frame can change its colour and sometimes even its essence. (1986, p.158).

There are, however, several differences which mark out why the music in Tarkovsky's films expresses more transcendental means than the form of the leitmotif (and work outside of being purely a refrain). The first is that rather than being a reference to something specific such as a character or a mood, its meaning through its repetition undergoes a transformation of the transcendental kind.

Whereas a leitmotif is often used for specific ties, if only to build an accumulated awareness for easy characterisation for the viewer, Tarkovsky's music is in effect different between its various uses throughout his films even when it is the exact same piece of music; the music's fixed status providing comment and context upon the progress of the narrative. This static recontextualisation recalls Philip Tagg's very conception of music's semiotic character:

In fact, musical structures often seem to be objectively related to (a) nothing outside themselves, (b) their occurrence in similar guise in other music, or (c) their own contextual position in the piece of music in which they (already) occur. At the same time, it is absurd to treat music as a self-contained system of sound combinations because changes in musical style are historically found in conjunction with (accompanying, preceding, following) change in the society and culture of which the music is part. (1999, p.18).

His three elements related to musical structure seem to fortuitously present a potential process through which this use of music initiates the augmentation of meaning. From its own ineffable language, through to meaning built up through repetition to finally an immanent context (provided in film through visuals and

narrative), this is in some sense the process that is typical in normal films and in flux in Tarkovsky's films. Tarkovsky's music refers to the whole filmic world he has created through an aesthetic and thematic difference rather than one with reference to one specific aspect; the music often overarches a character's emotional and spiritual journey. Robynn J. Stilwell in her essay "The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic", writes of a "difference" created by the delineated gap in audience reception: "My objection to the latter is simple: because the border between diegetic and nondiegetic is crossed so often does not invalidate the separation. If anything, it calls attention to the act of crossing and therefore reinforces difference." (2007, p.184). Stilwell later in the essay writes of such a gap leaning towards the fantastical and even the sublime:

The phrase "fantastical gap" seemed particularly apt for this liminal space because it captured both its magic and its danger, the sense of unreality that always obtains as we leap from one solid edge toward another at some unknown distance and some uncertain stability - and sometimes we're in the air before we know we've left the ground. (2007, p.187).

The sense of the unknowable and the unstable are key aspects of both Stilwell's argument and a general audio-visual transcendence. Yet Tarkovsky still refers to his use of music as a refrain. This may suggest some mechanical, anti-transcendental codifying process that the music goes through but it is the context in which this sits that ultimately forces the viewer to confront the ineffable, especially when such themes are at the core of his films in the first place.

Tarkovsky also refers to the layering effect through such a musical use which bears some resemblance to Pasolini's use of Blues music in *The Gospel*; where the music goes through a process of transfiguration as the context of the film evolves and progresses, often towards a greater sense of emotional and

physical hardship. The "parallel illustration of the same idea" that the director earlier referred to could also hint at the theological character of the music he chooses. There's little doubt that the majority of Tarkovsky's films are dealing with theological, spiritual and sacred subject matters and his description of the music working in parallel (not parallelism as traditionally known in audio-visual media) is most likely discussing the delicate process of theologising human emotion, turmoil, and travesty.

To bring this back to Derridian territory, it could be said that he is inverting the typical "signifier of the signifier" relationship that film music normally has within cinema, and where the music is very much outside of the narrative world in the sound hierarchy but is still attached to some connected aspect, being that of the director and his own spiritual association with the music and the scene in question. The argument could be summarised as follows. Derridian difference suggests a gap between spoken and written communication. Written words are twice removed from the subject/object whereas spoken words are only once removed. Consider film music through this framework. Film is arguably a collection of ineffable ideas first realised by the director and others. Like spoken language, visuals are the first response to these ideas of narrative/thematic points. In typical audio-visual relations, however, music is arguably twice removed as it is connected more to this secondary visual response than to the primary original subject/object. Tarkovsky's music, therefore, subverts this by being less attached to the secondary visual response to the subject/object and more connected to the original ineffable elements via its accumulated meaning, its personal inference to the director, and its overall aesthetic difference in the context of the overall film.

Duncan refers to similar musical uses as anempathetic music, a term coined by Michel Chion, which "...allows us to do more than simply support and oppose, but rather to see, and hear, how music shifts and confounds in the ways it relates to meaning." (2003, p.29). This is considered to be one of the key intellectual positions which pre-existing music can be posited within when used in film, where its presence (and, in the terms of this chapter's arguments, its *différance*) filters any potential meaning through its sheer placement rendering it far more complex and far more uncannily ethereal. This could potentially fall into Sontag's interpretative trap where "Only a bad intellectual end is served when we blur all boundaries and call it religious, too..." (1967, p.255) but there is a specific drive in Tarkovsky's cinema that ultimately forces readings of aesthetic realisations to be more than just immanent renderings of something Other but actually directed to connected to it. Music builds heavily into this relationship.

Tarkovsky's use of music as a refrain has the potential to do this. For, being in dialect with the spiritual expression of a scene, the music need only be built in earlier to either have its meaning expanded upon or to tie the visual happenings of a later scene to an earlier, more overtly ineffable one. Again it is contrast and difference at work within the recapitulation of the transcendental. For example, in *Solaris*, the case-study film of the next section, the mixture of Bach's music, an aesthetically pulp narrative, thematic material from other visual high art and the emotional turmoil of that narrative expand this gap to move beyond pure aesthetics. Through this, Tarkovsky uses music to rise above the world of mere aesthetic appearances. This is discussing his visuals, thematic content and his aural worlds (and is not simply rewriting the typical "music raises the image" dictum).

Kant's noumenal ideas have some relation to this because they relay certain ideals that Tarkovsky is himself exploring.

Seung suggests that "The world of phenomena is the sensible world; it is accessible to our sensibility. The world of noumena is the super-sensible world; it transcends our sensibility." (2007, p.3). The point in framing the argument within this is almost from a fantastical position especially. As Pontera has pointed out, Slavoj Žižek, another philosopher to analyse Tarkovsky, suggests that the scene in question requires the very phenomena at the heart of the film to resemble a Kantian subject: "In fact, Žižek comprehends the 'Solaris-Thing' as something akin to the Kantian transcendental subject in that it shares with this subject both its constituting powers and the impossibility of coming to know or grasp it." (2014, p.11). Yet Tarkovsky's overall relationship with the use of any music in his films is one of both positive and negative potential. He sees the necessity for it in a general cinematic sense but also the potential to discard it completely, stating that:

In every instance, music in cinema, is for me a natural part of our resonant world, a part of human life. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that in a sound film that is realised with complete theoretical consistency, there will be no place for music: it will be replaced by sounds in which cinema constantly discovers new levels of meaning. (1986, p.159).

He never had the opportunity to explore this idea completely though, even looking at his final film, *The Sacrifice* (1986) - a film that is framed by a piece of Bach and then uses traditional Japanese music to convey the differing paths between two possible dimensions - music is still explicitly key. This binary of music occurs throughout the film.

In the scene before the main character Alexander (Erland Josephson) burns his house down as a sacrifice to prevent a nuclear holocaust which he has already witnessed happening, the traditional Japanese music plays diegetically before

becoming more ambiguous in its source. After this scene has occurred and Alexander has been rushed to hospital for such a seemingly unhinged action, the final moment of the film shows the young boy at the heart of the film's Nietzschean eternal return watering a tree which has come to symbolise a life force (the Japanese music is briefly heard at the beginning of this scene though its source is a mystery). To finalise the film with this moment, Tarkovsky then uses Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* - specifically the aria, "*Erbarme dich, mein Gott*" - to highlight both the ineffable nature of his own narrative; one that is both fantastical but also spiritual in character. The slow crane shot moves from the boy to the tree with the music and the image concluding the film.

The music is key in providing a gap of difference and allowing for the borrowing the Bach's thematic material. It appears to be a theoretical purity with which Tarkovsky seeks to explore, one often contrary to his own practical methodologies. Perhaps his suspicions surrounding music in film are because of music's form being on tap for whomever may want to use it and for whatever (potentially crass) means in cinema are desired. Malcolm Budd outlines this construct:

Music is fundamentally abstract in the sense that, whatever other kinds of "meaning" it may have - semantic, representational, expressive - it has them only in virtue of its intramusical meaning; and only if this meaning is understood. (1995, p.127).

Tarkovsky also takes advantage of this abstract construct, using the aesthetic and (inbuilt) thematic differences of music in a number of scenarios where such difference and context creates a palpable otherness. Though the tools are still immanent leaning (abstract forms lie in immanence, awaiting such semiotic application), they are the only ones capable of expressing the ideals, feelings and

impressions that the director has felt in his life. These attempts to recreate such ineffable (and ultimately transcendental) moments are the real driving forces within his profound cinematic career and they require detailed analysis and reading to understand how such transcendental moments occur. As Tarkovsky writes "We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe, but the poetic image is able to express that totality." (1986, p.106).

### Musical Transcendence Through Bach's Music in *Solaris*

For Tarkovsky, Bach's music discloses the truth within us. - Pontera (2014, p.7).

The above quotation regarding Tarkovsky is a useful way to begin the exploration of his practical application and methodologies surrounding the use of pre-existing music in his films and their potential spiritual goals. This is because the director is highlighting, if only by accident, a common theoretical position in the analysis of music in film; that in spite of several similarities in regards to form, the amalgamating of the two separate media (the moving visual image and the aural kinetism of music) can and has been seen in the past as theoretically problematic. Even Tarkovsky himself qualified this point, writing that "For strictly speaking the world as transformed by cinema and the world as transformed by music are parallel, and conflict with each other." (1986, p.159). In other words, in spite of its obvious industrialised success (and the subsequent normalisation of viewer reactions to music in film) there is potential conflict enacted on a number of core thematic levels in audio-visual media. Some of these conflicts, by analysing some scenes from Tarkovsky's films, can be shown in contrary to the negative criticism of pre-existing musical scores, to access transcendental realms. It is a conflict that also

shares some parallel roots theoretically with Derridian *différance* in its mechanisms.

Duncan begins the rehabilitation of analysing pre-existing art music arguing that "A loose idiomatic identification - that sounds like classical music - will lead to a particular response; the more particular the identification, the more complex and interesting the effects that can be traced." (2003, p.141). Tarkovsky is an excellent example of this as, with the context of detailed musicological and cultural/historical analysis, complex effects of a transcendental character - an overtly difficult aesthetic aspect to define - can quintessentially be argued for. J.G. Kickasola comes upon a similar point when discussing the use of music in Krzysztof Kieślowski's cinema (and apt considering he details a likeness between him and Tarkovsky) suggesting that "...the consistent technique of surprise and de-familiarization, which results in a constant expansion of time and space in the mind of the audience, has the aggregate effect of generating a 'cosmic' or 'transcendent' sort of feeling throughout the film." (2012, p.67). Caryl Flinn also saw this potential when writing in the pre-digital era though, perhaps still under the shadow of the Frankfurt school and its connotative negativity, saw it as the reason for music's appropriation by the industrialised side of the form: "Indeed music is a lot of things, so many that one might conclude it is bereft of any imprint of its own or that it passively awaits meaning to be imposed upon it." (1992, p.8). Tarkovsky leans more towards Duncan's idiom of musical use than Flinn's though perhaps the two positions are not so much binaries but instead causational in their relationship to each other, where transcendental difference is created and perceived through

complex forms of identification with the music used in cinema, but is also itself produced by its multivalent relationships with meaning in the first place.

The transcendental difference works in Tarkovsky's films through this process of identification evolving into meaning, sharing music's pre-existing, cultural/thematic content, the personal inflection or the meta-diegetic position achieved and discussed earlier, and the overall aesthetic difference within its initial recontextualisation in the film. Though virtually all of Tarkovsky's uses of classical music work through this trio of interpretative building blocks, there is one example in particular that highlights the point more overtly and more transcendently than the others: the 1972 science-fiction film, *Solaris*. Because the transcendental moments occur through the conflicts of context, the film's narrative and aesthetic qualities need to be addressed before placing its idiosyncratic musicality within a general, transcendental framework.

*Solaris* is based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem and concerns the fate of a psychologist Kris Kelvin (Donatas Banionis) who is sent to investigate strange events occurring on a research facility situated on the planet of the film's title. One of the three scientists working there has committed suicide whilst the other two are clearly hiding information from the psychologist, especially as there appears to be more than two people roaming around the station's corridors. The planet turns out to have mysterious, almost sentient powers to work upon the memory of humans resulting in Kelvin being at first haunted and then reunited with the spirit of his dead wife Harri (Natalya Bondarchuk) who died at a young age. He becomes obsessed with the return of his lost loved one, initially trying to send her away but failing and embracing the facsimile. His obsession with her naturally grows and he

contemplates remaining on the base just to be with her as it is apparent that it is the planet which is producing the phenomena and is one that cannot be moved to elsewhere.

As the film progresses, it becomes clear that the newly sentient Harri relies on Kelvin being in close proximity for her to exist and to not suffer a painful, recurring death which he is forced to witness every time he is apart from her for a brief period of time. The happening has theological and spiritual connotations, explained by Skakov who labels the director's take on more fantastical elements as subversive: "It is clear that Tarkovsky attempts to subvert the miraculous quality of science fiction." (2012, p.83). She eventually leaves due to the strain that she knows her presence is putting upon the scientist and he supposedly returns home back to his parents' house where the film opened. He breaks down upon seeing his father. The film ends with it revealing that Kelvin is still in fact on the planet, living and even trapped in another rekindled memory. Perhaps even the whole of the film itself has been a fantasy produced by the planet with Kelvin never having left there.

*Solaris'* soundtrack is mixed in terms of its sources and produces a wide range of effects, not simply those of a transcendental nature. The soundworld of the film includes a hyper-sensitive emphasis on natural sound, electronic scoring by the composer Edward Artemiev and, most interestingly, the use of a single piece of Bach in the form of the F minor Chorale prelude, *BWV 639* from *The Orgelbüchlein* (The Little Organ Book). The piece in question occurs a number of times and its transcendental thematic character is affected greatly by two specific aspects: its placement in the film and how this version of Bach is actually created and

produced. Both hint at Derridian *différance* in several interesting creative choices. When the piece appears in the film's opening sequence, its character (like in Pasolini's *The Gospel*) is not transcendental in the audio-visual sense. Its use appears to be bringing out direct, spiritual connotations within the fantastical happenings about to occur but this is not strictly the mechanism behind a transcendental style. Instead, this is further enhanced later when the music is linked directly with the notion of being lost in personal and deeply affecting memories.

In a momentary flashback sequence, Kelvin is confronted with a montage of memories; montage in the sense that many years of life are shown to be interacting around the area of his parents' house but subtly and with very few typical cuts and montage techniques. Even though the scene is outside in a place that was previously shown to have an excessively loud variety of natural sounds, the aural world is replaced entirely with the piece of Bach in the soundtrack. This hints towards the link between the piece of music and the film's narrative suggesting that, for whatever reason, Bach's music represents the main character's past and his potential to return to it (as well as the desire behind such a notion). The film opens with Kelvin's return to the house and the soundtrack is deliberately split between the music in the titles and the cut to natural sound as soon as Kelvin comes into the picture. As the natural landscape around the house is shown visually in great detail, Kelvin's presence seems to continue the perspective of human perception initially instigated by the music as if it is continuing in silence through the visual of the man contrasted with the natural environment.

In the nostalgia sequence, however, the music now dominates which allows a progression to be discerned in regards to Kelvin's own emotional journey, where he is gradually becoming more and more lost in his own nostalgic visions. This nostalgia sequence attains a brief transcendental character in that it highlights the ineffable feeling that Kelvin must be experiencing but it is not fully formed thematically. This seems to be quite deliberate on Tarkovsky's part as he is clearly aware that it is building to a far more integral moment of transcendental expression later on. Instead, the main scene of interest appears in the latter part of the film some way into its narrative and after much emotional turmoil. The scene in question may be the only scene in the film that uses music to create a transcendental moment in the purest, musical essence (sound often plays more of a role as will be described in Chapter 4) but it is one of immense aesthetic power produced through an incredibly complex and patient methodology.

Some way into the film, the station changes its position/orbit leading to thirty seconds of zero gravity. As levitation is a common visual occurrence in Tarkovsky's cinema (and one never properly explained within any other narrative), this moment of weightlessness cannot be put down to the science-fiction-based narrative alone but instead down to a continuation of the director's thematic (i.e. spiritual) interest. After being told that such a phenomenon is about to occur, Kelvin rushes back to Harri who is sat in the study. The room is period rather than futuristic, decorated by paraphernalia of an older time including artwork by the painter Pieter Brueghel. He embraces Harri as they begin to float gently around the room, sharing the levitation with a variety of objects in a subtle use of visual and aural slow-motion. The scene cuts between Brueghel's painting *Hunters In The*

*Snow* (1965), a clear visual reference point for the earlier nostalgia scenes which lapsed into a similarly snowy vista, and the emotional moment shared by the couple. The soundtrack is at first sparse, making the most of the hypnotically slowed sound of the chandelier shaken by the orbital shift. Tarkovsky then cuts the sound to incorporate a varied interpretation of Bach's *F Minor Chorale Prelude* into the mix and the scene plays with the music augmenting its perception and affect.

The thematic relationships that fluctuate within this segment are incredibly complex. The main character has been repeatedly told that this relationship with the ghost of his wife will not last forever. Yet the station and the planet have given him the chance of a moment beyond expression, floating around a room of art built on the nostalgic memories of his past, whilst in the arms of a dead loved one. The scenario itself is already of a transcendental nature simply through its happenings and, more accurately, the emotional weight that is undoubtedly conveyed by the character as such a fantastical moment occurs. Pain and pleasure of impossible emotional quantities are balanced and expressed but it is the music which finally conveys these feelings of the overwhelming and impossible spiritual reaction over to the audience. Fairweather argues that sound in Tarkovsky's films is used to define notably ineffable elements, the explanation for which can be easily stretched to include such uses of music as in *Solaris* where "...a sound is used to personify and define an extra dimension of expression that is not immediately apparent." (2012, p.43). The music comes from no source within the room in

question contrary to several of Tarkovsky's other musical moments and so plays into this extra-dimensional quality with overtly transcendental results.<sup>53</sup>

Artemiev has augmented the music so that its top line melody in particular has an electronic tone that becomes more overt as the scene and the music progresses. The clash of difference is arguably already present in the music; the tonality of Bach's original music and the technology through which it is being recreated creating tension and highlighting the hand of a creator. Tarkovsky has expressed concern over music's illustrative nature before and perhaps this reimagining of the piece texturally is one of the ways to combat this: "Instrumental music is artistically so autonomous that it is far harder for it to dissolve into the film to the point where it becomes an organic part of it. Therefore its use will always involve some measure of compromise, because it is always illustrative." (1986, p.163). The fact that this is further enhanced by being in, at least in basic terms, nondiegetic placement within the scene means that the music is as alien a force in the moment as the very events unfolding for the character on the screen.

Some readings could explain away aesthetic differences within the music by the station and its technology. After all, the majority of the music within the film has either been Artemiev's own *musique concrète*-like electronic compositions (built from the sound effects but trying to be its own creation) which blend easily into the Science-Fiction soundscape, or purely experimentation with diegetic sound. But Artemiev's sound augmentation of Bach does not just occupy some space-age vision of how its characters would interpret or receive art music from the past. It is more thematically weighted by the emotional and spiritual

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<sup>53</sup> Harri and Kelvin are, however, seen at another point in the film listening to the record of the piece.

connotations of the scene in which it is most overtly used, whereby it is connecting a number of threads built throughout the film and is theologising them whilst maintaining a distinct difference between the diegetic world of the scene and Tarkovsky's/the viewer's subsequent reaction and perception. Pontera quotes Jeremy Barham and the problematic position of a reading relying on the relationship between these soundworlds:

As Jeremy Barham has pointed out "[t]he problem of interpreting this ending [of *Solaris*] is embodied in its sound: has the humanist Bach been appropriated by Artemiev's technological score, or vice versa? Or has rapprochement been reached between the twin poles? Does the final gesture suggest merely the pessimism of Tarkovsky's outlook, or the redemption of technology in some transcendent metaphysical realm?" (2009: 267-68). (2014, p.14).

The scene may be potentially laboured in its reading as being a very literal transcendence (where characters earnestly transcend gravity) but the symbolic nature of this movement combined with the difference within the music creates a moment of transcendental expression. Tarkovsky blends the nostalgia of the earlier sequence with the emotional turmoil of Kelvin's present predicament but, by including the tonal theologies of Bach's music, the director also implies some escape from stasis, perhaps the stasis of mourning or grief but equally the stasis of the dramatised happenings presented in the film.

As Pontera further writes, Bach's music relates the inexpressible of Kelvin's attempts to inject feeling and emotion into his relationship with his facsimile ghost wife:

Again, we can understand this scene as Kelvin's attempt to resurrect the emotional reality or "feel" of his earlier life. And just like the first attempt, this second staging of intimacy and reconciliation will fail because the Solaris-derived Harri, however much Kelvin wants her to be the real Harri, is precisely not that: she is and remains a phantom of the protagonist's guilt-ridden past. The important point here, however, is that, just as we did with the earlier scene, we may construct the present scene as one in which Kelvin is hearing, in the sense of in some way experiencing the import of, Bach's music. (2014, p.13).

The moment is theologised by the music's augmentation which suggests something beyond Bach's theology is being accessed. It feels odd because of the textural quality of Artemiev's synthesisers and its forcing of the viewer to leap over several boundaries before properly engaging in the scene; boundaries such as the very source of the music which is heightened as a question by the augmentations applied to it. It becomes what Derrida would call an "imprint" in linguistic terms which is also quintessentially a type of "form": "Difference is therefore the formation of form. But it is *on the other hand* the being-imprinted of the imprint." (1976, p.63). Tarkovsky, therefore, instantly has the potential to draw from Bach's music both its traditional theology (from its imprint) and an otherness (from its form) which, in the realm of the film, can only be properly described as an inexpressible transcendental notion.

When this aesthetic idea is tied to the thematic content of the scene itself - that of an inexpressible moment for the character channelled over and through to the viewer - the scene can only end up being read as some sort of expressive transcendence. Perhaps the point would be less laboured if the scene in question did not feature the literal levitation of characters transcending gravity itself but the scenario would be equally effective if they were simply sat in silence as the music played, the cuts switching between their acceptance of their emotional situation and the painting. In fact, it could be argued that this would increase its transcendental character as the music would be forced to provide more of the textural content and to draw more succinctly upon its previous uses within the earlier scenes of nostalgia for family life back on Earth.

Sontag surmises why this transcendental character is already there within many works of art, arguing that all inward expressions are in some way ineffable and that the subsequent creation of immanent work must take this facet into account. This can account for some of this scene's sense of balance:

In the strictest sense, all the contents of consciousness are ineffable. Even the simplest sensation is, in its totality, indescribable. Every work of art, therefore, needs to be understood not only as something rendered, but also as a certain handling of the ineffable. In the greatest art, one is always aware of things that cannot be said (rules of "decorum"), of the contradiction between expression and the presence of the inexpressible. (1967, p.36).

Tarkovsky seeks to balance this contradiction, especially within the scene in question, by supplanting the aesthetic world of each cultural artefact (the filmic content and the musical content) within each form; the classical sense of "high art" present in the scene through the painting, and the technological setting of the film present in the music through its electronic augmentation by Artemiev. The scene is most definitely a "certain handling of the ineffable" and seems to be built explicitly on the "contradiction" or difference of expression whereby Tarkovsky is performing some expressive attempt through the use of aesthetic forms that are in themselves abstract (at least in their formal conception, not in their actual application). The scene in *Solaris* provides evidence that there is a spiritual potential within the recontextualisation of music being used and placed carefully within the axiomatic world of the film and narrative; where its presence seems at first to have no say upon the self-realising narrative but changes the scenario's thematic leaning entirely.

## Potential for Pre-existing Music

For art could almost be said to be religious in that it is inspired by commitment to a higher goal. Devoid of spirituality, art carries its own tragedy within it. For even to recognise the spiritual vacuum of the times in which he lives, the artist must have specific qualities of wisdom and understanding. - Tarkovsky (1986, p.168).

Looking at the differences in teleological potential of both Pasolini's and Tarkovsky's use of Bach's music – that of invoking some sense of profound reception - the mechanisms by which music from the same composer has been adjusted should have given some indication in regards to both the production and negation of the transcendental as a reception potential. Though both directors have been shown to have explicit interest in theological and spiritual matters, the perceived lack of transcendental affect through an aesthetic overabundance in comparison to an overwhelming sense of the transcendental in the other raises several key points surrounding the use of pre-existing music in audio-visual transcendental style. The first concerns whether or not the cultural status of the music in question being that of an already religious/theological character and quality has had any effect on the transcendental nature and the scenes in which the music is used. Fairweather suggests this to be so in the case of Tarkovsky where, in his film *Mirror* (1975), Bach's music is used for precisely this effect (and arguably again achieves a transcendental character):

*Mirror* is also significant for its use of J.S. Bach's Chorale Prelude in D minor, "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist," heard first just after a speech therapist attempts to cure a young man of the debilitating effects of a stammer. The metaphorical effect here is on a higher spiritual plane, negating the need for dialogue as the young man at last - figuratively as well as literally - masters the phrase "I can speak." (2012, p.37).

Bach's music in *Mirror* again has personal connotations with it being the director's most autobiographical film; the recording being a more typical rendition of the piece than the Artemiev variations found in *Solaris*.

Fairweather's point is a valid one in the context of concluding the analysis of pre-existing music as it highlights one of the key arguments developed earlier regarding the Cookian transfer of cultural material. However, it must be said that this music does not automatically cloak such scenes with transcendental expression simply by virtue of its presence. The piece by Bach in *Mirror* arguably builds to greater and greater effect as the film progresses towards its use of music in the final scenario. Whereas Pasolini failed to realise the unnecessary nature of sharing certain attributes in an already theological narrative, Tarkovsky achieves more transcendental ends when applying and accessing such cultural and theological material against the backdrop of addressing a deeply humanistic and immanent narrative. *Solaris* may falter if described purely as an immanent narrative but its own goals are at least fantastical to begin with before the subversion of the genre's conventions, described earlier by Skakov, occurs. If such a thematic subversion was avoided, perhaps Tarkovsky's use of this music in the film would have been caught within the same problems as Pasolini in *The Gospel*; that of a failed attempt to earnestly recreate the transcendental through a tautology. Whether using art or popular music, this and the previous chapter should have shown that there must be *some* clash of material, some barrier placed in front of the viewer before the narrative world becomes accessible again at some, higher perceptive realm. As stated earlier, transcendental difference is created through complex identification with the music and by its multivalent relationships with meaning.

This, in the context of my earlier arguments, should be finally contextualised once again in aesthetic theory, especially that of Derrida but others too. Derrida writes that "...the signified is originally and essentially (and not only for

a finite and created spirit) trace, that it is *always already* in the *position of the signifier*, is the apparently innocent proposition within the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness, must reflect upon writing as its death and its resource." (1976, p.73) and this is useful in the sense that it argues for the same point regarding the combination between the sound and the image: that meaning and the signification of meaning are already there within the combination but also ready in their potential to relate to one another and express another form of signification if need be. This is the basic idea behind the most general forms of music in film, that there will be signification of some form whether intended by the creators of the work or, in the case of pre-existing music especially, received through individual connotations brought to the work by the audience. Derrida may be discussing a more general notion - that writing is itself always already twice distanced from its signifying idea rather than once unlike speech - but when applied to film music and an audience's relationship to it, the theory can open up questions surrounding how pre-existing music in particular works through its own variety of multivalent characterisations.

How such transcendental moments are created from the use of music is a complex process to map in that the feeling of brief access to the transcendental through a scene may be palpable but the number of factors working with the associations built up within the audience member and the thematic content of the film is ultimately infinite and beyond analysis within the artwork alone. Yet in the examples within this chapter, an attempt has been made to argue that, because of both directors' interest in such an ideal - in religious and sacred themes and material - they have attempted to (even unconsciously) second guess the audience

and provide several moments of empathetic ineffability. David Code, when analysing the pre-existing music in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), uses an idea of Cook's that, whilst contrary to the previous ideas of his used in the chapters so far, may potentially explain the effectiveness of such a gap of difference. Code quotes Cook as writing that "...attempts to force media into close superficial alignment (for instance, by cutting film to music) have the paradoxical effect of emphasizing the difference between the two media." (2010, p.136). Tarkovsky's use of music here recalls both of Cook's theories, where there is a sharing of thematic material between media but also a difference highlighted through their very presence as a multimedia form.

Tarkovsky's creation of this through his Personalised Difference is undoubtedly the most effective as he draws on the power of his own experience, the power of the aesthetic realisation of his narratives, and the power of his choice of music which have a dual character of being both theologically transcendental in the first place and personally transcendental in regards to its placement and significance. Tarkovsky allows an emotional, and even spiritual, directness that also asks for interpretation from the viewer. Often, this chapter has referred to aesthetic barriers being put in front of the viewer (and usually through musical/visual clashes) that require questioning in order to actually gain some reaction (or perhaps even narrative or emotional meaning). These barriers ask the viewer to interpret (albeit rhetorically as no strict sense of meaning can be suggested) the audio-visual relationships on show. Of course, this is deliberate for both directors know that the answers to such questions are of an ineffable and

impossible recreation. If the viewer could access this knowledge it would logically remove its transcendental character.

Tarkovsky's Personalised Difference - the audio-visual relationship that often falls into the meta-diegetic realm as discussed earlier - means that such issues are at the very least outlined in spite of not being answered.<sup>54</sup> Stilwell writes of the "sublime" potential of this area whereby:

If we were to follow the Romantic idealistic line of philosophy, music could surpass the voice/verbal into a sort of metadiegetic sublime soaring above the diegesis. This theoretical positioning might seem tenuous, subjective, but then that would also resonate with the emotional impact produced by that positioning. (2007, p.197).

This seems in some ways polar to Tarkovsky's reasoning, especially surrounding his desire to actually remove music entirely and rely on sound but it does discuss with some accuracy the director's use of music; where, when words were not enough to express the ineffable ideals he sought to relay, he looked to music and the relationships built through particular pieces within the film and his own life to express such transcendental ideas.

It must be suggested that Pontera's reading of the use of Bach hinges largely on this meta-diegetic position:

Maybe it is an instance of what film music scholars call *metadiegetic* music: music heard, remembered, or otherwise imagined by a character within the diegesis. As such, Bach's music would perhaps most obviously be understood as an integral part of the male protagonist's experience, something that he feels, undergoes, perceives, and engages with. (2014, p.3).

Stilwell writes of such a musical positioning and its power over the interpretation and reception of a filmic scenario contained within the audio-visual form through

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<sup>54</sup> Stilwell's definition of a meta-diegetic is necessary to outline so that its nondiegetic equivalent can be understood. She writes of the meta-diegetic that "The trajectory between diegetic music and nondiegetic music that might more precisely be called metadiegetic is not an uncommon trope in modern movies, and is often used as a way of drawing the audience into the subjectivity of a character." (2007, p.194).

its multivalent position: "It is the multiplicity of possibilities that make the gap both observable and fantastical because it changes the state, not only of the filmic moment, but also of the observer's relationship to it." (2007, p.200). This is a rather longwinded way around forming ideas that, throughout this chapter, have been denoted as Derridian; where difference gives way to infinity and impossibility. Tarkovsky himself writes of such themes being key to the very act of making art, one which has been shown to overtly affect his aesthetic and musical choices:

In the case of someone who is spiritually receptive, it is therefore possible to talk of an analogy between the impact made by a work of art and that of a purely religious experience. Art acts above all on the soul, shaping its spiritual structure. (1986, p.41).

Through difference, the conflict of cultural themes and aesthetic clashes, Tarkovsky builds the essence of the transcendental into his films like a thread.

This force is one explicitly enhanced by the music of Bach and its placement within *Solaris*, where the inexpressible comes briefly within the perceptible reach of the viewer before it fades back again into the obscurity of a Science-Fiction narrative, just like Kelvin's wife fading back into the ether of the planet. It is in these moments that the director is building his cinematic practice, a spirituality smuggled in by a unique and deeply theological relationship with the very expressive, human form of audio-visual media. As Tarkovsky himself suggests, "The artist, too, is driven by a kind of instinct, and his work furthers man's search for what is eternal, transcendent, divine - often in spite of the sinfulness of the poet himself." (1986, p.239).

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Repetitive Music and Alienation**

In the previous two chapters, the case has been made for music playing a key role in cinematic transcendental aesthetics. The context of those arguments was in direct opposition to the previous parameters set for transcendental style. The argument has been made repeatedly that Paul Schrader's various assertions surrounding music's role in creating this ineffable style - one that states that the reception teleology is, according to Cutter Callaway, "beyond representation" (2013, p.57) - is flawed, and music's form has been shown to help attain such a style. Moving on, the following two chapters present the argument from a different analytical position. Chapters 3 and 4 can be said to put forward one general argument: that earlier transcendental parameters already had a potential to realise the transcendental within them in the aural realm. In other words, rather than putting a film's auditory realm in opposition to such a style, certain directors have used the aural potential in the reduced audio-visual medium to enhance and create the difficult aesthetic elements.

Sheila J. Nayar, analyst of the spiritual in theological cinema, highlights the opposition between the previous chapters and the following two (one leaning towards abundance and the other leading towards reduction) in her critique of earlier transcendental assessments:

When it comes to what critically constitutes the "genuinely" religious film, rejection of ornamentation of the supernatural has pretty much been the norm since the time of André Bazin. Exoteric spectacularity finds itself repeatedly swapped out for quiet interiority, and films that wear their religion on their sleeve are dismissed in favour of ones whose touch of the holy arises, paradoxically enough, from the holy's utter concealment. (2012, p.95).

Chapters 1 and 2 recapitulated Nayar's arguments with their emphasis being upon overt and abundant cinema styles, albeit without looking at the populist cinematic forms that she assesses.<sup>55</sup> Her emphasis on such an opposition is reactionary to the previous texts, especially Schrader's, whereby the dismissal of hagiographic films feeds into her choice of examples. This chapter looks to the opposite potential; the aural qualities already there in reduced, "concealed" cinema. The reduced vision of the style's many aesthetic facets can be shown to have aural equivalents, where music and sound design actually mimics the type of aesthetic and thematic relationships examined in Schrader's original trio of filmmakers. Schrader famously writes of the style that "The proper function of transcendental art is, therefore, to express the Holy itself (the Transcendent), and not to express or illustrate holy feelings." (1972, p.7). The examples in the following chapters are an attempt to follow this reduced transcendental style, with its expressive rather than illustrative qualities, more earnestly in order to highlight the complex aural potential put aside in earlier definitions.

The case study of this chapter is the last to examine musical examples and this will be through the cinematic oeuvre of the Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr and, specifically, the work with his musical collaborator Mihály Vig. András Kovacs, the most prominent critical writer on Tarr's work, writes that "His films are like variations on a number of basic themes and formal motifs where the themes themselves become intertwined, or absorbed, in one another. We can best approach his films by learning how they relate to each other, how they vary these elements." (2013, p.1). It is also within these interrelationships between elements

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<sup>55</sup> Nayar's thesis is based around the analysis of Hollywood and Bollywood hagiographic films.

where such a musically transcendental argument can be pieced together, the stricter, harsher elements vital to earlier ideological frameworks finding an audio-visual equivalent.

The search for such musical potential can begin in Callaway's previously mentioned text, albeit without the reactionary evangelicalism of his analysis. He writes of music's role in film that "...rather than telling the audience how to interpret the film, the music urges us to contribute something of our own to the interpretive process." (2013, p.51). Callaway's argument is general but the dialectical aspect he presents is extremely applicable to the aural designs within this chapter's examples, where transcendental style's more difficult aesthetic relationships - ones that arguably mimic and aim to recreate the diegetic hardship being lived through by the characters - is created through music and sound forcing the viewer to constantly interpret in order to find coherence and reasoning. They are far from Callaway's blockbuster examples whose narratives are already laboured with everything a viewer would need for an enjoyable interpretation and emotional leading. He writes further that:

...music's affective power is not a hurdle that we must overcome, but rather is the very means by which filmgoers are able to derive a kind of "spiritual" significance from their encounters with film. (2013, p.93).

In the examples of this chapter, the transcendental audio-visual style will be shown to be a hurdle in terms of music's affective power but still a key element with which a viewer is able to derive higher meanings or, in Callaway's terms, a "spiritual" significance within narratives that are explicit in their expression of the "Holy" rather than a removed illustration of "holy feelings" à la Schrader.

Nayar writes of the key point within Schrader's thesis which leads to the quintessential cinematic stasis, created through a "*nonexpressive*" aesthetic ideal, summarising his work as follows:

Schrader believes that the key elements of the transcendental style are *nonexpressive*. Thus, clues which routinely help a viewer to interpret an event - plot, camerawork, dialogue, and so forth are reduced to stasis: The transcendental style *stylizes* reality, in other words, and it does so "by eliminating (or nearly eliminating) those elements which are primarily expressive of human experience..." (2012, p.45).

Music is a key element that becomes reduced and discarded in Schrader's vision but the argument presented here consists primarily of one idea and its subsequent potential: that music used in film can in itself achieve some sort of nonexpression, a reduced presence wherein its effects move beyond more typical musical functions and towards something more challenging. It can arguably aid such a desire for a nonexpressive *mise-en-scène* in order to create the cinematic stasis mentioned as being essential to the Schraderian conception. With the addition of music to film being considered as an expressive act, this may seem to be an unusual argument.

Numerous examples can be used to highlight its opposite and some analytical examples find such a stance within more relevant forms of cinema too. Gregg Redner, when applying Deleuzian theory to film music, suggests a usefully similar ideal within the cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski, writing that: "It was Kieślowski's belief that the most important thoughts and primary internal emotions of a film's actors should be expressed metaphysically through music and not through acting. It was the ability of music to express the internal that made it so very important to Kieślowski." (2009, p.109). Could music be used to achieve the same teleological goal highlighted here but with aesthetic mechanisms arguably aiding through a more nonexpressive role? I argue in this chapter that music which

attempts to avoid such expression, specifically through repetition and harsher aesthetic ploys, achieves similar reception goals.

It must be stated that by nonexpression, this chapter does not mean to say that the music fails to produce expressive reception effects. On the contrary, nonexpressive qualities leave a gap for audience reception, one that must be filled with higher interpretations in order for a transcendental reaction to occur. Examples such as Redner's are far more commonplace. However, it is an argument that has already been examined and made in this thesis. Music in film within this chapter will be shown to conform to what I label an aesthetic alienation - a term soon to be examined in more depth - within an overall cinematic style through actually mimicking the sparse means with which various narratives of hardship and toil are relayed. Consider Daniel Goldmark, Larry Kramer and Richard Leppert's position on film music's expressive capacity: "Music is not functional but substantive. It can express virtually any meaning, but alters any meaning it expresses." (2007, p.7). It has already been suggested that music can, almost uniquely, convey inexpressible meanings through its form. This chapter, on the other hand, argues that because of this substantive position, music can also alter such meanings through a nonexpressive aesthetic. Though a total nonexpression in music is impossible, this sense of nonexpression is within the wider film music context.<sup>56</sup>

Some have argued that film music's position within the form already invites interpretation, where the presence of music suggests a further interpretative potential. Callaway makes this point, writing that "Rather than simply telling the

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<sup>56</sup> Any number of audio-visual relationships outlined in the Introduction showcases the wider, more expressive norms of film music practice.

audience what the image means, the music urges audience members to discern and discover that meaning for themselves." (2013, p.32). The music in question works through alternative aesthetic techniques to many of the popular examples that he is discussing, whereby its mix within the soundworld is often fluid and questionable; its presence becoming unpleasant and monotonous, creating a repetition outside of the typical repetitive techniques in film music. This is taken to an agonising level that earnestly attempts to recreate the diegetic unpleasantness being lived through by a film's characters. The music in question aligns with Schrader's dictum that "Transcendental style, like the mass, transforms experience into a repeatable ritual which can be repeatedly transcended." (1972, p.11). This idea is traversable in both directions where the repetition, ritualistic or otherwise, leads back to inducing the ineffable thematic content of the transcendental style by reflecting the banal, harsh worlds of the diegesis. There is no better example of this than in the use of repetitive in music by Tarr but, before assessing why such an aesthetic is chosen, the argument must be made for what this repetition is actually doing in the receptive sense before such aesthetic guises and their teleological outcomes can be explored.

### Repetition and Brechtian Alienation

The classical *Verfremdungseffekt* produces heightened understanding. - Brecht (2001, p.10).

The key cinematic aspect examined in this chapter is the use of repetitive musical motifs. A basic link can be made between reception and aesthetically difficult cinema through an analytical framework that suggests a crossover between the spaces and scenarios within the film and the perception of them. To do this, the

theories of Bertolt Brecht have a significant impact upon the analysis. Aligning Brechtian theory with traditional transcendental aesthetic theory is a surprisingly fluid amalgamation, almost as if the two theories were attempting to explain the same receptive ineffability through aesthetic means, albeit in differing forms of art.<sup>57</sup> In Brecht's case, this manifests most clearly in the theories surrounding the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or the "alienation" effect as it is sometimes translated. This is the scenario where certain aesthetic choices complicates narrative distance for a theatre audience becoming aware of the viewing process, to the extent of eventually producing a heightened understanding by highlighting the act of the perceiving the work *as a viewer*. Though this idea slightly differs to Tarr's mechanisms, the same distancing is still initially required in his films, created to disturb the viewer's position of viewing by reducing all aesthetic leading to excruciating levels. This section will briefly outline this alienation effect with a view to showing its transcendental potential in the cinematic form and how music can subtly aid its creation in the audio-visual dialectic.

Brecht first considered the concept of alienation as a mechanism in the acting style of certain Chinese theatres. Siegfried Mews writes of its detailed history but essentially relates the philosophical positions inherent within it:

On its simplest level, the *Verfremdungseffekt* means "gaining new insights into the world around us by glimpsing it in a different and previously unfamiliar light" (Willett, "Brecht" 218). There is no unanimity among critics as to whether the *Verfremdungseffekt* should be seen in the philosophical-historical context of the Hegelian-Marxist concept of *Entfremdung*, correctly as "alienation," or simply as a staging device, a formal technique in the service of conveying a message. (1997, pp.9-10).

The transcendental potential is palpable within this description but is essentially one that is created quite simply as a "staging device" and a "formal technique". In

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<sup>57</sup> Brecht is far removed from the period of Schrader's writing and this chapter's case-study films.

other words, a form that functions through its aesthetic effect upon narrative interpretation but not weighed down by its immanent creation. What does alienation actually mean in regards to narrative reception? Reinhold Grimm has summarised this, suggesting that "Brechtian alienation is an aesthetic device to make us aware, by means of a philosophical method, of our sociological and historical condition and situation. The act of alienation or estrangement produces, dialectically, a bewildered insight into the state of alienation." (1997, p.43). Though he is discussing theatre as opposed to cinema, there is a definite cinematic potential in which where Brechtian formal alienation finds traction within the audio-visual medium.

This is where such an aesthetic stance asks stark questions about cinematic diegesis. The cinematic bewilderment, whilst functioning in this way to some extent, primarily forces the viewer to confront the cinematic medium as the content itself through various, often laborious means of heightening the perception of time spent with the artwork, the most effective of which is through the use of music. Yet it is also in this slippage where eventually the opposite occurs when such distancing begins to mimic the actual diegetic world, folding the Brechtian ideal in upon itself, as if the distancing is a trap that actually leads *further* into the narrative world in spite of that portal being opened by highlighting the very viewing process. The transcendental element comes from an escape from this enveloping, sometimes by a change or cut allowing the build up of monotony to seep away.

Through such repetition, cinema has the capability to speak multiple thematic languages but this becomes far more ineffable when such a repetition is created through a musical potential if only because of how stark its questioning can

be of a film's diegesis. Is there a more pertinent cinematic aspect that can challenge and rupture such notions of what is situated outside and inside the film's framing than its music? It is through this position that music can be used for far more subversive and transcendental effects. Consider John Belton's assessment of the phenomenology of music in Robert Bresson's films. Music's role here is removed from being simply commentative but is quintessentially part of the cinematic reality's core:

Nondiegetic music is generally commentative in nature - it speaks from the space of the narration and conveys, from outside of the diegesis, an attitude toward what is seen. But in terms of its relationship to the film's images, Bresson's use of Mozart's Mass problematizes traditional distinctions between diegetic and nondiegetic. Here, those distinctions break down and become useless. The music reveals the essence of the images - the truth that lies beneath their surface. In this sense, it is diegetic. In other words, the music is not a *filter* through which we perceive the action but a core reality within the images themselves. (2008, pp.25-26).

Though Bresson's music is not of the repetitive type - in fact, his use and placement of pre-existing music is again prescient for the previous chapter's assertions - it is the relationship that is produced that is key: music becomes the absolute of the reality of the film rather than a narrational presence.

Bresson sought this through the use of more overtly theological pre-existing music but a filmmaker like Tarr found equal potential in original musical reflections of his narratives, realities that are harsh in their repetitive, endless monotony. Brecht himself has written on this phenomena and he even writes of the traditional use of music in film (as opposed to theatre) that "The accompanying music is consequently situational music. In other words it expresses the feelings of the dramaturg. His 'Oh, how sad!' and 'Oh, how exciting!' is transformed into music. Since there are no characters, there is an awful void for this dramaturgical music." (2001, p.13). His criticism appropriately resembles several previous arguments yet

the examples here show an attempt to create a feeling through mimicking the narrative situation for the audience by actually first distancing them from it first via music.

This transcendental repetition must be qualified away from music's more recognisable repeated forms. Transcendental style in this case does not derive from an overall cinematic experience but from particular scenes and scenarios as in previous chapters highlighted through such an overall experience. These scenes are not of a normal aesthetic or formal construct and music is stretched over long periods of time through repetition though does not end up creating effects of montage or leitmotif. Whereas the use of music in a sequence of montage aids in the constriction of diegetic time and eases its reception, the music's elongated form here works in the opposite way, dragging harsher scenarios out until the viewer is forced to either grasp some higher meaning from them or to simply take the scenarios as a dose of aesthetic discomfort.

On writing about Brecht's rebellion against the Wagnerian *gesamtkunstwerk*, Vera Stegman writes of this potential gap of reception and comfort through the separation of formal elements: "While the fusion of the elements of Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* can turn the spectator into a passive receiver, their separation, resulting in contrasts and internal breaks, should allow for a more critical and rational audience." (1997, p.251). Applying this idea to multimedia again results in the break being of cinematic diegesis more than anything else. This break requires a new audio-visual description. From henceforth, the notion will be described as an audio-visual alienation, portraying the distancing effect created upon audience reception through the forced sharing of the

atmosphere of the diegetic scenario but that, in some sense of paradox, envelops the viewer in the film's scenarios too.

Though Tarr uses music from various sources to achieve transcendental aesthetics and audio-visual alienation, the effect is the same: that of slowing an already depressed temporal sense to a virtual, agonising standstill, at least in terms of reception. It is a circular progression to nowhere and the escape from this in Tarr's films creates some sense of the profound. This is not to say that every temporal reduction creates a transcendental aesthetic but it does have the potential to aid such a style (and Tarr's film achieve this through a mixture of aesthetic style and thematic concerns). To finalise these thoughts, it is essential to draw a final parallel between the teleological goals of these aesthetics and the transcendental potential. Grimm has written extensively of Brechtian alienation's potential to remythologise the everyday and the ordinary, rendering them extraordinary. He writes the following detailed summation of the theory:

Brecht's concept and device of alienation are essentially based on the assumption that the world in general and society and its workings in particular are too familiar to be really understood. In other words, we take too many things for granted and do not question them any more, or we do not question them sufficiently. What we therefore need, Brecht argues, is a method, or procedure, that makes us see the world afresh, that virtually forces on us a process or experience of understanding. In order to achieve this goal, he proceeds along dialectical lines. (1997, p.41).

Several parallels already arise between these ideas and the audio-visual transcendental aesthetic. Both use dialectical, aesthetic means to achieve their higher reasoning; both are a reaction to the assumptive reception position of the viewer; and both add ineffable uncertainty to essentially familiar elements.

Yet this is not necessarily an effect but more a form of reception persuasion as Todd Cronan has argued: "Brecht fundamentally differentiated effects of suggestion from effects of influence—two different kinds of artistic consequence—

in ways that have yet to be considered. In Brecht's finely tuned hypnotic terminology, the estrangement effect was a mode of influence but not of suggestion. It is upon this distinction that Brecht's aesthetics turn." (2013).

Compare Grimm's earlier description of Brechtian ideals to Nayar's discussion upon the sacred elements found in hagiographic films: "But if images and auditory encounters that are noncliché estrange us, it is because they *don't* come from our collective social memory or storehouse. Audiences are consequently forced to conjecture - indeed, have no recourse but to conjecture..." (2012, p.104). The connections are multitudinous, especially as a form of reception persuasion, whether it be in the very language used, the collective experience of such alienation or even the very conclusion of an audience forced into some form of conjecture.

In typical Schraderian analysis, this occurs in transcendental style through a reduction in aesthetic forms but such a reduction in regards to music should not simply mean its removal. In order to show this, repetitive music in film must finally be contextualised in a wider aesthetic argument, that of the description of a cinema of extended duration, commonly known as "slow cinema"; audio-visual forms which "...evacuate eventfulness, in the pursuit of dedramatised scenarios in which incident replaces event, and sheer profilmic happening challenges structures of legible or discrete causality." (2016, p.124) as Elena Gorfinkel writes.

## Slow Cinema and the Transcendental

Slowness of narration is clearly accentuated and radicalised in the second-period films, and it comes to represent a cornerstone of the Tarr style. It is one of the main ingredients of the circular structure, a structure producing the feeling that the return is inevitable. - Kovacs (2013, p.118).

Repetition in all aspects of cinematic aesthetics often suggests the elongation of some form of perceived time. This elongation has been further heightened, especially since the dawn of digital technology in filmmaking, and has become a defined movement of cinema of which Tarr's films sit firmly within. Before analysing the repetition behind such transcendental effects, these aesthetics must be contextualised within this wider movement of analyses. As suggested, these aesthetics now come under the banner of slow cinema, a global movement of film that extends cinema's length through a variety of means in order to achieve a reactionary state of slowness against the increased general hyperactivity within digital multimedia and culture. As Tiago De Luca and Nuno Jorge suggest, "Slow cinema is, then, a rather recent phenomenon in conceptual terms, and one that furthermore shares its discursive genesis with a much larger socio-cultural movement whose aim is to rescue extended temporal structures from the accelerated tempo of late capitalism..." (2016, p.3). The transcendental style has many parallels with this and my final form of contextualisation aims to amalgamate such phenomena with both an audio-visual alienation and a transcendental style.

Song-Hwee Lim has written of slow cinema's potential in terms of reception, significantly in the reduction of perceived film time and comfort through aesthetic choices: "By formulating a different relationship between film images and the audience through the use of long takes, extended duration, and the trope of waiting, this cinema comprises aesthetic acts that promote new modes of temporal

experience, new ways of seeing, and new subjectivities that are politically committed to an ethos of slowness." (2016, p.91). Consideration should be given to the concept of "temporal experience" with regards to cinema and the arguments of the previous section; cinematic choices are aiming to recreate diegetic discomfort through aesthetic challenges to the audience. Slow cinema causes the same difficulty as it is a form that refuses, for various socio-economic and political reasons, to conform to a more kinetic editing style and ease of consumption. Gilles Deleuze has written extensively on this in *Cinema II* (1986) but his theories are now contextualised within wider formal arguments in film studies (see the Conclusion for further Deleuzian analysis). De Luca and Jorge write further that "Durational slowness, then, can be variously moulded according to a given object of attention and specific formal and narrative strategies as a means to ponder over the co-existence of multiple temporalities." (2016, p.15). What exactly is defined as "multiple temporalities" is never quite asserted within their writing, yet the very act of an audience being given little direction in regards to a thematic or narrative reading already suggests a transcendental potential.

Slow cinema is characterised by an almost obsessive attention to more precise, almost mathematical analyses, namely the analysis and development of a film's average shot length (usually known under the acronym of ASL). De Luca and Jorge do, however, characterise the form through more than just modern, digital examples with incredibly long ASL: "At the other end of the spectrum we have directors, such as Robert Bresson and Yasujiro Ozu, who, while often invoked as precursors of cinematic slowness, made films that were entirely reliant on montage and short-length shots..." (2016, p.6). The connection between slow cinema and

transcendental style is obvious here with two examples - directors who do not conform to the form's more typical approaches but still achieve similar results - also being two of the three examples analysed by Schrader in his conception of the transcendental form. Even the work of Carl T. Dreyer, Schrader's third exponent of transcendental style, finds some linkage to the form in C.C. Thompson's essay "The Slow Pulse Of The Era", where "Dreyer obliges us to take the time we need to grasp the impulse that unites him with today's directors of "slow": to render palpable, in stillness, the human pulse of time." (2016, p.57). There is clearly an overt link between the forms, a link that is maintained in the aural essence of the movements.

In Jacques Rancière's contextualisation of Tarr within the slow cinema movement, he suggests a link between the very structure of music and the aesthetic principle behind slow cinema. He writes that:

Music then has a structural role instead of being an illustration of the story. But there is something more: cinema itself takes on the power of music, the power of condensing the global affect that exceeds the identification of feelings and emotions in the traditional narrative logic. But the condensation, itself, can be perceived only by way of a distension of time. (2016, p.249).

Rancière's argument can be simplified with some context of the earlier chapter's sense of music's ineffability, albeit this form is actually creating a "distension of time" alongside such transcendental elements. What Rancière does not quite manage to link together is how the music creates such a temporal augmentation in terms of reception and how this augmentation leads back to such global affect. This begins to question one of the contradictions inherent in the form and how this creates affect of the transcendental variety. Can thematic and aesthetically reduced cinematic principles rise to more than mere sense reduction?

The use of music in Tarr's films implement reduction through an emphasis on repetition, creating such a harsh parallel for the viewing audience to experience that a universality of sorts becomes inevitable. Lim, however, has addressed this point as a criticism often aimed at the form in regard to whether such a reduction combined with an extension of time is actually necessary in creating the transcendental affect:

At the same time, the duration accorded to filming a narratorial subject deemed as "nothing happening" features prominently in the debate on slow cinema, raising the corresponding question about the justification not just for representing so-called "nothingness" but, perhaps more crucially and controversially, for representing it over a long (and for some, longer than "necessary") duration. (2016, p.90).

Within almost all cinematic aspects, repetition is at the core, the extended duration is either created literally by repeating events or by extending the perception of cinematic time through repetitive aesthetics. The audio-visual alienation could be said to be a by-product of this but many of the arguments presented surrounding slow cinema already have suggested some likeness in receptive response, albeit one that differs in what could be described as spiritual aims. This is considering slow cinema's obsession with the ordinary day-to-day rituals of its narratives, including those found in Tarr's films.

So often the transcendental style turns this sense of the ordinary into a form of the extraordinary. Nayar writes contrary to this, suggesting that "In the context of human experience, the sacred, we might propose, implies a perceptual and affective set-apartness from everyday or ordinary experience." (2012, p.17). She earlier asserts a problem with such mundane narratives and aesthetics whereby there is a contradiction between the puritanical character of the sacred and its arguable sources:

Consider, after all, that the norms they generally, and oftentimes quite poetically, extolled - stasis, austerity, the mundane - are *never* part and parcel of films highly inflected by orality. In fact, as we shall see, the transcendently styled cinema's partiality for a "hidden God" may well owe its existence to writing and print. (2012, p.11).

Slow cinema and Tarr's films automatically imply the presence of a "hidden God" through their very form. Unlike music, as Rancière suggested earlier, it is not because of the sheer impasse between communicative language and the form, but because of the extensions applied to that form in contrast to what it is typically expected of the audio-visual medium.

Nayar saw this sacred potential in the action of duration augmentation, writing that "By slowing down movement, we ostensibly become conscious of movement, which coerces us out of being passive viewers who seek merely to 'forget the passing of time' or who, in slightly harsher terminology, want to 'dispose of time rather than gain experience.'" (2012, pp.107-108). This consciousness of creative time's movement ties back with Brechtian ideas. If cinema has a Brechtian equivalent in terms of his *Verfremdung*, then the aesthetics of slow cinema are undoubtedly the closest to achieving his desired effects of "heightened understanding" through the most quietly intensive of means. Due to their sometimes laborious lengths and editing styles, the act of the viewing is ultimately highlighted. However, the trapdoor that Tarr in particular hides within this process, in order to push the viewer further into his narrative worlds, is not generally present in most forms of slow cinema.

Philippa Lovatt is one of the few slow cinema analysts to broach the subject of music alongside Rancière, writing of its general disposal and the reduction of musical score: "In slow cinema, soundscapes composed of location sound recording, field recordings and an absence (or minimal use) of musical score,

foreground the material and sensory nature of matter on-screen thus enabling a sense of 'connectedness' between the acoustic space of reception and that of the diegesis." (2016, p.192). Interestingly, Lovatt's sense of the created "connectedness" possesses precisely the same logic as the audio-visual alienation, where there is an attempted sharing of aspects of the diegetic world with the audience. The sense here is that this is a gentler attribute. In Tarr's films this will be shown to be far more visceral and generally trying for the audience.

This sees an overt link between the Schraderian transcendental style's approach to cinematic soundscapes and slow cinema's extended duration, the latter uses the former to enhance and achieve its effect. Schrader wrote of the transcendental style's aesthetics within the context of the society it sat within, whereby it could be seen as a reaction to a voraciously "abundant" cultural backdrop: "The ratio of abundant and sparse means can be a measure of the 'spirituality' of a work of art. The more a work of art can successfully incorporate sparse means within an abundant society, the nearer it approaches its transcendental 'end.'" (1972, p.155). Perhaps, to stretch the point, music in its various forms could be considered another facet of the more consumerist side of filmmaking.

And yet such a position undermines its overall potential, both in form and usage. If other cinematic aesthetics can be edited and extended as a reactionary opposition to the commodified, speed-driven tropes of a more populist cinema, then musical scores also have such an opposite. This is the final connection within the argument to make before analysing some examples where this potential is fully realised. After all, Tarr's overall aesthetic uses have been considered as both a

reaction to the increase in cinematic speed of various forms and an attempt at some sort of revelation. Within this section and the previous, three separate but interconnected arguments have been made. The first is that, in contrary to the previous two chapters, an aural potential is already contained within traditional transcendental arguments. The second argument presents a general mechanism through which music can be deployed in this way.

By looking into the arguments of Brechtian alienation, a new explanation is perceivable for how music remains present in transcendental examples whilst still avoiding the natural abundance that such a presence traditionally suggests, creating a cinematic equivalent of the *Verfremdung* through audio-visual alienation. In other words, it confirms some of Schrader's ideas of aesthetic reduction regarding how the transcendental style can augment reception outcomes but suggests that music can aid this process. Finally, with this mechanism in place, contextualisation within the movement of slow cinema has questioned the role of cinematic time in the reception of transcendental cinema. This has been the final connection to make as its arguments bring Schraderian transcendental style back upon itself through audio-visual alienation, showing a number of reactionary qualities and reception outcomes. With this trilogy of ideas compacted together, the analysis of the case studies can now occur.

## Béla Tarr's Cinema and Repetition

The basic theme of all of Tarr's films is *entrapment*. Each film shows a situation which the characters are incapable of getting out of, however hard they try. They remain hopeless captives in their miserable situation, whether or not they are responsible for their own suffering. - Kovacs (2013, p.99).

So far, this chapter has yet to fully outline Tarr as a filmmaker or to express how his work fits into the many conceptual ideas so far presented. In this second section of the chapter, two differing audio-visual forms will be shown to create the alienation needed in the slow cinema iteration of the transcendental, namely the use music in the portrayal of social spaces in Tarr's films and the musical scores of Mihály Vig, both occurring in a number of scenes and films from Tarr's oeuvre. Both aspects will be shown to use repetition at their core. As Tarr has had little contextualisation so far, this brief section will provide some minor details in regards to his working methods, his cinematic history and his general thematic outlook before the detail of the scene-specific analysis will take place.

Though Tarr started making films much earlier than the examples examined here, it is in his later examples where such themes of transcendental style, repetition and alienation find fruition. Kovacs suggests that Tarr's filmography should be considered in two separate parts, his "second period" - starting with *Damnation* (1988) and finishing with his self-proclaimed final film, *The Turin Horse* (2011) - being the most conducive and relevant to transcendental aesthetic arguments. It is in this period where Tarr, whose initial background was in radical and political documentary movements, seeks to present social and political themes with a definitive slowing down of experiential time. Also worth noting is that, in his last three features, of which the last is one our case studies, his partner and editor Ágnes Hranitzky is co-credited as director. This will be assumed, however, as being

part of Tarr's wider practice rather than trying account for who takes credit and for what. In this second period, Kovacs believes that Tarr uses four basic techniques to slow his narratives down, some of which have a clear implications and effects upon the music and soundworld. He writes the following:

There are basically four ways of slowing down a narrative. The first is showing monotonous movements for a long time. The second is showing insignificant or everyday details of a process. The third is representing extended periods of time between two events, called *temps mort*. And the fourth is repetition of the same event. (2013, p.114).

Consideration should be given to the first and last of these aspects as they most define the musical direction of Tarr's films and Vig's scores within them. No matter what the source of the music is, Vig will have played a part in its creation, with Tarr being said to have had a closer relationship to him than with anyone else inside his filmic process.

Tarr himself relates such a process which highlights the freedom the composer has: "Without the composer the films wouldn't be what they are. He goes into the studio a month before the actual shooting takes place, composes the music, gives it to us and then we use the music during the shoot. So the music plays an equal role to the actors or the scenes of the story." (2013, p.18).<sup>58</sup> For a director infamous for being incredibly precise in every other aspect of his films, this freedom in regards to the music should give some indication of both its importance but also how the narrative/visual world of his films are matched perfectly by Vig's music.

Tarr is one of the few directors who confirms the audio-visual nature of the transcendental in its strictest form. Nayar writes of a relevant potential within cinematic stasis to occupy the aural realm, suggesting the following:

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<sup>58</sup> This practice of shooting scenes whilst playing music will be addressed in more detail later on.

Although visibility is an indispensable, if not *the* indispensable, constituent of film viewing, it is important to recognize that there are two levels of stasis that may, or may not, be called upon: (1) the stasis inherent in an image that one sees; and (2) the stasis inherent in the sound that one *doesn't* hear (silence, in other words). (2012, p.68).

In Tarr's films both are called upon in the most dialectical of ways; an element largely lacking in Nayar's argument (that the overall stasis relies on a fluctuation between the two aspects). This is highlighted further in Tarr's films by the transcendental functioning across cinematic diegesis. Vig's music manifests in the world of the film and the world of the viewer, acting as a reception portal whose job is more than to merely create affect. It has a very literal transportative function and end goal that defies normal cinematic conventions. It is one of a number of confrontations. In Tarr's films, there is less of a smooth flow of emotive ideas but instead a shared desire to create the vital circularity required in the narratives.

Kovacs writes of Tarr's circular narratives that "Circularity expresses the trap situation, slowness gives birth to something I would call *the time of hope*, hope that after all there is a way out of the circle when there is not." (2013, p.5). In doing this, Tarr slips between the diegesis and, through such a questioning, potentially alienates the inattentive viewer while at the same time asks questions of higher significance to the patient viewer. This begins within the very diegetic sound and music of his films so is the most basic aspect to analyse in his aesthetic and thematic output. Diegesis creates the initial harshness to achieve a transcendental aesthetic.

#### Repetition and Alienation in Diegetic Social Spaces

Tarr's diegetic soundscapes are defined by two predominant aspects: the heightened emphasis upon natural sounds such as walking and footsteps, wind,

leaves, glasses and other "real" sources, and upon the diegetic performance of music almost always occurring in social spaces. It is the latter that is of interest here though the former does also play its role in some essence of transcendental arguments as will be seen in the next chapter. This music comes in a variety of styles and is present in a number of films but they have a series of interconnected outcomes, namely:

1. The music's repetition over a set period of time, creating a gradually suspenseful and grating aesthetic for the viewer to experience.
2. The endlessness within the music, created by repeated motifs, leading to the sense of temporal stasis within the diegesis.
3. This temporal stasis, through Tarr's direction (and the reduced editing of Hranitzky), eventually leads to the affective response of being confronted with such a diegetic space; being one of mimicked discomfort and alienation on the part of the viewer.
4. And through this alienation, the viewer is forced to confront the implication of a heightened meaning through the shared stasis between the characters, the scenario of the film and the very act of viewing it (especially because the music is repeating whilst the visual is more obviously differentiated through a slow progression).

To assess this aesthetic ploy and to argue for its overall effect being that of a transcendental variety, two scenes from two different films will be analysed. The first is a scenario in the first film of his purported second period, *Damnation* (1988), and the second is a scenario from his longest film *Sátántangó* (1994). Both contain

scenarios which take place in bars, using diegetic music to convey a heightened sense of temporal stasis for the characters and the audience, but they also essentially have different and complex attributes due to channelling the inflections of differing narratives which must also be contextualised. These scenes provide pivot points for highly social, political and spiritual narratives that require their circularity to be fully explored. As Daniel Fairfax points out in regards to Tarr's usual narrative ploys, these scenes are common to almost all of the second period films:

Virtually every one of Tarr's films is punctuated by one or more extensive dance sequences, in which a drunken populace, gathered in a drab bar or dance-hall, traces the same few steps over and over again, to the accompaniment of a droning accordion, cycling through a simple series of chords to maddening infinity... (2006, p.10).

The description of "maddening infinity" needs little argument as to where it sits within the transcendental style; the maddening aspect tying into Brechtian ideals, the infinity aspect hinting towards an unavoidable ineffability even if not always spiritual in character. When Michael Palmer discusses the reception of religious experience itself, he suggests that it "...has a two-fold character; it is the reception of something that is given; it is, as we have noted before, the perceptible effect of an imperceptible cause." (1997, p.137). These scenarios work through the same mechanism in regards to audience reception, albeit their teleology is not some specific moment of dogmatic realisation but a far more ineffable and unnerving form of the transcendental style caused by an ineffable circularity creating the desire to escape.

### *Damnation*

In 1988, Tarr began a process of extension that would continue right up until his final film in 2013. This experimentation with form is said to pivot on *Damnation*.

Rancière writes of Tarr's general oeuvre that "...his films deal with the end of the faith in the historical advent of a new world of freedom and equality and with the disenchantment regarding the capitalist promise following the collapse of the socialist one." (2016, p.246). This, however, is generally started within *Damnation*, at least in an attempt to deal with these themes. The film follows the hopeless Karrer (Miklós B. Székely) as he attempts to win over the woman he loves (Vali Kerekes) who is the singer at a local bar called The Titanic.<sup>59</sup> Because she is married and full of regrets due to the past affair she had with the man, she is spiteful towards him for his continued advances.

She also believes that the affair with him could affect her goal of being a famous singer, a desire which is shown to eventually be more important to her than any of her relationships. Karrer is offered a chance to work on a smuggling racket organised by the bar's owner Willarksy (Gyula Pauer). Knowing it to be an extremely risky proposition, however, he instead persuades the singer's financially struggling husband Sebestyén (György Cserhalmi) that it would be worthwhile. This leaves the wife alone and allows Karrer to make some progress towards having her back. Several betrayals, however, foil his plan to live happily with the singer - Sebestyén is killed during the smuggling operation due to Karrer - and he is eventually left alone and isolated from the local community, barking in madness at a local dog, reduced to the level of a beast.

*Damnation's* overall narrative causality is not explicitly essential to the film's transcendental elements. Moreover it is the emotional turmoil of the characters and how Tarr portrays their protracted torment that is the key marker for his

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<sup>59</sup> The singer is never given a name.

future cinematic style. It is in this portrayal where the transcendental elements align together. The first facet of this movement of audio-visual alienation comes, not in the actual diegetic use of music, but in how the score (regardless of its source) earnestly mimics the harsh, industrial soundscape of the film's setting, arguably blurring certain diegetic binaries.<sup>60</sup> Vig's score, which opens the film, deliberately blurs this line. It mixes with the sounds of the heavy industry, which is portrayed in the opening visual of a system of machinery moving material on an outdoor pulley.

This shot begins the process of Tarr's extension and alienation of the cinematic world as a form of escapism, creating a long take whose movement is slow enough for the shot to give the false impression of a static moment. In blurring this boundary between diegetic layers, Vig then has the potential later on in the film to highlight inner realms for the main character and to have the option to imbue his diegetic sound and music with much weightier thematic content. A parallel can be perceived between the musical and visual creation of Tarr's worlds which Kovacs describes as follows:

One can best characterise this style as the wedding of two extremes: concrete representation of poverty, of moral and psychic misery in the social and physical environment on the one hand, and poetry of dreams and desires in the representation of the individual characters on the other. (2013, p.21).

By tying the emotionality of characters to the literal aesthetics of their environment, Tarr and Vig open up the potential for the heightened thematic importance of diegetic sound within the whole of film. It is a potential that is also explored within all of his films that followed *Damnation*.

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<sup>60</sup> The analysis of the sound mix lies within this section because of its arguably meta-diegetic status.

As suggested earlier, this potential occurs most frequently in the creation of specific diegetic spaces within the narrative world - spaces which are deliberately enclosed through both the inability of Tarr's camera to move or cut at any great speed when within them - where the music which haunts these realms again questions the diegesis (ultimately creating an audio-visual alienation within the reception). The circularity of Tarr's films are built from painful, claustrophobic engagement with these spatial zones with the music making them appear hopeless, forcing the viewer to confront some possibility of an escape. The transcendental here is the effect created by a shared hope of a break from the circularity of the socially and aesthetically alienated space. The transcendental character is an escape, a profound release from the dire situation of both the scenario and the viewing of it. In *Damnation*, this occurs specifically around several scenes within The Titanic bar and other social drinking spaces where many of the film's key scenes occur. The Titanic space also seems to hold more significance than others within the film musically because of the singer's obvious musical connection to the space.

To create the space of the bar aurally, Tarr opts for a technique in which, because of his camera's incredibly slow movements in mapping the space, blurs the presence and the source of the music, revealed later and creating a moment of higher meaning where it implies or is a deacousticisation of some sense of escape. It is eventually given a real-life potential to humanly end, something which is surprisingly harder to conceive when the music is potentially within some form of scored realm and away from the grounded rigours of a narrative's portrayal of physical performance. In the first instance of this effect, the music of a harmonium

is used and this sets the general precedence for the musical character of these social spaces for the majority of Tarr's later films, both in terms of the increasingly irritating texture of the instrument and its ability to build music almost entirely around repetitive arpeggios that have little or no intention of progressing or resolving.

In this scene, the camera lingers deliberately on the glasses at the bar as the music (which at this point is still denied a visual source), slowly tracks left even denying the human voice a firm source. With the music essentially moving as slowly as the camera, the sense of wanting the camera to quicken or for the music to stop builds.<sup>61</sup> When the voice is eventually given its source (or at least a potential source, as it is still kept somewhat vague through the composition of the shot), a slight respite is given though only for a brief period before the music's repetition continues to alienate the viewer from the scene. There's a play between Chion-like modes of perception, where the viewer goes through process of first "listening" and then "comprehending" (2009, p.20), switching between these modes at the will of the director using the visual elements to force perceptive readings of the sound and music sources.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> There could be said to be a correlation between what the music and what the camera is doing.

<sup>62</sup> Chion writes the following descriptions for the four modes of perceiving sound in his *Guide To Sound Objects*: "In sector 1 - Listening, means listening to someone, to something; and through the intermediary of sound, aiming to identify the source, the event, the cause, it means treating the sound as a sign of this source, this event (Concrete/Objective). In sector 2 - Perceiving, means perceiving by ear, being struck by sounds, the crudest, most elementary level of perception; so we 'hear', passively, lots of things which we are not trying to listen to or understand (Concrete/Subjective). In sector 3 - Hearing, here, according to its etymology, means showing an intention to listen, choosing from what we perceive what particularly interests us, in order to make a 'description' of it (Abstract/Subjective). In sector 4 - Comprehending, means grasping a meaning, values, by treating the sound as a sign, referring to this meaning through a language, a code (semantic listening; Abstract/Objective)." (2009, p.20).

Once this melody is cognised, which isn't too difficult as it is mixed to an unnatural sound level, escape from its repetitive circularity is virtually impossible for the viewer. They are within the characters' social space sharing the slowness of their emotional and social desperation. The music almost becomes noise in the sense of the word ascribed to it by Paul Hegarty: "Noise is then something we are forced to react to, and this reaction, certainly for humans, is a judgement, even if only physical." (2009, p.3). After some minutes of this melody, the moment of transcendental recognition for the viewer is prepared. In this case, like many other examples in Tarr's filmography, it comes through a sharp cut away from the social space causing a drop in volume and texture.

Through this cut, the visual emphasis and soundscape changes entirely to something akin to white noise. In the example of this scene, the cut moves outside of The Titanic bar with a torrential downpour occurring. The blanket sound of this rain is the moment of escape from the circularity and is the brief moment of transcendental realisation. Even though the scene that is cut to is equally harsh in terms of the diegetic narrative, its difference in sound creates such a contrast as to be able to convey a sense of escape, a revelatory moment after minutes of a slow camera moving against the grating music of the harmonium within the confined, grey walls of a rundown bar. It is a contrast significantly built from the accumulative elements collecting as the scenes progress.<sup>63</sup> This same idea is extended further in a later scene at the same bar with the harmonium music being endlessly played and deliberately denied a source until the camera has had an

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<sup>63</sup> Bad weather plays a prominent role in continuing the ideas of harshness and alienation to some degree and throughout Tarr's filmmaking.

excessive amount of time to slowly track around the whole of the bar, fittingly in a circular movement, before finally again cutting away.

The sense of the music being extended is palpable in these scenes. As Kovacs suggests, Tarr's shooting of each individual scene is treated like a continuous sequence in itself and not simply as a collection of cuts which accounts for this music's obvious extension: "Tarr treats each shot as an individual sequence, rather than as a sequence functioning in a narrative flow." (2013, p.17). Narrative flow is earnestly curtailed in favour of a lack of cutting, and the music reflects this by adding to the effect of extension and alienation. Another variation on this idea occurs in between these two scenes and, though it is built around the same mechanism, it performs a slightly differing narrative task; that of extending duration and keeping the viewer in a state of ambiguous diegetic reception through repetitive music, only to break away from it for a moment of release that is representative of both audience *and* diegetic escape. The scene in question is also more complex because of the narrative and thematic content added to the scenario by playing on a main character's relationship with music.

The female character at the centre of *Damnation's* narrative is also a singer whose aspirations to be a famous performer arguably create the essential desperation and hardship for the male characters. The scene in question is in the Titanic Bar again but the potential endlessness of the musical content is actually broken by a character. Once inside the social space, Tarr begins a long, slow track around the bar's various inhabitants, all motionless and downtrodden at their tables. The music consists this time of a honky-tonk textured piano playing an alternating set of arpeggios that often resolve back to the key tonality at

unexpected moments. Over this is a saxophone occasionally improvising, but the arpeggios dominate the soundtrack in terms of mixing. As the tracking shot continues, the camera focuses on the main character sat at a table. With the camera in close proximity to him, the female voice finally enters with a final few feet of tracking revealing the stage on which she is singing. In many ways the scene could be read as a subtly private dialogue between the two characters but effectively without any speech. She is then shown performing the mournful song with lyrics about a lost love, the character expressing a sense of despair.

After again tracking to show the elusive visual of the musicians (and even then only the saxophonist rather than pianist who remains effectively acousmatic), the scene cuts abruptly to a later point slightly further on into the evening. The music, however, has yet to suggest progression, again seeming to mimic relationships to noise, holding cinematic progression back through a circular potential. This new scene is one of a violent confrontation as the character, previously shown to be slumped at the table, now accosts someone in the back passageway of the club. Again, the contrast is still bleak but the escape from the loud, arpeggiated music cannot be understated as an effect.

This ties in to Schrader's sense of release from stasis, one that is not an actual release from the narrative of hardship but simply a brief respite of realisation at surviving such monotony. The moment may be devoid of theological implication but its otherness is still there. This monotony is very deliberately conceived through a variety of aural techniques in the scene, not simply melodic techniques, as Rancière discusses in his analysis:

Music here shifts from its usual status of "illustration" to a structural function. On a first level, the desperate song of the singer, telling the end of love, the end of illusions and so on, epitomises the desolation of the environment. But those desperate words were already anticipated by the six notes that are obsessively repeated and even accompanied by a metronome which reduces them to a mere tick-tock: the noise of the rain inside, of the rain in the bodies and the souls. (2016, p.249).

The shift of the music from an illustrative diegetic function to what Rancière calls a "structural" function is a common occurrence in many of the previous transcendental examples of musical use. As suggested, the music is almost removed from any typical function by emphasising the repetitive nature of its new structural position, the metronome being an obvious example whereby the soundscape of the scene is measuring out time's passing for the viewer. This is another extenuation of the temporality of the scene which makes the cut seem like a release.

The transcendental as a feeling arises from this contrasting aesthetic relationship, one that heavily builds alienation between the audience and the film. The vital point to make is that, by distancing the viewer initially from the experience, they come to share the diegetic experience of the characters, ironically putting them further within the film. Escape from this scenario, combined with spiritual thematic elements (which are still present in many of Tarr's films even if not overtly as in Pasolini's or Tarkovsky's films), creates an incredibly transcendental experience. Tarr could even be said to be toying with the audience by providing such a moment of alienated transcendental style, offering a false escape. This point is further heightened in that the music can still be heard in the background after the cut, albeit with consideration to the different position in the space. Tarr would push this ideal to its most extreme conclusion, not in *Damnation*,

but in a later film. In *Sátántangó*, this mechanism becomes extreme so to reflect the hyper-extension of virtually every aspect of his aesthetic ploys.

### Sátántangó

The takes get longer and longer to go along with my thinking. I don't know how my takes are getting longer and longer... When you shoot a movie, you can only shoot the reality, something that definitely exists. - Tarr (2012).

When making the jump between *Damnation* and *Sátántangó* even Tarr himself accepts that something dramatically changes in his filmmaking as the above quote suggests. Though he made one short film and a documentary in between the two films, his need to extend the cinematic process becomes abundantly clear. Why this occurs is never truly explained other than as a logical continuation of the aesthetic and narrative experiments began in *Damnation*, where a cycle of aesthetic ideas continues to be expanded until it can no longer conceivably go further as in his last film, *The Turin Horse*. As Kovacs suggests, Tarr follows his thematic points through, whereby his "...narrative minimalism reaches a point which is very difficult to develop any further." (2012, p.145). Perhaps because of this, *Sátántangó* has the most complex form of diegetic musical alienation. The film is a further collaboration with the writer László Krasznahorkai, *Damnation* being the first, and this may begin to suggest these forms of audio-visual alienation to be of a collaborative narrative experiment. Of greater prescience in regards to *Sátántangó* is the role that Vig has within the film as composer, writer and even playing the lead character. This makes the musical choices of the film seem incredibly intertwined and necessary to examine in a number of contexts, hence

why it is an example that cuts across different positions of music within this chapter.

When Gilles Deleuze discusses the relationship between conceptual difference and repetition, his analysis could equally be applied to the aesthetic techniques that Tarr himself deploys to excruciating effect in *Sátántangó*. Deleuze writes that "In every case repetition is difference without a concept. But in one case, the difference is taken to be only external to the concept; it is a difference between objects represented by the same concept, falling into the indifference of space and time..." (2004, p.26). Tarr could be said to be removing some conceptual element from cinema in order for any difference perceived within his narratives to still create a grating repetition. By using the term cinematic conceptualism, it is not a reference to any form of general cinematic concept but an encapsulation of the drive at the heart of the form as a whole; a narrative moulding an aesthetic ideal or vice versa. Tarr and slow cinema as a whole degrade this to the point of sometimes removing such conceptual elements entirely. One aspect loses almost all power over the other, leaving the alienated gap which is ripe for transcendental readings and appraisals.

*Sátántangó* is a complex film but its narrative is on a small logistical scale compared to its realisation. It follows the fate of a small village community whose shared farm, of which they depended on to live, has collapsed. The village is desolate and in the middle of nowhere. The film follows various counter-threads of narrative as the occupants are shown variously to betray each other or be duped by each other, often for financial gain. The main bulk of the characters are co-opting their money together thanks to the charismatic argument of Irimiás (Vig), a

villager who was thought dead but who has somehow returned. His ruse is to have the villagers killed by officials though the financial reasoning behind this is never truly explored. Elsewhere, a local worker Schmidt (László feLugossy) also had plans to steal the money but eventually loses out when Irimiás convinces the populace to leave, and when the local barman Futaki (Miklós B. Székely) discovers the plan. Watching over all of this is a reclusive drunken Doctor (Peter Berling) who notes down the events as he sees them from his window. He ventures out for more drink, only to discover an upset young girl (Erika Bók) who he chastises before attempting to apologise. She runs off into the night and this upset causes him to have a stroke.

This young girl is also fooled into losing her money by being tricked into burying it in the ground for it to be later taken on. She kills herself and her cat with rat poison. When the Doctor came across her, she was standing in the rain and staring into the local bar where much of the planning for various narrative scenarios occurs. At this point, her torment was unnoticed by the occupants of the bar who were dancing repetitively to music, eventually evolving into a tango, giving the film its English translated title of *Satan's Tango*. When the villagers leave the area, they are told by Irimiás that the plan for a new communal farm - the reason why he has supposedly taken their money - has had to be postponed for mysterious reasons, meaning that all of the villagers will have to split up and head to different parts of the country.

Futaki, whose affair with Schmidt's wife opened the film, is the only one who resists Irimiás and heads away from the group looking for work. From the opening of the film, the mysterious sound of bells has been heard alongside the score. This music is noted by many of the characters who are intrigued by the fact

that there were apparently no church bells around (the local church having recently been destroyed). After all of the occupants have left, the Doctor eventually returns from hospital to an entirely empty village. On hearing the bells again, he ventures out into the muddy countryside only to find a hidden church in a forest with a mad solitary ringing its bell incessantly. He goes back home, perturbed by what he has found as the bells chime on and he isolates himself further in his study, the film fading to black.

In a similar fashion to *Damnation*, it is the key relationships between the characters and the emotional fallout presented under aesthetic pressure that is essential. This is all realised within the framework of Tarr's extended and alienating cinematic effects. The main difference with *Sátántangó* and the majority of his other films is how far these effects are willing to go and how much of a role they play within the actual, diegetic breakdown of the characters. This comes from the movement of the music's position in the film from simple illustrative to a definitive structural ideal. Building on *Damnation*'s circular social spaces and repetitive music, several scenes in *Sátántangó* draw upon the same elements, heightening them to a great level of receptive difficulty for the viewer. These scenes explore elements first conceived in *Damnation* and again have a complex relationship with the temporal elements of the cinematic experience, viewer alienation and transcendental teleology.

The scene to question is again a scenario that has characters reacting to diegetic music. Unlike the characters in *Damnation*, these people react to the music by dancing, almost out of control and possessed by its rhythms. The characters are celebrating, many are drunk and in the town's only bar dancing to the music of an

accordion player who is almost always on screen. The first time the viewer comes upon this scene, it is not from the perspective of inside the bar but outside. The young girl who later commits suicide, watches the occupants from a window. She stands in the rain, the accordion music being mixed so as to be placed inside and away from her perspective. She is later disturbed by the doctor of the film and runs off into a nearby forest. This earlier context is essential to the scene when it is finally returned to from another perspective later on because otherwise it has no thematic context and is simply aesthetically grating. Tarr exercises such patience with his camera that the scene becomes one of the longest he ever shot. The camera moves backwards through the bar in a straight line as the characters chaotically dance to the music. This camera eventually comes to a standstill and simply watches the characters perform, the music repeating the same progression over and over again.

Jonathan Romney describes the scene from a usefully musical perspective to highlight its difficult nature:

The theme goes round and round, consistently frantic, neither pausing nor reaching resolution at any point: again, it threatens to burn out before it ends... the music's forced jollity ironically underpinning the world's - and the foolish dancers' - indifference to the fate of the young girl looking in through the window from out in the rainy night. (2014, pp.56-57).

Romney highlights several interesting points in regards to how this music works.

Firstly, he spots how repetitive it is, the point being that the music does not require a musically fluent audience to understand what is happening in the aural world of the film. Music has the ability to communicate to all. But the second point of the context of this music is important as to the ontology of the scene. Whilst this dance is occurring, a young girl is suffering great hardship. The audience will be aware of

this pathos as Tarr deliberately highlighted her position outside of the building in an earlier segment.<sup>64</sup> The music's "jollity" and its own desire to repeat, almost to distract from the torment outside, makes the scene incredibly trying on a number of aesthetic levels. Tarr could even be said to implicate the viewer in the scenario by attempting to alienate them from the morality of the film's society. The transcendental elements align through these aspects coming to comment upon each other where a desire to escape from the scene on the audience's part is as inevitable as the characters' distraction from the plight of the young girl.

The aesthetics of this scene succumb to the musical power of the sound mix and the music composed by Vig, denying an easy experience of what is a strangely pleasurable scene for the characters. Consider the potential position of this music in the film. The scene is arguably its pivot point, returning to an earlier temporal moment in the narrative but adding the final context necessary for the audience to understand the trouble that the town is facing. Though it would be incorrect to describe it as a revelatory moment, there is some essence of ineffable escape implied by the conclusion of the scene. Before this happens, however, Tarr does actually cut the segment effectively in two, cutting to another angle in the bar. This time the music does change as one character has demanded to partake in a tango dance. The music reflects this and yet also aids this moment being far more transcendental because of its instant differentiation from the previous moment, similar to the escape in *Damnation*.

By alienating the audience for a segment of time, Tarr allows virtually any escape to feel like a revelation. In analysing the scene from *Sátántangó*, Kovacs

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<sup>64</sup> The structure of film means that the first few chapters show the exact same point in the temporal chronology of the film but from different character's perspectives.

suggests there to be a key audio-visual mismatch between the diegetic sound and the subsequent reaction to it. He argues that:

Through the mismatch of sound and image, the two segments of the space give the impression of being slightly disconnected. This mismatch is continued later on all through the scene. Sometimes there is a slight discordance between the rhythm of the music and the movement of the dancers or the musicians. It is minimal, yet noticeable enough to provide a feeling of disturbance. The movements are not entirely different from the rhythm of the music, but do not follow it entirely either. This diegetic music becomes a somewhat disturbing sound accompanying the images. (2013, p.67).

The suggestion of the sound's very mix creating a "disturbing" effect is another way of addressing the audio-visual alienation that Tarr is creating. The discordance is not simply between the characters and their world but the audience and that world too. Though there is a subtlety here suggested by Kovacs that is inaccurate in regards to the genuine effects created by such aesthetic choices, the level of alienation and the aesthetic choices used to create them are essentially immaterial. They are creating the effect through diegetic means and that is the essential point.

This is an aspect commonly associated with scoring but Tarr's films show the potential to achieve such goals through diegetic methods, perhaps belying his leaning towards a certain aesthetic inherited from his earlier documentary work. In his analysis of the use of music in the films of Robert Bresson, John Belton suggests that music can be largely responsible for such receptive action: "In other words, it marks moments of divine intervention, where the course of events is determined, and marks points of human contact, where one man communes with another." (2008, p.30). This scene in *Sátántangó* creates the same effect only through diegetic music and where the "points of human contact" are far more pessimistic than in Bresson's brief moment of narrative respite.

In spite of overt symbolism often negating transcendental potential, Tarr's use of audio-visual relationships leads to a higher significance, even if that

significance is simply the implication of what he is not showing on screen and subsequently an escape from alienating aesthetic choices. When Tarr was interviewed for *The Guardian* in 2001, Romney summarised the potential outcome of a film like *Sátántangó* and backs up his assertion with an unquoted answer from the director himself. He suggests the following:

In the intensity of its ritual-like pacing, *Sátántangó* is as close as cinema comes to nightmare. It concerns a rural community torn apart by a trickster messiah, but the narrative is less important than the tableaux that compose it... The drunk scenes, however, were as realistic as they look - shot, Tarr says, with the entire cast tanked up to the gills. (2001).

Perhaps the symbolism of the scene is watered down, at least in terms of transcendental negation, by it being earnestly shot and improvised. Even the music has elements of this where the drunkenness of the scene leads the player to make genuine mistakes and trips whilst playing the repeated melody. This leads on to the final question of how diegetic music can be used to create an audio-visual alienation: where does the true transcendental mechanism within such scenarios really lie? In a sense, because audio-visual alienation is a process (and the scenes in question are part of this process), the transcendental moment of realisation is arguably more perceivable in the scenes immediately following these moments; the music's function as a mechanism in the non-illustrative position that it holds is not the overall transcendental teleology but the gateway for the viewer towards this teleology. So the mechanism is built throughout via music and images addressing particular thematic concerns but only comes to the fore in several moments, segments or scenes.

Nayar writes of the complexity of the transcendental "moment" perceived within the style and the problems that accompany the context of such moments.

She writes that "The paradoxical implication, of course, is that a moment that phenomenologically constitutes the sacred - born of viewing a film narrative, let's say - is one in which the participant *transcends* the ordinariness of that narrative." (2012, p.18). This is fitting for the context of the diegetic transcendental mechanism here as the social spaces of the film are exactly what the viewer should wish to escape from. The ordinariness produced in these scenes is not merely of a dull or laboured quality but of a phenomenologically trying test for the viewer. They are effectively led into the moment of transcendental realisation by being alienated from the cinematic experience which locks them into the diegetic space simultaneously. Watching the film is like being in the film and this feeling is created by the music. The "moment" is therefore after the diegetic mechanism has been built into the viewing experience, explaining again why slow cinema is conducive to this type of transcendental style, because the mechanism requires an extenuation of time that ordinary filmic styles dare not attempt.

#### The Transcendental and the Sound of Bells

The other recurring musical element in the diegetic soundworld of *Sátántangó* is the persistent sound/music of church bells. This is not a simplistic repeated occurrence whereby the scenario that requires such sound is revisited, but one where the sound hints towards higher realms through its mysterious positioning, one that is only partly explained towards the very end of the seven hour film. It is the first and last sound that the viewer hears in the film and is even the subject of the film's last piece of dialogue. If the denial of a source for the music in *Damnation* seemed initially elongated, *Sátántangó* by contrast heightens the relationship to

extreme realms. But, as Kovacs suggests, Tarr (and Vig) emphasises each element of the audio-visual composition with equal importance: "Sounds, noises and music are almost equally important factors of the aesthetic composition of the visual style." (2013, p.72). This can, therefore, explain why the source blurs.

The bells differ from the more obvious repetitive music and how they achieve a transcendental moment. Unlike the accordion music, the lack of explanation and source is one that is constantly hinted at representing some sort of diegetic revelatory moment as well as the obvious aesthetic difference through their overtly drone-like structure. This facet is eventually shared with the audience thanks to the film's incredibly long running time coalescing with a sparsely realised narrative. Such a combination allows for the previously mentioned interpretative gap which is less alienating than the previous musical uses but still works through a conspicuous presence in the film. Later on, the sound becomes more overtly diegetic but within earlier moments, the transcendental elements are more palpable because of the natural mystery of its source.

The position of the bells is rendered mysterious, created clearly by a hand outside of the film's world yet accepted diegetically by the characters, bringing to mind the field of Daniel Frampton's "Film Mind" with particular reference to subjective minds within the diegesis: "If a film has a person in it then an immediate possibility offers itself in the guise of that person's indicated thoughts and perceptions." (2006, p.20). Tarr turns this potential into a gateway that can be traversed in both directions, slipping the viewer to and from this inner world in order to extenuate the sense of time further. Is this Tarr's vision as the director (a creative act) or some view into the inner sense of a character? Either vision is

undermined by various choices throughout the film and quite deliberately: Tarr will not be academised so easily. In contrast to the previous diegetic musical scenarios, the mechanism differs.

Rather than forcing the viewer into a corner, this sound is far more palatable and almost the antithesis of the alienating human music of the accordion players. But its repetition throughout the film accumulates meaning, almost like a leitmotif but with a far more intangible quality. *Sátántangó's* opening long track through a muddy yard of farm animals sets the tone for the film but mixes a visual harshness with this strangely ambient soundscape. The camera tracks slowly as the bells gently fade in. At this point in the film, the viewer has no choice but to accept them as outside of the narrative world but, because of the gradually diminishing solidity of this position, the process becomes one of a transcendental aesthetic; creating a quiet but gradual sense of something beyond representation, channelled and contrasted with the most immanent of visual material. Fairfax's analysis of this opening suggests it to be typical and almost defining of the director's overall shift in style during this period but the aural elements displayed here makes the analysis seem oversimplified:

Not only do Tarr's films contain radically sparse storylines, in which the minimal amount of narrative progression is interspersed with long periods of *temps mort*, but his formal system, too, rests on a prodigious use of the long-take, stretching the bounds of cinematic duration. Totemic of this tendency would be the 7½-minute opening shot of *Sátántangó* (Tarr 1994) – in which the camera circles around a desolate rural village, whose only signs of life are a herd of cows plodding aimlessly around the muddy fields – but this is only a more extreme version of the aesthetic principle governing the entirety of his late work. (2016, p.4).

This opening segment is incredibly important in regards to the transcendental reception of the film. It sets out an initial mystery which even when finally revealed

later in the film, still retains a sense of the sacred (the church that no one knew was there) and ineffability (from the sound of the bells).

Is it accurate then to describe this as one of the film's periods of *temps mort*/dead time? The music is working through a complex range of hurdles in order to eventually build a transcendental framework into its uses later and so the description seems isolated. The bells could be described as more congruent than the accordion music, though only because of the ambiguous diegetic position. More usefully, the music created here is gradually denoted by the effect it has on the characters, combined with the length of the overall filmic experience: the sparseness combined with length forces for the viewer to grasp on to any meaning in order to comprehend the overall experience. Therefore, when a character is wordlessly overcome by this sound and its unspoken implications, the potential is there for the viewer to also grasp onto this diegetic experience.

This effect is more potent in the film's later scenarios, working in a similar fashion to the evolution of meaning in the music of the last two chapters. Its repetition adds more and more layers to the affective meaning of its presence. This must be acknowledged as being achieved with a medium that has repetition at its core. As Chris Otchy has written, not only has repetition been key to music as a whole but it has been one of the forms that openly requires it:

No other art form so passionately embraces repetition as music. If a writer were to repeat a phrase or a paragraph over and over throughout an essay, one might think he was either mad, or he was trying to create a type of poetic/musical resonance. If a painter or sculptor were to repeat a work over and over, critics might have the same reaction to her work. Yet in music, repetition is expected — encouraged even. (2017).

In these later moments, repetition is more than encouraged but used almost entirely to create the aural structure. Once the plan to deceive the villagers has

been set in motion, the narrative turns into purely one of journey, a pointless one though repetition is not quite there in the visual or narrative elements at this point.

On their way to the building in which they plan to blow-up the villagers, the three men involved in the plot, including the character played by Vig, come across a house. At this moment (and in spite of being some way from where the bells are eventually situated spatially within the film) the sound overwhelms the soundtrack and the characters. Vig's character drops to his knees as if witnessing some revelation. The composition of the scene also suggests this, a moody fog coming slowly down to reveal the house as an almost theological entity. Once the moment has passed, the music fades and the fog thins to properly reveal the house. The other two characters are somewhat unaware of this moment, asking the other "What's the matter, never seen fog before?" (1994). He could equally be talking about the filmic mechanism yet it hints at things beyond even the director's control (some potential transcendental force) that has resulted in his creation, playing on Frampton's "Ghostly beings" where "...some simply called on *invisible* beings to explain film's twists and turns." (2006, p.31). Perhaps all of these films are dictated by such ghostly beings; ineffable influencers subconsciously moulding reception to the point of drawing characters into their designs.

When the film concludes, the presence of this sound conveys the sense of transcendental realisation, the knowledge of something that has happened being gained in spite of its meaning still being totally incomprehensible in basic communicative terms. Romney has suggested generally of Vig's scores that they have a "Haunting" quality because of their relation to the "devastation" of the film's social scenarios. He writes the following: "Haunting - in the properly

unearthly sense of the word - and devastation are certainly words that come to mind when you think of Vig's scores for Tarr's work." (2014, p.56). Consider this aspect coupled with a Deleuzian ideal of conceptual repetition: "In every case, repetition is the power of difference and differentiation: because it condenses the singularities, or because it accelerates or deaccelerates time, or because it alters space." (2004, p.273). The repetition of the bells is different because, in a cinematic sense, it does condense the "singularities" of the film, marking and drawing together a seven hour experience in order to move back and forth between temporal periods and to heighten affect beyond the comprehensive expression of meaning. The position of this music as the only congruent aesthetic force in the whole film renders it almost unique in Tarr's own filmography because of its transfer of transcendental style into some new sense of escape, a respite between the moments of hardship that can't help but be grasped by the viewer.

### Repetition and Alienation

Assessing audio-visual alienation caused through the use of scoring is perhaps the most complex argument to be made here. Whereas musical occurrences given a source within the film have a logical potential in regards to dragging a viewer into a scenario by paradoxically alienating them from the cinematic experience, musical scoring outside of this has several other factors to contend with. These consist of the following:

1. The score's position of being already detached and perhaps unquestioned as part of a general audio-visual/cinematic experience (it is the most ephemeral cinematic aspect).
2. Retaining the connection with the world of the film in spite of aesthetically attempting to strain the viewer with the urge to escape it and to resist the overall cinematic experience.

These are both factors that feed into the problems surrounding the use of Vig's seemingly causeless music which, in spite of aesthetically replicating the music composed for diegetic scenarios (repeated arpeggio motifs, consistent drones, very little tonal progression), still aims to detach the viewer to the point of highlighting an unseen, ineffable quality in such scenarios. Tarr's relationship with Vig's music is a unique one whose process itself goes some way to explaining its importance in Tarr's cinema. Consider Kovacs assessment of their relationship which is one that is equally informed by the analyst's experience of working closely with Tarr:

Not unrelated to this effect is the considerable increase in the importance of music and other noises in the film. Repetitive music, the constant roar of the wind and several other sounds accompany the images, creating a more lugubrious atmosphere than in any preceding Tarr film. (2013, p.90).

Kovacs highlights throughout his text the importance of Vig's input to the cinematic process which suggests that the music's role is multitudinous. He suggests two intriguing anomalies within this process that suggest how the audio-visual alienation occurs through other means, eventually leading to the transcendental moment.

He firstly indicates the unusual production order between music and film. Vig often composes the music before Tarr has even started shooting, at the very

most working from a written treatment of the film. Secondly the music becomes an integral part of the shooting process itself, the compositions played during filming. The actors and everyone else involved in the process of creating the narrative and image are subjected to the music, perhaps even unconsciously channelling its atmosphere into whichever aspect of the film they are working on. This is extremely effective in regards to creators whose response is one of temporal positioning; the movement of the cameraman or the tempo of the actors' performances for example. With this in place, music (through an ironic meta-diegetic positioning within the film's making), starts the process of the audio-visual alienation, again building into Frampton's potentialities surrounding the conceptual film mind suggested earlier.

When being interviewed about the use of music in another second period film *The Man From London* (2008) Tarr entered into this exchange with interviewer, Geoff Andrew:

It often feels like you were trying to make a bizarre musical: the policeman's speeches are synchronised with Mihály Vig's music; dialogue may rise to a crescendo or feel like a scherzo.

We always used the music track during shooting so we could get the rhythm right in terms of camera movements. But it's true there's nothing naturalistic about the soundtrack: I hate realism. I prefer things to be dirtier or more elegant than "reality". (2007).

Vig's scores play a major role in this rejection of "realism" though Tarr never quite expands upon what he means by the term. Transcendental style also generally rejects traits associated with realism though ironically its techniques (a general aesthetic reduction) are often also associated with the term.<sup>65</sup> Essentially, the scores have to work within their own placement in the films. The music in question is usually one or two pieces used repeatedly throughout each film. This may

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<sup>65</sup> Realism could be used in terms of many forms such as Social Realism, Soviet Realism etc.

perhaps explain why Tarr is able to use them throughout filming, because their repetition builds on a continuity of atmosphere from the shoot.<sup>66</sup> Many moments of Vig's scores could be argued to aid a transcendental style and this section is looking at his strongest example: the musical score of *The Turin Horse*. The music is complex because every facet of Tarr's filmmaking is pushed to its final teleology as he accepts the conclusion of his overall thematic goal; that of an initial alienation from the cinematic experience through a contradictory entrapment, circularity and, eventually, through a release of transcendental expression.

### *The Turin Horse*

He found Mihály Vig's music appealing, as it is minimalist, slow, sad and sentimental. It is also very simply orchestrated, mainly based on piano and accordion, and so is a mixture of cheap traditional pub music and sophisticated contemporary repetitive music. - Kovacs (2013, p.67).

*The Turin Horse* is the end point in Tarr's many methods of extension. In spite of being shorter than several earlier films, there are fewer cuts and longer takes throughout, perhaps influenced again by the increased role of his editor Hranitzky who now has a co-directing credit. When considering the film, the first aspect to assess is the shift in the musical perspective. Unlike almost every other film before it, diegetic music of the kind examined in previous sections has virtually vanished. Such a presence could perhaps be seen as actual evidence of optimism within the narrative, of which there is actually none. Its characters are not even afforded a release through diegetic music in social spaces as the key element of the film is that, for various reasons, its characters are increasingly trapped within their decrepit property (and arguably in the final days of civilisation). Repetition and

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<sup>66</sup> The "rhythm" that Tarr refers to is far more vague and fluid as a concept to the filmmaker generally than this interview quote implies.

audio-visual alienation play key roles in the film but through an obvious aesthetic presence. For the effects created through diegetic scoring is now moved to Vig's musical score.

Repetition in Vig's music has been discussed by several analysts but it becomes a constant point of interest when assessing the music for *The Turin Horse*. Romney suggests that "Vig's themes transcend the generic through their repetitive intensity and the sheer weight that he gives his sounds." (2014, p.57), later writing of its role as a transcendental entity within the very stasis of the film's ending which suggests "...laboriousness, decrepitude, cosmic wheels that might roll on pitilessly for eternity (even through the enforced stasis that emerges as the film's theme)." (2014, p.57). Kovacs also notices the music's reflection of the film's formal structure, writing the following: "There are no individual numbers in the music. We hear a repetitive minimalist music constituted of variations on a single three-note musical motif using different instruments, orchestration and harmonies." (2013, p.149). This musical structure will be returned to shortly as it contains an essential element of the reasoning behind the audio-visual transcendental style.

*The Turin Horse* opens with a contextualising voice-over spoken upon a blank visual image. This introduction tells of a horse that the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche saw being flogged by its owner. It is the image that caused Nietzsche's final breakdown. The film then purports to loosely follow the fate of that horse after Nietzsche had left it. The horse is shown to be owned by a driver (János Derzsi) and his daughter (Erika Bók) as they increasingly struggle to survive in their barren landscape, partly because of the horse's refusal to walk and partly because

of the strangely dramatic increase in weather conditions.<sup>67</sup> The film opens with the horse being driven back to the house where they live before Tarr goes into detail about the pair's daily routine. The driver is partly crippled and so requires constant aid from his daughter. The film is built around several repeated rituals, from the undressing and dressing of the father to the cooking and eating of boiled potatoes. As the weather worsens, the pair makes several attempts to leave but in vain. They eventually bed down in the house against the weather, attempting but failing to continue to live out their routine. The light of the film begins to fade until it is implied that all of the light in the world has been extinguished in a quiet apocalypse.

When Kovacs, Rancière and others discuss the narrative progress of the film in comparison to Tarr's other films, their reference is often to this repetitive ritual structure. Fairfax summarises it most effectively:

The Turin Horse, therefore, represents the infinite endpoint of the regressive spiral of Tarr's oeuvre. A curious thing happens when this point is reached: no more movement occurs, and yet the body continues to rotate around a point. The distinctions between mobility and rest, change and stasis, progression and regression all collapse. (2016, p.15).

In terms of audio-visual effects caused by this heightened structure, it could be said that *The Turin Horse* ultimately reflects the repetitive structures of Tarr's general aesthetic means, from his visuals and editing to Vig's musical structures. For the first time, the cinematic structure is totally in line with the music's structure, creating an incredibly powerful experience that draws upon similar thematic content as discussed in the previous section (alienation, repetition, escape, circularity) and addresses it overtly.

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<sup>67</sup> The weather is strange in the context of the film rather than in Tarr's general cinematic worlds which are all inhabited with a generally unpleasant set of weather conditions.

Erzsebet Bori writes of this structural evolution being one that is evolved from the initial extenuations of *Sátántangó*:

The recurrent, concentric structure creates the form of the film. The edifice is similar to the structure that held audiences captive in *Satan's Tango*, but there it became apparent only retrospectively, whereas in *The Turin Horse* it unfolds throughout the film. As a temporal process, it makes use of devices employed in musical composition; the constant elements give the ostinato, and the theme returns in a range of variations interwoven with new elements... (2011, pp.158-159).

Perhaps some likeness can be perceived in the musical evolution as well. *The Turin Horse* "...makes use of devices employed in musical composition..." where techniques such as "ostinato" can be recognised within its structure even when the writer is not a musicologist. The reason for emphasising this final jump - the structure of the film to a more musical form - is because the transcendental elements eventually align together within the temporal process through this shift. By analysing the music, the film's structure is also highlighted in its effects and this belies the connection to more Schradlerian principles of the transcendental style. Logically, with the music and the narrative structure linked, two arguments can be put forward: first, that a transcendental form (the music) is being reflected within a cinematic form; and second, that the narrative is not simply reflecting a general musicality but a very specific one which taps into elements already discussed in regards to the diegetic music.

The two arguments are interlinked but there are several specific aspects that need to be noted before simply accepting them. These aspects are best assessed in the music of the opening scenario and how this structural motif (as a form of what could be described as anti-leitmotif) functions, carving a powerful vein of transcendental expression through the rest of the film. This scene is the first visual and narrative moment after the blank screen with its contextualising voice-

over. Once the viewer has been told about the context of the horse, its flogging and its connection to Nietzsche, Tarr opts for an opening that follows the horse and owner along a windswept road (the conditions clearly causing them difficulty). The scene does not cut and shows the simple process of the horse pulling the cart and owner along the road.

The diegetic sound of the scene is reduced, especially in context of Tarr's general use of natural sound, and Vig's music plays over it, starting as the only sound the viewer can hear before gradually fading in the natural sounds of the scenario. This fluctuation between traditional sound and musical roles is key to Tarr's aural character, rendering the designations moot.<sup>68</sup> This is the only piece of music heard throughout the film, brought over as another structural device whose positioning would be labelled as having a coda effect upon the film and its scenarios in the Schraderian conception of film music's position. Its structure is essentially similar to the diegetic music in the last section with extra layers of instrumentation. Some form of organ along with a cello is responsible for a repeated arpeggiated motif that mostly builds upon the same chord, barely progressing just like the accordion music that plays in the other films' bar scenarios. Over the top of this is an elongated melody on strings of two different three note melodies which structurally plays two of the first melody and then two of the second melody. This structure is then repeated over and over until the end of the scene, occasionally allowing a tremolo violin to rise and fall in the mix. This also

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<sup>68</sup> The fluctuation between sound and music positioning is why elements of what officially could be called sound analysis is being included in a chapter predominantly about overtly musical ideas and content.

occurs when the scene allows more diegetic sound to enter towards the end, the tremolo seeming to heighten the agony of the animal.

A number of contexts are being played out within this scene. The first is the thematic context already applied through the opening voice-over. The viewer is aware that the horse is going to be suffering great hardship. The transcendental nature of this narrative subject can be shown to share likenesses with that of Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1966). The suffering of animals in film is always beyond language because simple communicative language is already beyond possibility. Such a scenario, therefore, is required to be communicated through more aesthetic means.<sup>69</sup> Music plays its role in this and, by also aiding the structure throughout the whole of the film, Vig's score alienates the viewer from the scene by attempting to recreate the repetition and monotony suffered by the horse. This also brings to mind the problematic nature of conceptual diegesis in itself and where the viewer is placed in the experience. Goldmark, Kramer and Leppert write most effectively on this, suggesting the following:

The diegetic - extradiegetic (or source-underscore) split maintains a more basic and far less tenable distinction between reproducing reality and signifying it. This is the familiar opposition of mimesis versus symbolization, of fact versus value, that is also basic to the idea of "realism" in representation. (2007, p.4).

Is Vig's music reproducing or signifying the reality of Tarr's films and how is this affecting a transcendental reading?

It must be stated that, like the diegetic music of previous examples, the moment of transcendental expression comes from the music contextualising the scenario in order to create an eventual escape for the viewer and that the repetition of the music throughout the narrative highlights further the circularity of

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Bresson's film is about the suffering of an overworked donkey.

the situation.<sup>70</sup> The effect is created through audio-visual alienation, a slippery alienation between viewer and film brought about through aesthetics which initially highlights the process of viewing but one that, unlike purely Brechtian alienation, eventually leads the viewer *deeper* into the film's schemata rather than away from the illusions of the diegesis. Similarly, Brecht touched upon this potential well before it was fully realised in feature length films. He writes of music's ability to change the very nature of how much the viewer works to interpret and comprehend a filmic narrative, writing that "Expressed differently, the film's scriptwriter can portray the course of events much more dialectically, i.e. in their real contradictoriness and disjointedness, if the music places the public in the constructive attitude of 'collecting details'." (2001, p.16). Vig's music is a brilliant example of this as it genuinely forces the viewer to confront the reality of the film's diegesis and narrative but through the highlighting of the medium. The endless repetition of hardship and toil means the viewer is allowed only a brief aesthetic respite from the harsh world of the film, manifesting in a moment of a pure understanding when the music variously fades out.

However, the music *must* create this alienation for its secondary moments to appear within the transcendental realm. The Schraderian stasis cannot even be remotely attributed to the film's various post-music scenarios without the droning context of Vig's arpeggios. In other words, Tarr's trapdoor can only be opened upon such a stasis if the music highlights the unpleasant process before the viewer ultimately feels a kinship with the characters and their own narrative worlds. And even with this structure, the film is still arguably reducing its aesthetic means to a

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<sup>70</sup>The *Turin Horse's* aesthetic choices literally grind down the cinematic medium into nothing, the ultimate transcendental aspect of the void.

bare minimum as required by Schrader and others as a necessity of the style. Kovacs suggests *The Turin Horse* to be the ultimate distillation in such a reduction of aesthetic means, even in the whole of Tarr's filmography, which suggests that the film is the most conducive to the style: "However, within the realm of the Tarr style, and with regard to Tarr's moral attitude, this film is the one that is reduced to its minimal essential ingredients." (2013, p.145). It is fitting that Tarr ends his entire cinematic career subverting this same mechanism, the only escape left being a total end in both the diegesis of the film and in the real world with Tarr giving up filmmaking.

Romney recognises poignancy of his retirement: "But if it's possible to imagine such a film containing a note of hope, it perhaps lies in this: at the end of *The Turin Horse*, the light goes out, seemingly in the entire universe. On screen, everything turns to blackness - and yet, in the dark, Vig's music goes on playing." (2014, p.57). Even after the diegetic world fades completely away (and this is perhaps reflecting a potential narrative apocalypse) the music still plays, proving Deleuze's dictum of the ultimate "groundlessness" created by conceptual repetition as a whole: "Representation, especially when it becomes infinite, is imbued with a presentiment of groundlessness." (2004, p.346). Tarr can be seen to create one final moment of transcendental style, one that subverts diegesis by occurring after the film has concluded, one final escape from his narrative worlds before finally coming up for air in the real world, now viewed with a greater and ineffable understanding. The alienation, first caused to the viewing process by the elongation and repetition of a huge variety of slow cinematic aesthetics and ideas becomes a gateway into understanding and comprehending the toil that Tarr's

characters live through. The repetition within the films escapes into the viewing world and ensnares those who choose to share in the endless arpeggios and the mysterious bells. What initially distances the viewer from the experience now draws the cinematic world in around them using music to recreate the cinematic spaces and worlds that the characters are forced to inhabit again and again. By taking part in such a repetition, the viewer shares in the hardship of such worlds, leading back to a most Schraderian of transcendental receptions: repetition, alienation, circularity and eventually a transcendental expression through release.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Ambient Sound and Emersonian Transcendence**

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. - Ralph Waldo Emerson (2008, pp.3-4).

Within this thesis so far, musical scoring has sat at the heart of the aesthetic analysis. Music has been positioned through its thematic contrast to the narrative, its thematic and aesthetic difference to the film world, and its repetitive structures breaking out of an affective narrative world position. Yet, with all of these hierarchies and creative decisions, there has been an unspoken element present, or perhaps it is better described as a side-effect which the examples of this final analytical chapter deliberately build upon: the emphasis on natural sound when music is removed or reduced. This effect most often occurs through contrast, like many of the examples already discussed, but it is attuned to non-musical matters. A concise way to express the ideal of this chapter is by asking an initially simple question: what does positioning music in a film do to its contrasting soundworld and design? As I argue in this chapter, the musical choices of these films and others emphasises soundscape, and the soundscape of the natural world in particular, creating a contrast whereby such emphasis feels and is, by all accounts, an ambient realisation of transcendental style.

Through such a contrast, this ambience of soundscape can be heightened and emphasised to create a number of intriguing effects which all reflect to some extent the philosophy and previously-set parameters of transcendental style. As has been stated numerous times so far, Paul Schrader suggested that the removal of scoring was the only real choice to allow a transcendental style to be achieved in

aural terms. This chapter in part conforms to this logic, if only to show that such a negation actually contains a number of aural and audio-visual potentials itself (and does so by often creating a contrast with the presence of music). As James Wierzbicki writes "The real world teems with sounds that have meaning in and of themselves and at the same time potentially have meaning as elements in a shared or private semiotic system." (2016, p.153). These relationships will be shown to create an emphasised natural soundscape, reflecting upon some of the repetitive and elongating effects found in the previous chapter, but also showing how such a sound design chimes with a number of transcendental characteristics. For this chapter, the ideal in question will henceforth be described as a naturescape; a natural soundworld derived from rural landscapes that imply a number of narrative and philosophical ideals from spiritual revelation to contentment and solitude.

In the opening chapter of this thesis, the analysis was described as etymological because of the cascading and homonymic meanings within the word "transcendental". Sound scholars such as Wierzbicki (and also Jeff Smith) have found potential in this gap of meaning. The former in particular labels such effects as "sound affect" and writes that "Relative to the entirety of information that a film offers its audience, affective sound/noise - sound effect that results in sound affect - is often deeply meaningful." (2016, p.156). Again, within this chapter the character of the transcendental finds an accidental but apt tie between the audio-visual aesthetics of interest and a transcendently relevant area of philosophy, therefore differing from Wierzbicki's theory through the specificity of its relation to landscape and natural sound. In summary, this link is between the created naturescapes in film and the philosophical/theological belief system derived in the

nineteenth century by the “transcendentalists”, an American group of writers and theologians whose various moral and philosophical beliefs were also based on a personal reemphasis upon the natural world. Through this link, the soundscapes and naturescapes of the case studies will be argued as conforming to both cinematic and philosophical transcendental theories.

When Schrader discussed the lack of music in transcendental cinema, he spoke of such an aspect as if some sort of cinematic silence was somehow achieved. As this is the only chapter whose soundtracks are mostly barren (with music almost always being given some diegetic source when present, if present at all), there is a logic to this description of “silence,” albeit a flawed conception of it. Again the problems arise from language. As Sheila J. Nayar has suggested, the reduction of cinematic aesthetics supposedly required for transcendental cinema, hints towards a form of aesthetic silence being the key to the traditional formulation of the style: “Indeed, when mapped against the transcendently styled films, what this immediately brings to the fore is the transcendental film's reliance on *silence* no less than stasis.” (2012, p.108). She further highlights the very mechanism essential to my examples, summarising as follows:

Through silences and stillnesses, and similar sorts of “distances” worked into a text, viewers are pushed evermore from a *feeling* relationship with a film to a *thinking* relationship; they are forced to *work* during the movie... (2012, p.120).

The work-inducing silence discussed by Nayar and by others is quite clearly not silence but instead an absence of scored music creating a “*feeling* relationship”.

The fact that it is often described as a form of silence conveys both the powerful role of scoring in general but also the sort of reception relationship that relying on a soundscape or sound design creates for the viewer. They are “forced to

*work*” which is essentially the effect of all of the musical relationships so far analysed. This is thematically where this chapter sits in relation to the other chapters too though, as will be stated whenever the descriptor of silence is used, it is referred to through a cinematic context; that silence as used here will almost always mean the presence of a complex, nuanced and perhaps unconsciously perceived soundtrack rather than an aural void (but one essentially absent of music's influence upon meaning).

To coincide with the shift of emphasis within the analysis from music to sound, a number of different theorists will now play a crucial role in constructing the arguments relevant and will address an essential problem in the visual-heavy analysis: that absence of scored music is treated as a silence and with an almost puritanical admiration. The theories of Michel Chion hold a great deal of influence over potential analysis of transcendental soundscapes, beginning with the idea that "...there is no image track and no soundtrack in the cinema, but a *place* of images, plus sound..." (1994, p.40). In some ways, the problematic character of the conceptual silence needs to be addressed here simply because, through this contrast, some sense of quietude and absence of music is, in the context of a film, punctuated by a contrasted silence.

This isn't a literal silence but a silence in the nondiegetic realm as discussed by Chion in his analysis of Robert Bresson; apt as well due to Bresson's canonisation by Schrader as a transcendental filmmaker. Chion writes the following on this paradigm of cinematic silence:

In a well-known aphorism Bresson reminded us that the sound film made silence possible. This statement illuminates a paradox: it was necessary to have sounds and voices so that the *interruption* of them could probe more deeply into this so called silence. (In the silent cinema, everything just suggested sounds.) (1994, pp.56-57).

Even a transcendental filmmaker like Bresson, whose work clearly channelled some absence akin to cinematic silence, is aware that such pure moments are almost unobtainable and yet are ironically *more* possible due to the coming of sound. It is clear that, more than other aspects within Bresson's own filmmaking, Chion is referring to an absence of lavish musical scoring; a choice which ultimately leads to a more readable and complex role for a film's soundscape. The analysis of this chapter deals with the extraordinary finding its expression through the ordinary. The naturescape being the most recognisable collection of sounds out of all of the aural techniques analysed within this thesis.

K.J. Donnelly has written of the symbolic potential of sound design which is essential to the exploration here due to the reading of such ubiquitous aesthetics that occurs later on. He writes that:

Similarly, sound effects in films are regularly more than simply an emanation from the illusory diegetic world constructed by the film. They often have symbolic or emotional valences that outweigh their representational status. (2014, p.129).

As in Donnelly's analysis, the soundscapes here contain meaning and potential that is far beyond their role as merely a representational presence in the films. Of course, the divided usage (that is assumed usage of film music and film sound with one as comment and the other as anchorage) has been steadily questioned by scholars. Martine Huvenne writes extensively of the "intertwining" of music and sound (rather than a pure attempt at synchronisation) and its effects in the work of Hildegard Westerkamp. Westerkamp comes from a background of sound installations and compositions that already use natural sound as a textural ideal.

Though the context of a lack of visual/narrative grounding must be taken into account, the effect is still poignant in that the cinema in question uses a remarkably similar balance of compositional form and natural soundscape:

...the situatedness of the listening in the auditory space and an embodied listening are transmitted. This enables an exceptional intertwining of music and sound in film: the situatedness of the listener in Westerkamp's music is sustained in the experience of the felt sound, even when some sounds find their place in relation to the visual image and can be interpreted as off-screen sound, revealing a source and meaning. (2016, p.134).

This fluid state between sound and music is heightened but the contrast is also subtly inverted by the examples in this chapter which requires a new theoretical backdrop. With the help of nineteenth-century transcendental theorists and ideas, this can be shown to be the starkest example of immanent objects leading to a more ineffable affect. Susan Sontag writes usefully on this idea, suggesting that "...works of art (with the important exception of music) refer to the real world - to our knowledge, to our experience, to our values..." (1967, p.21) and this is incredibly relevant for the shift in emphasis within this chapter. Sontag is discussing what she sees as the highest level that artwork can achieve – those with transparency – where work is constructed as enclosed. She suggests music to differ from this, echoing Schrader's reasoning for the discarding of soundtrack and scored music in transcendental cinema. So this chapter addresses the audio-visual potential in such a philosophical position, suggesting several ways in which an emphasis on sound artefacts is equally capable (through context and contrast) of expressing ineffable, transcendental notions.

But more importantly, there's a definite logic to the emphasis on natural sound in the philosophical content of the transcendental. Sound and noise scholar Paul Hegarty writes of this from a Kantian point of view: "For Kant, music can be

pure or 'free beauty' (*Critique of Judgement*, 76-7), but nature will always offer a better version. Music always runs the risk of being as if it were natural, either through imitation, which is cheating... of being 'only an agreeable noise'..." (2009, pp.7-8). The natural soundscape will, therefore, always be more conducive to transcendental ideals. Whether such soundscapes also fall into arguments surrounding imitation is debatable. Further into this thinking, the concept of sound rather than noise begins to figure heavily, especially as the presence of sound for long periods of time in these cinematic examples may sometimes be testing the patience of the viewer. As Hegarty notes, the evolution from sound becoming noise in a musical context is one of a value judgement: "Noise is not an objective fact, it occurs in relation to perception - both direct (sensory) and according to presumptions made by an individual..." (2009, p.1). So if these soundscapes are, at times, uncomfortable in the overall cinematic mechanism, are they (in spite of lacking the harshness associated with the term) now occupying the role of noise, soundscape, music or a mixture of all three?

Greg Hainge has also examined the potential of noise in all forms of media and he interestingly situates it, on a conceptual level across various multimedia, as disturbing any potential stasis (the key element of traditional transcendental style). He writes that: "Noise *obsists* - since it is fundamentally anathema to stasis and thus opposes all illusions of fixity, pulling form beyond itself through expression and bringing about the collapse of meaning." (2013, p.23). Yet the sound here aids stasis and perhaps only fluctuates into noise through the assumptive relationships viewers have built up regarding *how* films should lead the interpretation of narrative events aurally. As Wierzbicki has already noted, "Every sound has

meaning." (2016, p.153). Even an uncomfortable sound scenario will still contain meaning *and* obsist. Liz Greene writes of this contrast in the context of the soundtrack, conforming in some way to silence and creating an ambiguous potential reception simultaneously. She refers to them as "atmos tracks" and gives the following detailed summary:

Silence can have great emotive and narrative ramifications in the cinema. It is one method used by sound designers to create ambiguity in film. These silent or atmos tracks offer the filmgoer the opportunity to hear the environment in which the film is set. It is rare in Hollywood film for the sound to get to a point of silence or relative silence for a protracted period of time. (2016, p.28).

This is essentially the sound structure of the naturescape, built from sounds of the cinematic environment and allowed to grow without the interruption of music for unusually long periods of time.

It is built from material that could be construed as noise but the teleology is far from the disruption that Hainge and Hegarty identify in more purely musical forms. It is only the specificity of the examples here that differentiates from Greene's examples, where the use of the natural landscape is essentially part of the various thematic interests rather than merely the setting for drama detached from their topography and surroundings. The sound could also be said to undergo a change due to this new emphasis which, in sound and noise scholarship, is one that converts noise to a more overtly contained expression as Hainge suggests:

It is, however, impossible for the content of expression to separate itself from an immanent plane out of which it is formed and the differential process through which it comes to be - "meaningful" expression becoming such only by contracting noise into a form that no longer seems noisy. (2013, p.18).

Essentially, this chapter will detail a series of effects that, whilst created by music and music's placement, have a mechanism within the noise and sound of these films. These naturescapes play upon the diegetic spirituality of the characters

within the films, inviting the viewer not to feel as Cutter Calloway suggests of film music's general presence, but to experience a deeper knowing of the world through sound.

The filmmakers in question here - Ben Rivers, Gideon Koppel and Pat Collins - all use this varying aural structure to highlight an ineffable quality to the emotions of the characters, especially in the context of rekindled memories and longing, perhaps even nostalgia. It is worth noting that all three examples play on the blurred line between fictional film and documentary, rendering their forms already complex through using elements found in both but never becoming one more than the other. None of the examples are documentary films in the traditional sense but all effectively blur the line between fiction and reality, marking them as different in form from all of the films examined so far. This balance of form must also take into account their differing sound frameworks. In his essay on the role of time and meaning in the sound of documentary film, John Corner writes that:

Documentaries, even when fully dramatised, do not usually invite us to *immerse* ourselves in the worlds they portray in the same way that feature fiction typically does. Although their discourse may be richly imaginative, the dynamics of *understanding* something in relation to specific *realities* finally take priority, whatever the complexities and ambiguities involved and whatever the affective as well as cognitive depth of our engagement. (2015, p.135).

Equally, these films follow constructed narratives on the whole and do not, therefore, need to follow Corner's idea against potentially immersive cinematic qualities.

All three of the films subvert documentary traditions whilst still using some of their recognisable qualities, but essentially they do so through complex sound designs, especially in relation to the isolated qualities found in their sporadic use of music and the subsequent emphasis this puts upon the rural soundscape. Jeffery K.

Ruoff writes of the difference between typical audio-visual aesthetics found in documentary as compared to Hollywood cinema, pointing out an essential contrast of relationships in regards to such sound designs. He writes that "One of the major stylistic characteristics of documentaries that use sounds recorded on location is the lack of clarity of the sound track. Ambient sounds compete with dialogue in ways commonly deemed unacceptable in conventional Hollywood practice." (1992, p.221). Because of this fluctuation of form and its effects on sound, this chapter is split into a number of sections.

Firstly I will highlight the already-present naturescapes in the examples of previous chapters, in films by Béla Tarr and Andrei Tarkovsky. Again such an aspect has already been of interest to scholars but, similarly to the transcendental language that oversimplifies the scholarship of film music, it has been too readily accepted without deeper philosophical investigation. This reassessment will then highlight a need to link the philosophies of the transcendental film with that of the presence of an emphasised natural landscape. As suggested earlier, this will be found in the writing of the nineteenth-century transcendentalists who similarly evoked spiritual becoming through an emphasis on the place of nature and the natural landscape within their beliefs and ideals. By highlighting similarities with the writing of Ralph Waldo Emerson in particular, this should show the transcendental potential within the aesthetic realisation of emphasis upon the natural world and its various audio-visual qualities; that such an emphasis when recreated in a film and contrasted with a more typical audio-visual relationship raises reception questions surrounding what is being expressed.

With this mechanism set, this chapter will conclude with the in-depth analyses of three films: *sleep furiously* (2008) by Koppel, *Two Years At Sea* (2011) by Rivers and *Silence* (2012) by Collins. Koppel's and Collins' films will be analysed in conjunction with each other due to their aesthetic similarities but Rivers' film will make up the main body of analysis due to its long-form attempt at the natureescape form. With this analysis complete, this chapter will highlight both the aural potential within adhering to the very basic principles of transcendental cinema but will also finalise all avenues of potential meaning that come with using "transcendental" as a descriptor for audio-visual media. To begin, however, analysis of the aural natureescapes in the examples of the previous two chapters will raise questions surrounding the structural decisions of soundscape design and its philosophical implications.

#### Early Implications of Natureescapes in Tarkovsky and Tarr

And if music should also fail? Well, there was always silence to fall back on. For always, always and everywhere, the rest is silence. - Aldous Huxley (1960, p.320).

In *Solaris* by Tarkovsky and both *Sátántangó* and *The Turin Horse* by Tarr, their musical moments took precedence within the previous analysis. Yet this fails to give a full picture of their aural character, both of which emphasised natureescapes through the positioning of music. The role of this brief section is to show some examples of how the natureescape can work in more musically minded films and to provide further aural detail of the already-assessed transcendental examples. In doing so, the groundwork can be laid for questions surrounding what is being expressed with a heightened soundscape as opposed to moments containing musical score. It is through serendipity that the films already argued as containing

musical expressions of transcendental style also contain aural elements and sound designs that reflect a thematically similar soundscape, even building on some of the thematic strains discussed in previous chapter. This suggests that certain types of soundscape can reflect the same teleology as the musical functions within transcendental cinema; in this case reflecting the quiet difference in Tarkovsky's film and the monotonous repetition in Tarr's film.

When discussing the extenuation of time in both Tarkovsky's and Tarr's cinema, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson questions the relationship between cinematic rhythm and the role of sound in its production:

If Tarkovsky wanted to allow the "pressure of time to run through the shot" in order to create a particular rhythm, Tarr seems to be aiming for a sense of temporal limbo. The gaze of his camera is so unwavering, the experience of the present tense so heightened, that the audio-spectator's submersion into vertical temporality seems inevitable, its pulse profoundly affected by sound. (2015, p.44).

Such a style of cinema, arguably conforming to ideas of slow cinema as addressed in the previous chapter, seems to equally rely on its sound design to create this pressured sense of time. The music analysed in Tarkovsky's film does not do this but its sound design does. Tarkovsky is known as a director who would over-emphasise natural sound for a number of thematic reasons.

This would consist of running or dripping water, the wind rustling through the trees, various sounds of animals (especially the barking of dogs) and the crackling of fire. The sounds produced through water are especially prescient in *Solaris*, taking up the majority of the soundscape for the many sections that are set on Earth. The sound in the film is credited as being by Semyon Litvinov, an engineer who also worked on Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975); a film noted for the detailed meaning hidden within its soundscape. Yet the presence of Edward Artemiev as

composer, and his previously explored use of various electronic sound effects and synthesisers (including the ANS synthesiser), implies that the soundscape is a mixture of the two men's work, the boundaries between music and sound heavily blurred through most of the film outside of the use of Bach's music.

The film opens after its rendition of Bach with a naturalscape occupying the visual and sound world, detailing the lake that surrounds the main character's childhood house. Even when the camera eventually reveals Kelvin's presence – hence why the viewer is being shown these visuals – the soundscape still mixes a range of running water effects to unusual volumes and even occasionally with hints of reverb. These sounds can be seen in the context of the film's overall narrative arc which explicitly questions the presence of Kelvin's world as actually being a dreamt illusion within the sentience of another planet. When the viewer is first introduced to this concept moments before the film ends, it is through an unusual scene where it appears to be raining inside the house where Kelvin grew up. The viewer hears the sound more than they acknowledge the visual as the happening is treated as quite normal but the sound heightens an awareness of something more transcendental occurring. This circle is completed when Kelvin's emotions cause him to drop to his knees, clutching his father with a reawakened mourning for his lost wife. The film then relies on Artemiev's more electronic elements to finalise the moment of mourning and self-realisation, suggested as being beyond words.

Yet the natural soundscape heightens this moment as much as the complicated presence of Bach in the opening heightens the holy quietude of the film's first scenes. This is an argument already put forward to some extent by

Elizabeth Fairweather who reads the sound of water in *Solaris* as being an element that is “othered” by its mixing and aural processing:

In *Solaris*, water sounds are comparably filtered. Tarkovsky asked Artemyev to orchestrate natural, ambient sounds, and in response Artemyev created a collage that depends strongly on the multi-timbral combination of acoustic and synthetic sounds. Used in this manner, sound suggests the sense of "otherness" that surrounds the titular planet, but the idea is set up at the very start of the film by the foregrounding of such “earthly” sounds as the trickle of a brook, the songs of birds, the whinnies of a horse, and the barking of a dog. This emphasis on the sounds of both worlds is, in itself, suggestive of "otherness" in the filtered sounds of raindrops edited so that their echoes resemble continuous pitch sung with shifting vowels. (2012, p.42).

Through emphasising these sounds early on, Tarkovsky plays upon the contrast and even the slowness that such a sound design (and lack of scoring) provides. The fact that this explicitly connects to the narrative’s transcendental material and themes makes it a perfect, early example of how such naturescapes can potentially work.

Fairweather quotes Andrea Truppin in another useful assessment of the director’s sound design where the emphasis upon the natural soundscape of the film is even described directly as operating on a transcendental level: "Andrea Truppin argues that the privileging of ordinary sound in Tarkovsky's films operates on a transcendental level in which it surpasses logic and reason and speaks with unspoken intuition and immediacy. Meaning is generated from these sonic fingerprints not just in individual films but across the totality of Tarkovsky's output." (2012, p.35). This could be read as suggesting that the natural sounds are in fact not natural in the sense that their emphasis removes some essence of problematic questioning of authenticity, a forever vague and unobtainable goal. They obsist as in Hainge's conception of noise, balancing reality with falsity and creating an unconscious distance in traditional reception.

But it is this mixture of the ordinary and the extraordinary, using something general in such a subtly heightened way, which makes the naturescape so effective.

Even when it is at its most powerful and compelling, it is still essentially difficult to grasp that something other than a common aesthetic grounding is happening in the film. The music may heighten these moments by providing a contrast but the soundscape in itself contains its own complexities and potential thematic outcomes bringing the analysis back to Tarr. The chief purpose of sound in Tarr's films very much reflects the role of music and repetition as analysed in the previous chapter. In order to extend the cinematic experience to excruciating levels for the viewer, the sound follows the extended pathway opened up by having incredibly long shots and scenes with very few cuts.

This was already touched upon by Kulezic-Wilson in that such a decision within the visual world of the film means that the diegetic sound design has to adjust in some way to compensate for the long, winding shots. This adjustment is often a heightened form of pessimistic naturescape, one that reflects the tough life and hardship of the characters, even becoming a factor in the very reasoning behind a shot's elongation. By this, I am referring to the many perambulatory shots that occupy Tarr's films in between the long scenarios in the many rooms and bars of his worlds. These walking scenes deploy a heightened naturescape – especially with the inclusion of a strong breeze which the characters are almost always walking against – in order to justify the very logic of the scene's longevity. The sounds present within the diegesis actually show the viewer *why* the characters are walking so slowly and reflects the difficulties within their lives.

Bori suggests this to be a pivotal thematic aspect of *The Turin Horse* especially where the sounds of the wind highlight the trapped and isolated nature of the characters: "In A torinói ló (*The Turin Horse*), the wind is constant,

unflagging, like the bora, the cold north wind of the eastern Adriatic. There is nothing one can do to counter its hurricane force except close one's eyes, draw one's head in, batten down the hatches, and take cover..." (2011, p.158). This speaks suggests more than simply a diegetic realisation as it provides an equally difficult viewing experience for the audience. With only the monotonous music of Mihály Vig as a scored accompaniment, the wind becomes an ever-pervasive and uncomfortable presence to experience. It grates in the exact same way as Vig's music does and, coupled with the incredibly long shots – some of the longest Tarr ever shot – the naturalscape becomes a pessimistic aid to the cinematic stasis that simply refuses to give the viewer any instance of escape or break from the diegetic world.

As András Bálint Kovacs was quoted in the last chapter as suggesting, "Repetitive music, the constant roar of the wind and several other sounds accompany the images, creating a more lugubrious atmosphere than in any preceding Tarr film." (2013, p.90). The sound is put on an equal plain to the music in its creation of the lugubrious elongation in Tarr's most transcendental film. It could be argued that Vig's music functions in a Hegartian sense of noise, especially as its diegetic source of performed music is less problematic to tie in than a soundscape with its incredibly differing contexts. Yet with Kovacs linking the music in Tarr's films with very specific natural sounds, it can be argued that the naturalscape here is once more functioning along a parallel route to more musical forms of noise even if the discomfort - the rebellious disruption of noise as characterised by Hainge in a variety of multimedia - is still achieved through stasis.

Whilst Tarkovsky and Tarr use naturescapes and a general emphasised sound design in interesting and potentially transcendental ways, their examples only begin to hint at the potential of a full reduction of leading content and a reemphasis upon the natural sounds of a landscape within a film. As the examples later will show, containing and even restricting all such content within the diegetic realm creates a surprisingly more powerful realisation of transcendental style in film, both through the emphasised naturescape and through its own form of elongating of temporal perception. However, the emphasis and teleology of a natural soundscape must be realigned with a more optimistic philosophy to account for the change in tone of this chapter's cinematic examples. To do this, the emphasis on the aesthetics of the natural landscape, both visual and aural, must be contextualised within the philosophy and writing of the nineteenth-century transcendental movement. By doing this, not only are all potential meanings of the word “transcendental” assessed within an audio-visual aesthetic framework, but an argument can be made regarding the spiritual character that is being tapped into and expressed from the natural landscapes of the films.

#### Audio-visual Application of Emersonian Transcendentalism

In nineteenth-century America, “transcendental” became a far more specific descriptor and signifier of belief system. Thanks to writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the transcendental became associated with the movement of the transcendentalists whose ideology and philosophy was based chiefly on reconsidering man’s place in the natural landscape. As David M.

Robinson, a scholar on Emerson’s work, suggests:

Transcendentalism was thus a moment in history containing both expansive hope and a sense of strife and embattlement, and marked by emergence of new intellectual categories, new relations among persons and classes, and new ethical and political imperatives. (1999, p.13).

These new relations were for Emerson a recontextualisation of moral philosophy as seen through the prism of the natural landscape and all that was associated with it.

This brief section is here to convey the philosophy of the transcendental in this context in order to show the potential crossover between its philosophies and the readings of our audio-visual examples; a crossover whose bridge is contained within the use of the naturescape and the reasoning behind it.

Emerson famously wrote of this reemphasis on nature in his manifesto-esque work *Nature* (1836) suggesting that "Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only material, but is also the process and the result." (2008, p.7). By this, Emerson meant that the natural landscape and the ecosystem all around us was potentially always the lowest common denominator no matter what theology or philosophy attempted to cognise it. He wrote in detail of this relationship, suggesting the following:

Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us, by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? (2008, p.1).

Through taking notice of nature, Emerson seems to say that an invitation to a higher reasoning is gifted upon the transcendentalist. The likeness between this idea and the reception of the aesthetic relationships being assessed is clear. This original relation to the perceptive world is considered a more likely pathway to experiencing some (still theological) sense of the transcendental.

This relationship also reflects some essence of Kant's transcendental reasoning in its status as *a priori* or knowledge gained via nonexperiential means. In fact, it is the ultimate in *a priori* parameters of lived experience because it is highlighting the absolute basic perception of knowledge gained via non-experiential means. As Robinson writes, Emerson probably already drew this aspect from Kant, further conflating (or perhaps providing the crossover between) the different meanings of the word: "He also recognized the importance of Immanuel Kant and the German Idealist philosophical tradition to his own work and that of his contemporaries." (1999, p.19). If this final potential of the transcendental is considered as an audio-visual style or form, then all of the potential possibilities derived from using such a word can be shown to have been broached in this thesis. Hegarty writes that noise's situatedness in place becomes essential in the initial disjunction from a search for conscious meaning in listening. The Kantian elements here are touching upon both aspects of the transcendental (the perceptive and the spiritual) where the space formed through such sound allows meaning to enter *a priori*, the soundscapes here actually inviting both meaning *and* placement: "The attention that loosens listening from a search for meaning restores extra capacity for situatedness, of listener and sound, such that space is formed, audibly." (2009, p.198).

Robert D. Richardson, another scholar of Emerson's work, highlights an interesting problem when discussing Emerson, one which also relates to this area of audio-visual potential. In assessing Emerson, Richardson suggests that nature as a concept is often considered too vague by many scholars and philosophers and itself requires greater explanation and discussion. He writes the following:

Emerson's definition of nature is a broad one. Nature is the way things are. Philosophically, Emerson says, the universe is made up of nature and the soul, or nature and consciousness. Everything that is *not me* is nature; nature thus includes nature (in the common sense of the green world), art, all persons, and my own body. (1999, p.97).

How can this philosophy be applied to an audio-visual context? If we assume that “the way things are” is in some way applicable to a basic, diegetic soundworld, then the rest of Emerson’s potential philosophy fits nicely into place.

For the removal of scoring (and the subsequent emphasis this puts on the natural soundscape in the examples of the next section) highlights the “not me” aspect for the viewer. On a psychological level of sound, through experience of previous cinema, the reemphasised naturescape could be read as separating the viewer from a forced meaning for the happenings in the cinematic world, in a similar (if more optimistic and gentler) way to the subverted Brechtian alienation of the previous chapter’s scores. Emerson believes in the constitution of the universe being, in Richardson’s words, the “...nature and the soul, or nature and consciousness...”, and these two strands can be metaphorically split to be seen as a contrast in audio-visual media that uses such naturescapes. By removing scoring, this contrast is heightened and essentially only gives one of the two components of the universe in Emerson’s terms. The viewer must input more of their own unconscious reading into the viewing experience, one which initially may seem to be devoid of meaning, spiritual or otherwise, because of this very aesthetic reduction.

From this alone, the potential for applying Emersonian theories of transcendentalism to the pared down audio-visual aesthetic is clear. Richardson even expands on this idea to show a parallel to this audio-visual potential, especially if treating such theories in terms of reception. He writes that:

The most daring, and to a modern reader, the most challenging aspect of Emerson's nature, is his argument that nature teaches him to look beyond nature. To put it more carefully, he says that the beauty and interrelatedness of physical, outward nature leads him to inquire into the inner laws of nature which determine the outer appearances. (1999, p.101).

This relationship is exactly replicated in terms of audio-visual aesthetics. That an outward and seemingly normal relationship to a diegetic world (or, in Emerson's case, the actual world) can lead to higher, more transcendental questions regarding perception and spiritual placement in the world is a natural extension of Emerson's theories. In the same way, the natureescapes of these films ask the viewer to look beyond the representational qualities which they traditionally function through, suggesting through such emphasis that their presence is far more complex, especially in relation to the inexpressible elements of the characters in the film (elements which, traditionally, would have been conveyed through scoring and music's naturally ineffable potential). In the films of the following section, Emerson's ideas find a genuine aesthetic realisation in the creation of the diegetic world and in the expression of the lone individuals who usually occupy them.

Again, Richardson's summation of Emerson's belief and the logical mechanism behind it, suggests a great potential in the reading of natural soundscapes in cinema. He writes the following:

Perhaps Emerson's greatest contribution was his own account of how these two aspects of nature are interrelated. His lifelong endeavour was to show how the laws and processes of nature are part of the mind, and to work out the relation between mind and external nature. (1999, p.101).

This bridge between the inner mind and outer nature seems to be one aesthetically represented by relations to the rural world more than any other aspect of human experience. Though this marks Emerson's theories as somewhat skewed, it also explains the heightened precision with which a nineteenth-century belief system

can be applied to twenty-first-century audio-visual media. Consider the following two points raised by the sound theorist, Andrea Truppin, in relation to outward perception (when made up of the aesthetics of nature) and its ability to discuss more inner (and, therefore, transcendental) concerns in Tarkovsky's sound design.

The first point raises the gap between the sound, its source and its meaning:

In Tarkovsky's use of sound, meaning is produced as much through the synergism of narrative and formal elements, both aural and visual, as through the audience's efforts to establish coherence among these elements... In these films, the use of ambiguous sound plunges the audience into a never fully resolved struggle to believe in the diegesis, much as the films' characters struggle with their own ability to have faith. (1992, p.235).

With this point, Truppin is highlighting how the heightening of such a naturalscape (in her case, specifically the sounds of water dripping) actually becomes something for the viewer to bypass; in her own words, it requires "faith" from the viewer which mimics the thematic characteristics of the people within Tarkovsky's own diegesis.

Now consider Truppin's other point about the thematic potential within

Tarkovsky's naturalscapes:

Tarkovsky uses sound to embody this internal process by drawing a parallel between two "leaps of faith": that of accepting that a sound proves the existence of an unseen object and that believing in the existence of an invisible spiritual world... This persuasive quality allows sound to function, for Tarkovsky, as material with which to represent the numinous realm. The spiritual is mysterious, inaccessible to sensual experience. It becomes perceivable only through phenomenological representation. (1992, p.236).

In one sense, Truppin is reflecting, albeit by chance, the logic of Emerson's own belief system, or is at least suggesting the same mechanism to be responsible for the transcendental qualities in Tarkovsky's sound design. The numinous realm in Truppin's sense leads to the transcendental experience in a phenomenological sense because sound can explore the potential between the definite visual material and the qualities that the viewer will ultimately bring to the experience of viewing. Emerson found this bridge to be an essential part of his own belief which is why, as

Richardson suggests, "Nature was Emerson's starting point for a new theology."

(1999, p.103). Richardson even likens the spiritual state of Emerson to a potential reception viewpoint, where the transcendentalist's sense of perception becomes so heightened as to gain access to higher, inexpressible truths. He writes that:

When we are in this state of heightened awareness, of enthusiasm, of ecstasy, we come as close to the secret heart of nature as we can get. The important thing about your enthusiasm for nature - or for Emerson - is the enthusiasm in you. This is the highest and most valuable teaching of that nature we all agree we cannot do without. (1999, p.104).

Again there is a great deal to unpack in how this potentially reads in an audio-visual sense.

As stated throughout this thesis, many of the films will fail to create the right effect if the viewer is unwilling to accept the requirements put to them by the film and director. This is an interesting point in the context of Marion Leonard and Robert Strachan's summation of Chion's arguments where such natural sound sits within the cinematic frame. It is also worth noting that Leonard and Strachan are discussing two of the three films to be analysed in the next section and that the point raised is initially contrary to the questioning of the aesthetics that are discussed in their essay and in this chapter. They suggest that:

Traditionally, the use of environmental sound has been seen as a sonic background. For Michel Chion, ambient (or territory) sound "envelopes a scene, inhabits the space without raising the question of the location of its specific source(s) in the image". (2015, p.166).

Emersonian spiritualism requires the devotee to bring their own desire for such a heightened awareness which hints at the potential placebo that both the transcendental theology and the transcendental cinematic style work in terms of reception.

Whereas I will not comment on the theological aspect of this, in terms of cinema this is entirely true as the viewer of any film will, in some sense, give in to

the fictionalised elements of the story in order to gain some experience from it, spiritual or otherwise. In cinematic aesthetics, this heightened awareness is only achieved when the viewer is forced to work in some way, meaning closer attention is paid to the viewing experience if only because a film is doing so much to reduce its presence and its ability to convey to the viewer a very strict meaning. In the previous chapter, this relationship was taken advantage of as the music's repetition forced a subverted alienation. As the examples of the next section show, however, such an adaptation of Emersonian thinking leads to a far gentler form of transcendental audio-visual style.

### Transcendental Naturescapes

The three films to be discussed in the context of transcendental naturescapes require some introduction as to their general idiosyncrasies in order to understand both their inclusion in the analysis and why such analysis reveals transcendental aesthetics. All three films – *sleep furiously*, *Two Years At Sea* and *Silence* – are relatively recent and made in the digital age. Yet the three films all deal with some pre-digital ideas through analogue aesthetics, with *sleep furiously* and *Two Years At Sea* shot on old film stock rather than digital, and *Silence* including a variety of archive analogue material, visually and aurally. Another aspect of all three films, as stated earlier, is that they blur the line between fiction and documentary. It is an intriguing problem in that none conform to either form's parameters completely. This mixture has interesting effects upon the use of sound in all of the films, but especially in *Two Years At Sea*. For the analysis required here, the films and their portrayal of a constructed reality will be considered in constant flux.

The films all deal with some sense of rural isolation or landscape, allowing the naturalscape to be a natural part of (and perhaps even a requirement of) their aesthetic construction. Yet sound is more than the ambient effect described by Chion in the previous section as the blurred line between (some sense of) reality and fiction opens up a great deal of transcendental potential specifically through a mechanism that reflects the theological teleology of Emerson's belief system. *Silence* especially, in part deducible from its title alone, is *about* naturalscapes and specifically how the desire to capture it by a character in the diegesis leads to an incredibly effective expression of ineffable nostalgia.

The analysis here is split into two sections. The first is dealing with *Silence* and *sleep furiously*, analysed together because they still use music interspersed throughout. This means that the transcendental effect is again far more momentary as in the previously analysed films than seen from the perspective of the *gesamtkunstwerk* and is not quite as pure in its affective creation as the second example. The second section deals with *Two Years At Sea* quite specifically because it follows Emersonian ideas all of the way through its running time, reducing more typical cinematic aesthetics to a bare minimum with music only playing a negligible role in the aural design of the film. Through both of these analyses, a sense of how the naturalscape – questioned through Emersonian philosophy, Schraderian audio-visual aesthetics and even the blurred line between documentary and fiction – should highlight how emphasis upon the natural landscape can lead to such expressions of ineffable notions.

### *Silence and sleep furiously*

Pairing *Silence* and *sleep furiously* together may at first seem an unusual proposition considering the difference in their structures. Yet this pairing has already been part of the analysis of sound design in Leonard and Strachan's paper which suggests that there is something that links both the films and their respective sound design. Collins' *Silence* is a digital film that focuses on a real person, Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, who lives in the bustling city of Berlin. He is a sound-recordingist who ventures back to his native Ireland on a recording job which is apparently an attempt to capture some form of "silence" on audio. Already, the transcendental possibilities within this idea should be clear with hindsight of Emerson's transcendentalist ideas. Making a number of attempts at recording in the wilderness and in a differing range of landscapes, he finds such "silence" to be ultimately impossible to capture.

However, through the journey and because of the impossibility of the task, what Eoghan is looking for changes as he gets closer and closer to his old family home on Tory Island. The search for "silence" eventually becomes a search for the memory of a home long since left, a stark contrast to his current location in Berlin. The soundscape of both of these environments comes to comment on the mental state of the man, the natuescape especially becoming entwined with a sense of nostalgia that grows as he gets further and further away from the urban and closer to his abandoned rural home. *Silence* is essentially a film *about* sound and, more importantly, how that sound can signify things beyond basic communicative expression. It also links the journey towards these sounds with the journey towards a very personal sense of self-exploration and breaks down the assumptions

surrounding memories of home as well as urban/rural divides (especially in terms of aesthetics).

On the other hand, Koppel's *sleep furiously* is in many ways a nondiegetic, visual version of the narrative of *Silence*, where the director visits his own community in rural Wales in order to document the lives and ways of living that he remembers and cherishes in his memory. By capturing the day-to-day life of the village (including the life of his mother), Koppel expresses his own ineffable affection for the place that he left behind, very much in the same way as Eoghan does. How both films use the naturescape to access such ineffable content is essentially through transcendental audio-visual ideas.

The naturescapes in both films are interspersed with various uses of music, and, therefore, require some further contextualisation. Because *Silence* is about the philosophical nature of sound, it is mostly built up of differing naturescapes. In many ways, *Silence* is the only film to be assessed that is about the notion of spiritual potential found within the action of concentrated sound. The film's narrative is permeated by a rural/urban divide, created the character's journey and by the aesthetics which Collins initially uses to frame the film. Collins deliberately portrays the reasoning for the character's leaving of his new home in Berlin through sound which highlights an aesthetic underpinning of the film's thematic content. In scenes early within the film, Eoghan is seen recording several audio sounds in the city before telling his partner that he is going away to Ireland on the recording job.

When this scene occurs, the sound presents the possibility of an anti-transcendental potential by drowning out what the couple discuss through a range

of urban sounds, specifically that of cars on the road and a train passing underneath the bridge on which they stand. In the traditional context of film sound, this is unusual as it is assumed that the dialogue would be of relevance and necessary for the viewer to hear. But this aesthetic actually examines the man's ulterior motive for his trip, rendering his half-heard words exactly as hollow as the reasons he is giving to his partner. It could be seen as tapping into a sense of noise, distorting and muddying information in the way described by Hainge earlier on, but a closer reading suggests it is actually getting closer to the truth behind the character's actions, the sound belying his need to succumb to his nostalgia rather than simply being an uncomfortable subversion of sound hierarchies *à la* Chion and Claudia Gorbman. The scene is presented in one static take, similar to that found in films of the slow cinema movement, clearly attempting to remove the cinematic editorial hand in a similar fashion to the character removing the presence of people in his sound recordings.

Leonard and Strachan hint at the film's potential likeness to the slow cinema movement, writing that "The very fact that sections without dialogue or music are long (and frequent) by normative cinematic standards engenders an experience in which the environmental soundscape is inescapable." (2015, p.170). As already stated, the likeness between the desired effects of the sound design in these films and the music of the previous section's films is clear in that both rely on an increased length of visual shot and respond accordingly with interesting and equally extenuated aural designs. Where these examples differ is in their optimism. They are far easier to experience than the worlds created in Tarr's films which trap the viewer in the more typically transcendental narratives of hardship. Here, the

narratives are not about hardship but about other potentially transcendental ideas such as memory, nostalgia and loss. Only when Eohgan ventures to Ireland does *Silence* begin to access transcendental realms. In between long shots of the character walking out into the landscape and recording, diegetic music plays from his car stereo system (although mixed to nondiegetic levels so that one song especially, Rory Gallagher's *I Fall Apart*, can act as the title music over the film's opening credits). This provides a grammatical punctuation for the scenes which I argue here as being potentially transcendental.

*Silence's* structure is built from Eohgan's largely failed attempts to record the sounds of differing landscapes, often following the structure of showing the character entering a landscape, setting up his recording equipment and then showing the recording to be disrupted in some way (almost always by the presence of some man-made source) in order to follow the disruption and meander into side-narratives following the characters and the (sometimes genuine) people that he meets on his travels. In using this as a basic narrative structure, Collins sets up a potential audio-visual structure which often results in a moment of personal realisation for the character. It is in these moments where the audio reflects such a realisation – that he is equally in search of his ineffable memories of place – where the transcendental potential is realised. This is aside from the fact that the journeys to such places are interspersed with car stereo music, further contrasting their silence. On the character's third attempt to record sound, this is exemplified perfectly.

Collins frames the sequence with very few cuts, creating several long shots of the landscape and the character acting within them. The natuescape of the film

is at first typically presented, the sound corresponding to the visuals at least in some basic sense or matching. It seems to at first follow Rick Altman's ideas discussing Joseph P. Maxfield's idea that sound can carry its thematic information within itself, devoid of confirmation of the visual content of the film. He writes the following:

According to the theory elaborated by Maxfield and followed by many early sound men, the sound track must carry, independently from the image, all the information necessary to reconstruct the "real" space of the scene (that is, the one represented by the image). In this approach we easily recognize the technique of a representational system with a decade's experience in creating sound space. (1992, p.55).

Altman writes further of sound being used as the "point-of-intersection" where "...sound thus constitutes the perfect interpellation, for it inserts us into the narrative at the very intersection of two spaces which the image alone is incapable of linking, thus giving us the sensation of controlling the relationship between those spaces." (1992, p.61). Collins deliberately plays upon this and almost uniquely subverts it through using the visual to shift the emphasis on how the sound is being interpreted by both the viewer and the main character.<sup>71</sup>

As Eohgan sets up his apparatus in several scenes (presented with minimal cuts and with very little aesthetic hand of the director on show), the soundscape is more emphasised as it becomes clear that the film is presenting the sound from his perspective (through the emphasised listening the headphones that the character is wearing). With this shift in perspective, there is transcendental potential present, finally activated when the character arrives home. The viewer, by the time the film

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<sup>71</sup> Two other films that deal with the shifting of sound perception to some extent are Brian De Palma's *Blow Out* (1981) and Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012) which are good examples of this subversion, albeit for more pulp and suspense effects rather than transcendental effects.

has reached its final scenes of Eohagn's return home, should be used to reading the soundscape of the film.

It forces such a reading by rarely leading the viewer in scenes which are of clear importance to the narrative. As Holly Rogers suggests, there is potential in such a mechanism within the sound design through a forced concentration of listening leading to ambient soundscapes gaining wider thematic (and eventually transcendental) meaning: "Such concentrated listening allows real-world, ambient sound to become a signifier of emotional and thematic intent in a way similar to a nondiegetic score." (2015, p.17). But in this sequence, and in every sequence when the character tries to find silence, the relationship between his listening and the viewer's listening is repeatedly shared and built on. It follows Greene's formulation of cinematic silence especially whereby "...what we talk about, in screen media terms, is relative silence, which is determined in relation to sound that comes before or after silence." (2016, p.27). This is where the film's line between being fictional and real becomes more blurred, referring once again to the unusual, problematic position and refusal to conform to categorisation.

The transcendental moments of the film occur within these segments when the viewer is quietly forced into sharing the experience of the character's recording attempts. There is no music and very few cuts, creating a sense of audio-visual ambience. With the temporal effects of this reduction being a slowing of the viewing experience, the disruption of this by human forces in the film (in this particular instance quite literally by a man walking into the shot and scenario) coerces the viewer into asking what was happening moments before and why it was still in some way effective when there was very little aesthetically to interpret.

The absence is a ploy that opens up suggestive readings of the impossibility of a total perceptive reduction of aesthetics, in cinema and in lived experience.

Consider Chion's notion of why certain "silent" moments are used in the grounding of cinematic worlds, but also consider them in relation to this scene:

Every place has its own unique silence, and it is for this reason that for sound recording on exterior locations, in a studio, or in an auditorium, care is taken to record several seconds of the "silence" specific to that place. This ambient silence can be used later if needed behind dialogue, and will create the desired feeling that the space of the action is temporarily silent. (1994, p.57).

In Chion's terms, the naturescape is acknowledged as some form of silence in that it has no overt or obvious role to play for the viewer (though clearly *does* play several vital roles in the creation of the cinematic world).

Collins' film examines this relationship and, because the actual narrative of the film is dealing with this as its chief diegetic concept, its examination accesses the potentially ineffable qualities that such a relationship means for the main character. The naturescape, which in the film varies between the sounds of wildlife, the sounds of wind (almost always present), rain, rivers and the sea, continually hints towards Eohagn's inner nostalgia, something which meta-diegetic music could potentially also relate but in far less subtle and purely transcendental ways. It reflects Richardson's view of Emerson's philosophy when he writes that "He understood nature to be a process rather than a thing." (1999, p.102). Collins presents sound not as some background element to be forgotten about once the landscape or location of a scene is set but a constant process that gains accumulative meaning both as individual scenes continue (when the recording is interrupted or spoiled by some manmade factor) and as the film continues as a whole.

Chion further highlights what this cinematic quietude really means, suggesting the scope for imbuing such a typical and necessary audio-visual presence with more functions and meaning:

However, the impression of silence in a film scene does not simply come from an absence of noise. It can only be produced as a result of context and preparation. The simplest of cases consists in preceding it with a noise-filled sequence. So silence is never a neutral emptiness. (1994, p.57).

Chion recognises the lack of neutrality in such naturescapes, where they raise questions about the positioning of perspective that the viewer is experiencing and what that perspective suggests if considered as functioning outside of the grounding of place and location. As Leonard and Strachan suggest, this particular form of naturescape in *Silence* "...is used as both an experiential trigger and an invocation to reflect upon issues such as memory, loss and identity." (2015, p.168). All of these elements would be incredibly difficult to evoke with such equal subtlety through music. These scenes of recording in *Silence* work around the problems of addressing memory by using the most basic and ubiquitous element of sound film – the background sound of the diegetic world – as an opening into an inner realm which is arguably impossible to convey fully. The contrast, therefore, between the vast landscapes of Ireland and the microcosm of the character's memory evokes a startling but idiosyncratically transcendental revelation, in both the theological and Emersonian sense.

*sleep furiously* does something slightly different to *Silence* in that its own naturescape is often perceived through a contrast built with an overt musical score. Whereas *Silence* is explicitly narrative driven, *sleep furiously* is far more cyclic and more typical in terms of documentary. The film follows the community of a Welsh village where the director charts one year of life there. This ranges from life on the

local sheep farms, the monthly trips of the local travelling library (a man in a van who loans out books to the locals), and the quiet fight against the closure of a local school which is treated as the centre of the community. The name of the film, though a reference to a quote by Noam Chomsky, could equally be referring to the sense of frustration surrounding the structure of the community; that its draw as an isolated place is equally what will potentially undermine and eventually be its downfall. Koppel could have opted for a soundtrack equal to that of *Silence* as the film is shot largely in rural locations, but instead he opts for a musical score by Aphex Twin to play alongside the naturescapes. The score is almost entirely piano led only using pre-existing electronic tracks by Aphex Twin in two moments (a sequence revolving around a celebration at night and in the film's closing credits). The music, whilst working through a slightly differing mechanism to *Silence*, still retains some Emersonian transcendental aesthetics, and this element is arguably more overt because its fragmentary quality is so contrasted.

With its position being more obviously that of a documentary, *sleep furiously* has the further context of such a form's relationship(s) with music. Corner writes the following of how music (in its scored position) sits within the documentary form as whole:

Music performs some of the referential and formal tasks that it does in fictional narratives but its play upon and beneath the record of the real, as an agency both of expansion and focus, gives its use in documentary accounts a distinctive role. (2015, p.135).

The music of Aphex Twin fulfils this role in the sense that its position is subverted and becomes considered "underneath" in terms of the film's soundscape. Through this, the moments that use music (which seem to be mostly interludes of landscape throughout the film) automatically act more to highlight the absence of music

directly after it has stopped than to highlight its own presence when played. It need not be suggested that what is highlighted after it has ceased playing is the natural soundscape of the film.

Leonard and Strachan argue, in terms of *sleep furiously* and *Silence*, that “...soundscape is clearly used in order to invite reflection upon the spatial, aesthetic and thematic concerns of a given work in parity with the visual.” (2015, p.168). Consider then Anahid Kassabian’s summation of their argument in which “...the soundtrack both heightens realism while at the same time creates an uncanny distancing effect for listener/viewers.” (2015, p.195). Describing it as some form of distancing effect (or at least describing the formers’ reading as concluding upon an effect of estrangement) seems too strong in the context of these films, especially in regards to *sleep furiously*, but this conveyance does rightly mirror the mechanism of the previous chapter. For what essentially happens is that the music pushes the spectator away from the viewing experience, allowing it to guide some reading but, through abrupt cuts, then allowing this false sense of leading to fall away, asking the viewer to consider the absence of music in a more heightened fashion. This occurs in the film a number of times, using music as a framing for the naturescape.

A piece of landscape in the film is continually returned to, usually to show the effects of the changing seasons. The same tree is referred to several times as well as various pathways that lead up the hills surrounding it. Early into the film, this pathway is shown to have meaning for the director and the film’s chief figure of interest, the director’s mother. This is because the director’s father is buried on the hillside and the first sequence shows his mother going to place a rock upon his

grave. Music played on a piano, though differing in every segment, seems to reoccur when this landscape comes into the focus and a sequence later on uses music to frame its naturesscape in an incredibly effective, transcendental way. The segment is filmed in high winter, the landscape now covered in snow. It opens with the same tree in a snowy landscape, cutting to distant shots of the general hillside – the only difference between this section and earlier ones being the inclusion of someone sledging down the hillside. When the scene cuts from the main tree to the far away hillside, the music begins to play.

The shot is held, showing someone far away – almost definitely the director's mother – walking once again along the hillside to the grave (though the grave is not shown in this case, instead ultimately ending on a town meeting to decide the fate of the school which suggests an overt symbolism at play). The piano music comes in after the shot has cut between the tree and the wide-shot, playing over the few fragments of the distant view until cutting again as the camera shows a close-up of the mother walking with her dog up the hill. For such a short segment, the music seems oddly placed at first. In typical cinematic language, it would have started as soon as the winter segment began and played through the whole sequence up until the film moved into the town meeting, creating a montage for the winter setting. But the music does not do this: it breathes into the segment but cuts without any real logic.

The next section after the music stops is overtly out of the diegesis in many regards with spots of snow on the lens breaking any sense of illusion, but its soundscape is even more heightened. With another cut, the visual is back to the tree with less snow now around it. Time has passed and in this moment there is a

sense of the profound, the music creating a drop in the reception with no place for the viewer to go except to read further into the image. It is telling that music is then used to connect this nature-scape to the following scene. The drop needs this reconnection to continue further into the narrative following the closure of the school but the moment before gains a sense of the profound created explicitly through absence. The absence is, of course, naturally highlighted by the lone presence of the nature-scape in the aural realm.

Though music like this occurs throughout the film, it seems to be set within the soundtrack as a marker to highlight the soundscape around it. Only twice does it move away from this ideal – once when the diegetic music of a Welsh choir is intercut with scenes of the landscape, and the earlier mentioned electronic music in a night segment – and so it must be considered that the placement of the music is not as a bridge between cuts or as some guide for the viewer. Instead, it is clear that the music is there to build a contrast in order to emphasise the quietude that heightens its absence. By creating such a relationship, the nature-scapes that directly follow take on a transcendental quality, as if the director has asked the viewer to consider something that is beyond words or verbal expression. If the music of Aphex Twin can be considered as Koppel asking the viewer to simply *watch*, the scenes with the emphasised nature-scapes are the moments that the director is really asking the viewer to *consider*.

It should be noted that, because of the lack of music (and often visual thematic material to guide specific pathways of meaning too), Koppel is not essentially suggesting “This is...” with such a ploy. This is the chief point in analysing the film: that the nature-scape is still an abstract form in that the viewer can piece

together information to build some logical relationship between what is happening in the visual realm and what is happening in the aural realm. Ultimately, such a use of sound plays on the very basic principle that Chion suggested soundscapes to function through. He writes the following:

For another thing, when the spectator hears so-called realistic sound, he is not in a position to compare it with the real sound he might hear if he were standing in that actual place. Rather, in order to judge its "truth," the spectator refers to his memory of this type of sound, a memory resynthesized from data that are not solely acoustical, and that is itself influenced by films. (1994, p.108).

How fitting it is for Chion to consider such an aspect of cinema, dealing with the ineffable qualities of memory. Whilst this ultimately explains why directors have used such an emphasis on naturescapes in their films, either when about or produced through their relationship with the memory of a landscape, the naturescape can function in even more reduced ways in order to fully convey the Emersonian transcendental.

Essentially, it is this reduction in the typical nature of the aural cinematic world that leads further into transcendental realms even when such a reduction is still bookended in some way by the presence of music. This is the key point of the analysis thus far: that the reduction has been segmented and inconsistently applied in a similar way to the segmented use of music in Chapters 1 and 2. To assess this ultimate reduction in typical audio-visual aesthetics and to highlight the multifaceted role of naturescapes, this chapter will conclude with an in-depth assessment of the film that uses the naturescape most effectively and without the overt need of grammatical uses of music, *Two Years At Sea*.

### Two Years At Sea

Out of the three films assessed here, *Two Years At Sea* is the most complex and contains the purest Emersonian essence of the naturescape. Its complexity derives from a heightened idea seen also in *Silence*, where the form fluctuates almost imperceptibly between documentary and fiction. Rivers' ethnographic-based film practice is often built on such a blurring, where he uses numerous real elements – real people, real dwellings and real behaviours – to tell a more fictionalised story. The soundscapes of his films follow suit, rarely containing music that does not have some diegetic grounding or positioning though, because of the communities and individuals he sometimes portrays, music can be ramshackle or absent entirely. Rivers mostly relies on the sounds of the (usually rural) landscapes. Though he often travels far to lesser developed parts of the world in order to capture a certain sense of landscape – recalling Pier Paolo Pasolini's logic in initially desiring to film *The Gospel According To St. Matthew* in Palestine – *Two Years At Sea* is filmed in the vast landscapes of Scotland and draws upon the wealth of rural and meteorological sounds to express more inner, transcendental notions and ideas.

The film is arguably an ethnographic document of a hermit who lives in an isolated house in the woods of a Scottish mountain side. Jake Williams (who plays himself), has supposedly spent “two years at sea” saving money in order to become a hermit who subsists by the land. The film is built from showing Jake's daily rituals, whether it be simple tasks such as washing and cooking, to more interesting habits such as taking long walks (for both pleasure and to gather wood) or going fishing on a homemade raft. Alongside this daily sense of ritual, Rivers documents the landscape and abode that Jake lives in, hinting at more esoteric elements being

present around him, manifesting most obviously in a scene of literal transcendentalism where a caravan that Jake is sleeping in floats to the top of a tree. The film concludes with Jake watching a fireside slowly burn itself out before it fades to black. All the scenes in question use natural sound and naturescapes to add ineffable meaning to the seemingly simple moments and, therefore, require analysis in order to show how the naturescape can evoke more transcendental ideas.

In a scene late into the film, Jake decides to go fishing. So far, the character has been followed going on pleasurable walks into the forest and the landscape, Rivers' camera deliberately emphasising Jake's contentment in doing nothing. He has no real ties to any sort of system of work other than his own subsistence which is in itself an idea similar to those of Thoreau's where the whole model of living was remoulded by being dependant and sustainable within rural landscapes. The scene is relatively easy to relate but the affect is difficult to convey and understand. Jake is seen putting together his homemade raft made of wood and small plastic barrels. He has what appears to be a makeshift fishing rod though Rivers makes sure that we see it as a pointless presence, an excuse for doing nothing. There are minimal cuts as Jake is seen finishing adjustments to the raft before putting it onto the lake, embarking on it and floating slowly into the middle of the water. The scene then refuses to cut as the raft moves achingly slowly from one end of the lake to the other. Rivers' lack of cutting in this incredibly long scene recalls many of the aesthetic aspects of slow cinema but the key element here is what effect this has on the naturescape and the shifts it has on the thematic elements of the scene.

Chion relates the effects of static long takes (or the lack of “temporal... vectorization”) have on the soundworld, writing:

First case: *the image itself has no temporal animation or vectorization in itself*. This is the case for a static shot, or one whose movement consists only of a general fluctuating, with no indication of possible resolution - for example, rippling water. In this instance, sound can bring the image into a temporality that it introduces entirely on its own. (1994, p.14).

In some ways, the scene is a subtle take on this idea where the sound is latched onto by the viewer in search of some explanation. The sound here, as in much of the film, is incredibly low in volume and derived from the actual recorded sound of the moment. There is no leading within this sound, no perceivable repetition of melody that would come with a musical score. The fact that the camera is locked off some distance from the source of the sound means that the whole image – through lack of cutting and its naturescape – gradually gains a sense of the profound, even if that transcendental element is ultimately deriving from the character’s clear sense of freedom and pleasure away from any sort of manmade system outside of his own.

As the raft drifts, the splash of water from Jake’s occasional movements can be briefly heard alongside some bird song, but the naturescape is essentially reduced even further as an aesthetic element. There is no forced emphasis or heightening of any aspect of the film as it sits in a position of ambience. Leonard and Strachan pointed to a similar potential when discussing *Silence* and *sleep furiously* where:

... ambient sound at times works as an indicator of realism, providing an (albeit constructed) sense of actuality; at others, it is used to evoke a sense of the uncanny or to create a distancing effect for the viewer. (2015, p.167).

With a context of ambience, it could be construed that this is working typically in the background, in a role more akin to the ideas of documentary sound earlier.

Even though it is less augmented than the ideas surrounding Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*, for example, its desire towards a more extended affect means it requires some context here even if the naturescapes overtly reject musical form and are still tied to their existence as sound rather than music.

Usefully Hainge has tied this idea into conceptual noise, writing of the underlying difference between recording noise for documentary techniques and recording noise for more affective goals:

As we have noted previously, however, *musique concrete* does not content itself only with recording all possible sounds in the interests of some kind of anthropological or documentary function, it also arranges these sounds in (non-natural or non-realistic) relation to each other. This, indeed, is what converts sound into music, for again, in all music from all times and traditions, the common denominator that unites all musical expression is that sound is organised via a particular kind of expressive event, a musical act. (2013, p.253).

The sound of interest here blurs the line between both of these potentials. It is a use of documentary elements (the natural sounds) yet mixed and contextualised in such a way as to heighten its affective response. There are a number of theoretical differences of course, one of these being how a piece of *musique concrète* would earnestly fit natural sounds around an evidently musical framework, removing it entirely from its source of sound (or at least aiming to break its tie to more overt sound contexts). The sound here is instead heightened as both a source and an inner world of a character through an avoidance of musical presence, framework or form which is so pivotal to *musique concrète*.

Rivers' use of sound in this scene, a use that sometimes comes close to a genuine cinematic silence because of its low volume and unobtrusive content, arguably creates a sense of distancing but *through* its role as an indicator of attempted reality. Rivers' sound aesthetic is as close to the genuine sound of the landscape of the film as a cinematic example can be. By quietly forcing the viewer

to accept that the scenario is going to be pared down, the viewer's input to it must be far greater than it would be if Rivers was cutting the scene, similarly to how the reception of noise is often intellectualised (in itself a reversal of Hegarty's value judgement) to account for its subversion of reception norms as suggested earlier.

Through such a distancing effect, the viewer is free to read the scene in far more detailed ways, recognising the link between the character's moment of contentment and his place in the landscape. The link is relatively clear between the absence of almost all aesthetic content and the character's ease of living. It should be stated that Rivers' aesthetic has other aspects to contend with in regards to editorial hand at least. Though working prominently in the age of digital filmmaking, Rivers' work stands out due to being filmed on 16mm film stock which is then hand processed. The resulting effect is something that is more artisan in its visual qualities but one that presents a clear distancing effect of its own from any potential drama that the director shoots through aspects such as scratches or natural imperfections on the celluloid image.

Again, combining his choice for ambient soundscapes with this aesthetic raises some intriguing transcendental questions, especially surrounding the blurring of the line between documentary and fiction. Rogers has discussed this at length, in particular regards to what effect it has previously had upon the use of sound and music. She writes the following:

A great deal of critical attention has been paid to the fragile boundaries between fiction and nonfiction cinema. But attempts to identify a clear and consistent documentary aesthetic have often been thwarted by the porous nature of the borders that distinguish films that document real-world events from those whose imagined landscapes promise fictional escapism... (2015, p.1).

She later writes what effect this has had on the use of music which is the most relevant aspect to discuss in relation to *Two Years At Sea*. She poses the question of what role music actually has in a documentary format, concluding that “For many filmmakers, the answer is simple: it has no role.” (2015, p.2). Rivers' film conforms with this to some degree but then subverts it through the relationships found in its naturescape. As Rogers concludes, “...once music is taken into account, in other words, the radical and much theorised divide between documentary and fiction film needs to be revisited.” (2015, p.15). How does Rivers' soundscape fit within these schemata?

Though several very short snippets of music do appear, it is the previously mentioned naturescape that builds towards the film's most transcendental moments. Music appears in a handful of car journeys and also in an intriguing scene in a forest walk. But this music, with hindsight of Rivers' prelude film to *Two Years At Sea*, *This Is My Land*, is actually music produced by Jake himself.<sup>72</sup> This hindsight may not be afforded to the casual viewer but knowledge of this renders the music, in spite of its scored position, still part of the diegesis and, therefore, an anomaly in the context of the film which does, in the majority, use the naturescape for most of the soundworld.

The viewer must look to the constant but subtle presence of the naturescape and are at the very least affected more by its presence than by the few snippets of music. The relationship between this aesthetic, its transcendental teleology and the extenuation of cinematic time as experienced by the viewer

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<sup>72</sup> *This Is My Land* actually shows him producing the unusual music from a homemade instrument.

cannot be understated. Chion has suggested this to be one potential effect of a more soundscape-reliant film, writing a detailed analysis as follows:

Nevertheless it can have on the dramatic perception of time exactly the same effect of concentrating attention and making us sensitive to the smallest quivering on the screen, as does the tremolo in the orchestra. Sound editors and mixers frequently do utilize such nocturnal ambient sounds, and parcel out the effect like orchestra conductors, by their choices of certain sound-effects recordings and the ways they blend these to create an overall sound. (1994, p.21).

The relationship in Rivers' film can be summarised as follows: that by reducing all typical audio-visual aesthetic modes, the viewer becomes more sensitive to any change in the scenario, perhaps even anticipating and reading into scenes that, with the presence of music, would have been largely cast aside or treated as extraneous to the required narrative interaction. Even considering *Two Years At Sea* within such a framework, it still comes out as a quietly subversive use of aesthetics. This is almost always down to the contrast between the sometimes fantastical qualities in the visual, the documentary nature of the film's general thematic content, and how its soundscape playfully conforms to Ruoff's ideas of traditional documentary sound mentioned earlier and Rogers' ideas of typical sound hierarchies in documentary cinema. It is simply a more reduced vision of these frameworks.

The most overt example of this comes in the film's only obvious moment of fiction, the contrast heightened because of Rivers' breaking out of the documentary form through the obvious flexibility of his narrative world. Jake has been shown to enjoy pottering about in a caravan next to his house. It sits next to the edge of the woodland which was shown earlier as his source of firewood and is a constant presence throughout the film. Jake is shown to fall asleep in the caravan before it begins to float to the top of the trees. The way it is shot suggests that

nothing particularly unusual is happening because Rivers deliberately opens the frame of the shot by not showing the camera's lower vision. Only as the shot continues (and with no cuts) does the viewer realise that the caravan is floating up into the air. Rivers only cuts when the caravan is sat at the top of the tree, showing the inside with its new, higher view as Jake awakens. This is clearly only a logistical cut, unsurprising for a film with a relatively low budget. Jake opens the door and sees that he is inexplicably now looking out over the forest yet does not react to this as a fantastical event. If anything, it's a mere curiosity rather than something beyond reason. The way the naturescape works hints at the potentially transcendental nature of this scene, both in terms of affect and symbolism.

The latter point is obvious when considering the literal transcending of a character whose peace of mind could easily be read as being reflected through this moment. But it is in the contrast between sound and vision where some essence of the type of transcendental affect, expressed as being present throughout this thesis, resides. For, unlike in a typical scenario where such a moment would be accompanied by some elaborate sound effect, a lesser version of "Mickey Mousing", Rivers chooses to shoot the moment in the tradition of the documentary sound hierarchy. The naturescape is composed of an incredibly low volume soundworld with particular details of the breeze through the trees, hinting that what is happening, if it *is* happening or caused by anything within the film, is caused by the trees themselves.

By not elaborating on the fact that something fantastical is happening within the narrative, Rivers arguably avoids the accusation levelled at some forms of attempted transcendental style where the resulting effect is grounded through

an attempt at visualisation, rendering it immanent and ultimately a signifier rather than a purely expressed transcendental moment. This scene balances the fantastical nature through an aesthetic framework that cannot help but render what is happening as some uncanny moment beyond understanding.

The viewer knows something extraordinary is happening on screen yet it is clear that something else is being expressed. With the aesthetics built around the naturescape (and a general presentation of the natural environment in the visuals) it seems that *Two Years At Sea* is equally about a reengagement with natural landscapes and places. In the context of Emerson's theories, this automatically aligns it with his view of transcendental in the theological sense and in the very basis of his belief in gaining closer proximity to the transcendent itself. As Richardson writes of Emerson's beliefs, "Explicit or implicit in nearly everything Emerson wrote is the conviction that nature bats last, that nature is the law, the final word, the supreme court." (1999, p.97). For an aesthetic entirely in the framework of the Schraderian model of transcendental, however, the final scene from *Two Years At Sea* presents perhaps the ultimate example of a reductionist audio-visual ideal. Because of its use of the naturescape, its complete removal of any sort of editing and its position as the final moment of contentment for the character in the film, the scene presents the most effective example of any sort of audio-visual context of cinematic transcendental style.

This final shot is at night and shows Jake lit up by a fireside. Though the fire is not shown initially, the soundscape and the flickering of the light upon Jake's face makes the viewer aware of the character's position. The scene is shot with the least amount of editorial intonation. The only lighting provided for the shot is the natural

light provided by the fire (which even then fails to light up anything outside of Jake's face), the sound is exactly "as it is" so to speak, and the scenario only ends when the natural element providing the light has genuinely extinguished creating a natural fade. In this moment, the very structure of the scene is explicitly transcendental in the reductionist sense and the viewer should begin to feel aware that, as the scene progresses and nothing is happening (in basic terms), they are watching the film in the sense that they are being removed slowly from the processes of the narrative world. It is a stark irony that it is the gradual failing of one of these processes that the screen eventually fades to black. Leaving the visual editing in terms of cutting to the unpredictable reactions of a natural phenomena is in itself an unusual ploy that is rife with potential meaning, in terms of reading the scene and in terms of its relation to the diegesis.

Donnelly has argued that the perception of sound in the most basic terms of its task has been to uphold and solidify the narrative reality of any given film. He writes that:

Some theorize that we perceive the diegetic world on-screen as an unproblematic reality (on some level), and sound is one of the principle elements that convinces us that the space on-screen is real. After all, one might argue that most sounds in films exist essentially to bolster or "make real" the images we see on-screen and the surrounding world we imagine. (2014, p.127).

Rivers is one of the few filmmakers who reduces sound back to a basic "what is there" aesthetic, at least outside of pure documentary-making practice. In fact, it could be argued that this aspect is the chief element brought over from documentary practice and that, with a generally reduced aesthetic pace and narrative, the reduced sound is essentially following the editing reduction. In other words it is still aiding some guise of cinematic reality. But the final scene is more

than the ultimate entailing of audio-visual reduction: it is the most strangely optimistic of transcendental scenes. For, by extending the temporal elements of the scene through the natural sound and temporality, Rivers expresses the character's inner contentment.

Jake is happy to let the fire go down in exactly the same way that he was happy to lie on his raft earlier and not catch any fish. It is in the same relaxed vein as Jake not being too perplexed by his caravan taking him to the top of a tree. Now he is content to simply let all light fade from his reality, to let the fire burn out (even though the film has repeatedly shown that he is surrounded by forest and regularly collects wood). The scene is about acceptance in the most basic sense but expressed through the prism of a genuine and optimistic contentment. The fact that this happens with no scoring or musical guidance, no dialogue (the film is dialogue free) or even cutting on Rivers' part defines this moment as being the most Schraderian form of transcendental style.

Before concluding the analysis of the transcendental elements of the naturescape, this scene should be contextualised with another scene from the previous chapter. In Tarr's *The Turin Horse*, a scene exactly the same in terms of structure and aesthetics occurs where the main character is shown to be watching a fire in his hut, the dying fire gradually fading the film out naturally. Like *Two Years At Sea*, there is no musical accompaniment, no cutting (as typical for Tarr) and little guidance for the viewer to interpret the scene as it stands. Like the rest of Tarr's oeuvre, *The Turin Horse's* final scene is extended to excruciating levels in order to trap the viewer in the character's hardship-ridden world. However, unlike *Two Years At Sea*, *The Turin Horse* is not optimistic. As quoted in the previous chapter,

the fire going out actually represents the light of whole the world coming to an end, the most pessimistic of conceivable cinematic endings. So what is different between the two films that enables their similar endings – whilst both expressing transcendental feelings – to be so different? In essence, both of the films use the naturescape in differing ways and this is where their character varies.

The naturescape of *The Turin Horse* traps the characters gradually, its emphasised presence leading to their isolation in their hut, watching their last fire diminish to nothing. In *Two Years At Sea*, the naturescape has functioned to emphasise the character's inner contentment rather than torture, even if the viewer is expected to sit through an equally extended and perhaps difficult cinematic aesthetic. The fact that virtually the same visual and narrative scenario can create two very differing affective responses through the nuanced differences in context of the films' naturescape, suggests an even greater potential in the use of natural sound to create transcendental expressions than this chapter can ultimately detail. These differences in aesthetics hint towards such further potential and perhaps ultimately suggests an infinite array of aesthetic choices in sound design, where the most typical and largely ubiquitous of elements in filmmaking today are no longer treated as the bolstering of reality but as a vital tool in the creation and expression of the ineffable.

Beginning with ideas of Emersonian transcendentalism, serendipity was again found in highlighting yet another aspect of the word's multifaceted nature. The line between documentary film and fictional cinema has been blurred in several examples, allowing more complex questions about source and meaning to arise when acknowledging the reduction of typical audio-visual aesthetics. Consider

Fairweather's quote on Tarkovsky's use of sound, quoted in the Introduction as evidence of transcendental language being used in audio-visual analysis. She writes that "Perhaps more than any other director, Tarkovsky consistently uses sound in this way, as a means of transcending whatever mundane reality is suggested by his visual imagery." (2012, p.43). With the analysis of this chapter concluded, how does this idea – something which is generally accepted as a norm in audio-visual analysis – now appear?

Altman hinted at such questions far before Fairweather's essay, writing "As a consummate sound designer and technician, Tarkovsky continually challenges his audience to make meaning(s) out of sound." (1992, p.176). The sound in Tarkovsky's films is not of the sort of reality that exists in Rivers' film but is it really "transcending" some "mundane reality"? The naturescape of these films use ideas of noise, as seen in the contexts presented by Hegarty and Hainge, but through the subversive idea of not seeming at first to distort the reception potential of the work. Instead, through quietude of aesthetic reduction, natural sound becomes a blank canvas that eventually forces the viewer to question what they are being presented with or, more accurately, why the real world seems so bare. Its reduction makes it ironically more noticeable.

In essence, what this chapter has shown is that, by emphasising and allowing a naturescape to flourish and be noticed without forcing it to be a background over which music masks and takes for granted its presence, ineffable elements and expressions derived from the characters become perceivable. With examining another meaning of transcendental - through Emerson and the serendipity of a parallel ideology derived from a reemphasis upon landscape - the

naturescapes presented and analysed here show a wealth of potential transcendental expressions, the inner thoughts and feelings of characters whose state is almost always beyond words and where silence becomes the ultimate symbol of an almost holy presence. It is not the mundane reality of the everyday countryside that is presented but inner reactions that reflect off the prominence of *that reality*. In other words, it is a powerful, audio-visual transcendental expression of outer lands reflecting inner worlds.

## **Conclusions:**

### **Implications of Sound and Music for**

#### **Transcendental Cinematic Style**

Throughout this thesis there has been a central question: how does sound and music fit within or against previous notions of transcendental style in cinema? By addressing this question, several others have been broached regarding the effectiveness of earlier analytical models, in particular the role of language in general audio-visual analysis and how the style can be assessed in an age of multimedia. To finalise the study, this concluding chapter will assess the effects of my audio-visual research upon two specific areas. In highlighting these areas, my thesis will be left open for further application in terms of both the practicalities of aural choices in new cinema and in the language with which we analyse audio-visuality more generally.

The first aspect to assess is how the findings of the previous chapters recontextualise the language used in certain analyses of sound and music in cinema. The studies here have highlighted the natural, inexplicable sense of the profound invoked in many studies of audio-visual media, arguably shown in the Introduction to have been brought over from the musicological discourse of previous eras. In regards to this analysis, the teleology implied via the descriptive language - derived from various synonymic implications of the transcendental - has been shown as problematic rather than properly contextualised in its use. The first section of this chapter will reiterate the problems of these assumptions and use the

arguments and findings of the case-study analyses to suggest several potential alternatives to such descriptors. In so doing, the assumptions made through such language can be considered more questionable, especially as this language is being applied to differing and varying aesthetics. With the transcendental style more acknowledged as an audio-visual form, the language also gains more requirements and the need for a more coherent contextualisation.

The second section of this chapter highlights further questions regarding the future of denoting cinema as transcendental or being made within a transcendental style. As we have seen, the fluctuating nature of its meaning has rendered many examples problematic. This section contains several areas of transcendental potential in audio-visual form, realised by a number of directors working today. Considering the work of these directors allows us to think more broadly about new aesthetic forms such as slow cinema and the differentiation of style in the digital age. As a result, the necessity of the descriptor, its potential relevance today, and its effectiveness as a label can all be reconsidered.

#### Questions Surrounding the Language of Audio-Visual Studies

If the various aesthetics assessed throughout this thesis are considered to have some of the potential attributes of the transcendental, what does this suggest about the future use of the descriptor in analysis? Even when considering the case studies discussed here, there seems to be little in the way of aesthetic relationships between films. In fact, some appear to be working in direct opposition to one another, Pier Paolo Pasolini's use of lavish, pre-existent African music in *The Gospel According To St. Matthew* compared with the sparse sound design and natural

soundscapes of Ben Rivers' *Two Years At Sea* for example. It is, therefore, worth taking the term back once again to its basic formulation in order to see if the gap between these many aesthetic and thematic aspects can be reduced. Sheila J. Nayar has been a reoccurring presence throughout this thesis because of both her excellent summation of transcendental ideals and her refreshing (if broad) view of general theological aesthetics in cinema.

Early in her work she questions the very basics of the theological implications of the transcendental when considered in the context of a created artefact rather than as a reception feeling (an aspect we will come to shortly). She highlights the following in relation to the writing of Saad-Zoy Souria:

Souria distinguishes between *multiple* levels of existence in the artistic realm: physical, phenomenal, "thing-ness," and transcendent - with the transcendent accounting for the mystical aura that envelops a work of art because of that work's capacity to evoke ideas and feelings which thereby give it a special depth. (2012, p.41).

Though there is a specificity implied by the "transcendent" and its presence (rather than the more vague "transcendental"), there is also a clear symbiotic relationship with the aesthetic creation of the artwork in question. It is brought into existence through a gap between the film and the viewer's reception. It is this gap that has been touched upon throughout, denoted through descriptions that imply some sense of work within the viewing experience for the audience at varying levels, from simply the addition of more questioning elements (in our case studies, the unusual choices of pre-existing music) to the harsh, minimalistic elements that elongate and draw out the perception of the viewing experience itself.

The sense of mysticism, tempting in any discussion of the transcendental, has been avoided within my analysis because of the intangible qualities it has imbued previous analyses by Paul Schrader, Cutter Callaway and others. Also, it has

been avoided because its sense of intangibility has been used to explain away the effects discussed in previous audio-visual analysis with little explanation or argument.<sup>73</sup> Essentially, this ineffability has often been the reasoning behind the unqualified use of the transcendental as a description as seen in earlier quoted work by K.J. Donnelly and Elizabeth Fairweather among others (in the Introduction and Chapter 1), where its presence is used to denote some profound sense of reception in spite of focussing upon aesthetic mechanisms. Its use suggests the reference to something not actually inherent in the work (even in examples where transcendental aspects are arguably expressed) but rather something that arises in affective responses to that work.

When "transcendental" arose as a description in Schrader's 1972 work, what exactly was being referred to? I believe that it is the teleological reception of the work which ties the descriptor to highly differing aesthetics, and much of the analysis here supports this. But, while this sense of the profound seems to be specific - at least in the natural inability to be properly conveyed because the reaction is often beyond words - the methods and routes that lead to this effect are broad. I have only provided four potential routes of no doubt many - the use of two different forms of pre-existent music in Chapters 1 and 2, the use of repetitive musical scoring in Chapter 3 and the re-emphasis on the natural soundscape via a reduction of musical content in Chapter 4 - perhaps even neglecting methods that may go completely against all previous delineations of the transcendental style suggested by Schrader, Susan Sontag and others. But this section is concerned with

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<sup>73</sup> I return once again in particular to Callaway's suggestion of how music creates a general affect in audiences which is largely argued as being derived from his specific reception through the dogmatic system of his own religious beliefs. The can be applied to Schrader too though it is far less evident in his analysis.

the effect that this research could have on the very language of analysis and is driven by the following conundrum: does the likeness between the overall reception of the transcendental moment(s) merit the use of the description in analysis when the pathways leading to such effects have been shown to be so drastically varied?

This brings us to a prominent idea in the work of Sontag, one of the key figures in the early addressing of potential transcendental style and spiritual reception of cinema. She highlights the potential importance of reception but specifically through a sense of becoming lost in a work's diegesis:

The effect of the spectator's being aware of the form is to elongate or to retard the emotions. For, to the extent that we are conscious of form in a work of art, we become somewhat detached; our emotions do not respond in the same way as they do in real life. Awareness of form does two things simultaneously: it gives a sensuous pleasure independent of the "content," and it invites the use of intelligence. (1967, p.179).

There seems to be a divide suggested within Sontag's summation but this is the relationship that has been argued for within each example of this thesis. It is also worth noting in relation to academic analysis that the transcendental, when invoked in scholarly contexts (and I must include myself within that), is automatically formalised due to the viewing position of the analyst as opposed to that of the casual viewer. The transcendental reception likely did occur when the analysts watched these and other films, but the point to raise here is that the inexpressible moment is problematic when using the description in an academic setting without due context.

The many routes provided by the aesthetic mechanisms analysed highlight the fallacy in using the term. Its implication, when not properly contextualised as a reception stance, is that it suggests some aesthetic trend when its emphasis is

overtly upon reception potential rather than a single aesthetic framework operable from the point of creation. Here I have shown the multitude of aesthetic ideals that could potentially come within the description. Although the transcendental is the destination, it is seemingly reached via a large variety of aesthetic routes.

Therefore, it must surely be questionable to use the term in such a way, whether describing films, film music and any sort of audio-visual relationship, when it is clear that the parameters that can potentially fit under the term are in a constant state of flux.

One of the elements that could be considered a flaw in my own analysis is the fragmented nature of the moments that I attribute with a sense of the transcendental. All previous analyses of transcendental style, or even theological cinema as a whole, discuss their subjects through an overall aesthetic ideal. Scenes and scenarios are part of a larger framework that though left unstated seem to provide a sense of the profound from the full filmic experience and not from just a handful of scenes as in Schrader and Sontag, all of the way through to more modern scholars such as Callaway and Nayar. I believe that this shift from the *gesamtkunstwerk* model to emphasis upon individual moments has been caused by my formulating of the transcendental in an audio-visual context which automatically brings in specificity in regards to its overall creation of affect. In spite of some examples also relying on the accumulation of meaning, there is still an argument to be made regarding the manifestation of the transcendental being momentary, where earlier sound and musical examples in the first two chapters in particular only gained their transcendental qualities via a wider context of previous uses and the presence of other music. The entirety of these films, whilst aiding

such an aesthetic, is not made up of such transcendental elements, the cinematic form instead resembling a process. This process has no definitive end but contains the potential to realise transcendental style through affect as has been argued through studying the cinema of Pasolini, Andrei Tarkovsky and Béla Tarr.

This raises a further question that is too big to answer fully in this thesis: what are the alternatives for describing and assessing such moments? If the music/audio-visual relationships in a film somehow convey something to an audience that is beyond words, how can one overcome the inherent barriers and paradoxes within the language of representation when analysing and discussing these moments? Though this requires a great deal of depth and perhaps even further research, some ideas can at the least be broached in regards to alternatives. The first is that of consideration of context for the use of "transcendental" as a descriptor. If the use of it can be extemporised and signalled through various thematic analyses before such a word comes into play, this could render its use far less problematic. This could be achieved with an overt emphasis upon the aesthetic relationships being represented as a journey towards its potential meaning and thematic content, the transcendental becoming the goal in the contextualised journey which is stated as beyond the full representation of language.

Almost always, the transcendental character is used to "set the scene" in previous analyses and colours everything after through association rather than through argument. The transcendental is placed as a prism of descriptive language through which the subsequent analysis is seen. Such a structure automatically implies that the content of the word is far from the fluctuating anomaly that this

thesis has gone to great lengths to portray. By opening with suggestions of a work possessing such transcendental qualities, it implies that it is transcendental *because of the aesthetic analysis that follows*.<sup>74</sup> This paradigm cannot work as it fixes the transcendental as a solid aesthetic point without context, rather than portraying it as a reception potential connected by varying aesthetic relationships. As the analysis of sound and music has taken so long to establish itself as a justified form of critique, the assessment of something *in between* the reception of the work and the aesthetics of the work can hardly have been of urgent importance when neither of those aspects was treated with relevance in earlier analytical contexts.

Yet it is the consideration of this gap, and the intangibility of its overall reception teleology, that must be signalled if such future analysis is not to be undermined by the use (and perhaps even invocation) of the word and its multitudinous ineffability. At the same time, this argument should not be considered as the typical disjuncture sometimes associated with even the most traditional of audio-visual analyses (and practice). Michel Chion often spoke of the connotations of such gaps. In all of the examples, there has been a final absence of construed meaning caused by the sound and music, requiring input from the viewer (even sometimes in the most basic and simple of terms): whether this gap is caused by the disjuncture created through pre-existent music as in Pasolini's and Tarkovsky's films, repetitive scoring that refuses to prescribe meaning in Tarr's films

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<sup>74</sup> A number of essays cited in the Introduction by the likes of Donnelly, Fairweather and others often use transcendental descriptors early on within their writing but then continue with their analysis with little transcendental context. It is a natural method of portraying the affect created by their examples but is almost always disconnected from the arguments of their case-study analyses.

or the removal of musical content entirely in Rivers', Gideon Koppel's and Pat Collins' films.

Chion in particular highlights one such gap, or in Callaway's terms an invitation, in his own analysis where "Audiovisual counterpoint will be noticed only if it sets up an opposition between sound and image on a precise point of meaning." (1994, p.38). The sense of opposition that haunts such theories all the way back to the original and problematic conception of such a counterpoint, as discussed in the Introduction, is present but should not be confused with the invitation or gap being presented here. More important is the effect it has on the working relationship between the viewer and the film. If the transcendental aesthetic functioned in the same way as such theories of counterpoint (or vertical montage for that matter) then it would certainly not need the level of context that I am arguing for here which requires not simply a relationship of any form with the viewer but one that specifically forces the viewer into a working and even uncomfortable relationship with the film.

The paradox suggested here resembles those assessed recently by Donnelly, a potential process which he argues is "occulted" and, therefore, labels as "occult aesthetics":

My starting point is that aesthetics *are* occult. The way they work is far from being simple, logical, or easily understood, and, particularly in the case of film, they strive to conceal their processes and foster the impression that something else is going on instead. (2014, p.3).

This element of distraction that Donnelly highlights feels in some ways similar to the transcendental invitation. It is a moving of emphasis away from the aesthetic object towards something else, namely the inexpressible transcendental element. In Donnelly's conception this is simply an avoidance of the recognition of the film

itself which is apparently cloaked, the language of analysis then attempting to remove this cloaking or at least acknowledge that it is there. There is a sense that the coming of digital technology also figures into the writer's analysis, suggesting some links within digital media that further heightens this cloaking.

If aesthetics are striving to both convey and to hide *the process of that conveyance* then it is the academic's role to reassess such a conveyance as those aesthetics will always be essential to audio-visual analysis in some way. But if the language they are ultimately using and portraying as a framework for such aesthetics *aids that very same process of occulting*, of hiding the process by which the aesthetics lead to reception, then the hidden nature of the audio-visual form as a whole will continue to elude reasonable analysis and such assessment will inevitably be rendered as problematic. The emphasis must be moved towards the reception and the invitation that influences it. If the destination is assumed and unqualified by the use of transcendental language within the close reading of filmic texts, then the analytical journey towards it is arguably undermined through such assumptions too.

#### Questions Surrounding the Criteria and Practical Future of Transcendental Style

The research of this thesis has clear implications for questioning the language of audio-visual analysis as a whole, but what are the questions raised for the practical production of audio-visual media? By asking this simple question, a further point is also raised: namely what use, if any, does the descriptor of transcendental cinema have in the digital age? This section will assess these two points, with the former

essentially leading the latter. To begin, it is worth returning to an idea explored in Chapter 4, the use of silence and what this means to the cinematic medium.

Nayar writes usefully on this subject, building on Schrader's arguments of cinematic stasis:

Indeed, when mapped against the transcendently styled films, what this immediately brings to the fore is the transcendental film's reliance on *silence* no less than stasis. (2012, p.108).

As already suggested in the previous analysis of *Two Years At Sea, Silence and sleep furiously*, silence is not to be literally interpreted here as a total and complete lack of sound but quite specifically as an absence of scored music as Ed Hughes has argued, using Claudia Gorbman's theory of "nondiegetic silence" and "diegetic musical silence" and linking the ubiquity of such potential to the coming of sound technology:

The aural complexity (the simultaneous delivery of a range of musical and non-musical elements) made possible through contemporary technology is both a fascinating and troublesome aspect of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century narrative films. Particularly notable is the widespread exclusion of significant silence, whether literal through muting of soundtrack, or ambient, meaning the aural presence of natural sound. (2007, p.89).

Modern cinema in its more experimental and less commercialised form has reacted to the increase in aesthetic spectacle of popular cinema and has arguably begun to follow the route to more transcendental ideals.

As stated at the beginning of this thesis, this is a style study and yet genre has also suggested itself in regards to cinema being conjoined by parameters. The analysis in the previous chapters has shown that genre would, however, be a flawed and inaccurate way to perceive all of the films mentioned as the mechanisms with which the transcendental style has been achieved has been different in every case. The connecting factor is not fully contained within the films

but interconnected to audience reading and interpretation. It would be inaccurate to link the aesthetics of Pasolini's *The Gospel According To. St. Matthew* and Tarkovsky's *Solaris* simply because their transcendental reception has been argued as similar.<sup>75</sup> There is, therefore, no solid potential for a so-called "transcendental genre."

For a modern film to be considered within a transcendental style, its context within the wider leading aesthetic spectacle often means that it has to reduce the aesthetic (in the Schraderian sense) surprisingly little by comparison to pre-digital cinema.<sup>76</sup> As Schrader himself suggested recently in a talk on the style in the modern day "It's more powerful to be slow now... because everything is moving so fast." (2017). Music can be reduced in the examples that follow with little or no ripples of shock caused by such a choice because so many modern, less commercial directors are also making this choice as the examples of this section show. The reduction in such scored soundtracks has almost become a marker for a film going against commercial forms of soundscape and musical choices.

Alongside Tarr, Rivers and the other directors analysed, modern directors in this less commercialised form of the medium (and on a global scale) can be seen to build upon and normalise this idea of reduction in the musical aspects of a film. The mechanisms and styles analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, of elongating the experience

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<sup>75</sup> This point is worth stating more forcefully because the films are linked by an initial theoretical mechanism of pre-existing musical use. The fact that their narrative "genres" are incredibly different should alone give warning as to the fallacies of linking these films into some sort of genre; the reception and the mechanism is what links them in Chapters 1 and 2, not the overall films themselves.

<sup>76</sup> Though an arena for the debate regarding analogue vs. digital in filmmaking could be broached, it is of little importance as the aesthetics still lead to the required reception. With the arguments surrounding slow cinema in Chapters 3 and 4, further evidence is provided that, in spite of the various changes brought about by digital cinema potentially negating transcendental ideals generally, in the hands of the right director, its own facets (such as the possibility of longer scenarios) has equally proved fruitful for the transcendental style.

of the film through grating musical repetition and unnervingly sparse soundscapes, dominate the award-winning strand of cinema of this less commercialised arena, perhaps proving Schrader to be in some ways correct in regards to the ultimate role of music in such cinematic styles. Filmmakers such as Michael Haneke, Lav Diaz, Pedro Costa and Michelangelo Frammartino all reduce the nondiegetic elements of musical score to the sort of levels seen in the films of the previous chapter.<sup>77</sup>

Frammartino's film *Le Quattro Volte* (2010) is similar in aims and aesthetics to the films of Chapter 4, *Two Years At Sea* in particular, that follows natural and organic elements in their day-to-day living. The soundtrack conforms to its reduced visual aesthetic again akin to slow cinema and built via a natureescape. Though the film has a score by Paolo Benvenuti, Benvenuti is also the film's chief sound editor which explains the organic mixture of forms.

In terms of Schrader's "coda music" - the use of fragments of pre-existing music in a similar recontextualisation to the examples from Chapters 1 and 2 - is especially perceivable in Haneke's filmmaking, where music is itself a thematic strain and the director, who is openly well-read in musicology (especially the work of Theodor Adorno), uses such structuring recontextualisation to address particular themes. For example, the opening scene of his 1997 film *Funny Games* cuts abruptly from the diegetic presentation of Mozart to a sourceless loud mix of heavy metal in the form of *Hellraiser* by Naked City.<sup>78</sup> This musical disjuncture, similar in

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<sup>77</sup> Nondiegetic as a term is used here in its basic sense and every aspect from this previously uncontested level in cinema's sound hierarchy is removed. Such terms have, of course, become problematic themselves in recent years. See Anahid Kassabian's chapter "The End of Diegesis As We Know It?" in *The Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics* (2015) or Ben Winters' essay "The Non-diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space" (2010) in the *Music and Letters* journal for more detail.

<sup>78</sup> *The Piano Teacher* (2001) is another film that has examples of this that use a variety of different styles of music.

fashion to Tarkovsky's use of pre-existent music mixed with the discomfort created by the scores in Tarr's films, is one of a number of effects that alienates the viewer from the experience, allowing the harrowing nature of the film's narrative of mental and physical torture to create several moments of release (as well as a stark implication of the viewer's desire to watch the film to the unfolding horror it presents).<sup>79</sup> This may not be the sort of revelation previously discussed by Schrader but the mechanism is incredibly effective and is just as powerful even if not especially spiritual in character.

At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum, Diaz and Costa, both of whom are associated with the slow cinema movement, remove all leading musical elements to extenuate the passing of time in their long-take films such as *Norte, The End Of History* (2014) and *Colossal Youth* (2006), allowing access to transcendental ideals through the forced concentration of typically harsh, sparse narratives (and through the same mechanisms of films analysed in Chapters 3 and 4). Costa's film is somewhat of an urban equivalent to Rivers' film that reflects the reduced architectural designs of the film's spaces.<sup>80</sup>

Of these modern directors harnessing the techniques of the transcendental style, the most overt are the French brothers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. All but one of their films up to 2011 is entirely devoid of any musical scoring, with the one film that does use scoring (*The Kid With A Bike*, 2011), still conforming almost explicitly to the Schardarian coda music form (with the repetitive use of an excerpt

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<sup>79</sup> Other techniques in *Funny Games* include fourth wall breaks by the characters, implicating the viewer in the violence through their very experience of (and the choice to experience) the film.

<sup>80</sup> These spaces are new-build blocks with little defining features other than their enormous size; they are devoid of human augmentation and, therefore, the sound design is reduced to reflect the coldness of the space in which the characters live.

from Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No.5 Op. 73*). This poses a further intriguing problem in that their work is still mostly shot on film in the analogue tradition of previous intellectual cinema whilst mostly being made in the digital age. They have resisted the ease that digital cinema could provide though have also rejected its potential to increase such transcendental elements through the extenuation of length and slowness. The digital revolution has arguably allowed slow cinema to arise as discussed in Chapter 3 even though many examples here were made before digital technology was commercially available.

The coming of digital media and technology has arguably allowed the linking of works, showing previously idiosyncratic creators to no longer stand alone due to the reduction of cost in making longer, slower cinematic forms. Perhaps the slowness emphasised in the last two chapters is not as strongly linked to the style as first considered, with particular regards to music. Even Tarr's examples were all shot on film and his films are far more extenuated and reduced than most forms of digital cinema in spite of the ease for such extenuation when shooting with digital cameras. His work is a forerunner to the digital examples of the following decade. As Lev Manovich wrote, digital production changed the form in most drastic of ways:

The challenge which digital media poses to cinema extends far beyond the issue of narrative. Digital media redefines the very identity of cinema. (1995, p.1)

This shift also renders the position of analogue filmmakers as increasingly rebellious, even when their films seem to tie in with some sense of formalism. With the Dardennes' success at film festivals being consistent, especially at the Cannes Film Festival, it could be argued that their formalising of the more reduced aesthetic form associated with the transcendental paved the way for its adoption in

the modern cinematic realm.<sup>81</sup> The reduced aesthetic is the dominant mode for modern cinema made for the art-house with musical scores being abandoned and only occasionally replaced by the use of pre-existing music (popular or art music). It could, therefore, be argued that the practical and critical application of the transcendental style has already happened before the resituating of it in a more audio-emphasised framework.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide further confirmation of this as the examples analysed were all made more recently (and after the second wave of audio-visual analysis typified by Gorbman, Caryl Flinn, Kathryn Kalinak and others assessed in the Introduction). Whether citing the influence of the filmmakers that Schrader assessed in his work - Robert Bresson, Yasujiro Ozu and Carl T. Dreyer - or perhaps even having considered the text as whole, some of his principle ideas have found their way into the parameters of this form of cinema today. Even if Schrader's problematic dismissal of the audio-visual nature of cinema is at the heart of the questions that have been posed in this thesis, the potential aural framework in his ideas has been more explored and more imbued within the practicalities of filmmaking than in academic contexts. If one aspect has been explored in parallel with his work in modern cinema, it is the aural potential within his ideas of reduction rather than the visual parameters he originally set out.

It could be argued that the amalgamating of the transcendental style with some sort of recognisable art cinema aesthetic was a natural outcome considering the proliferation of the style's total opposite in many examples of popular

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<sup>81</sup> Every film made by the Dardennes brothers since their 1999 film *Rosetta* has been nominated for the *Palme d'Or* or some other award at the festival with various wins.

cinema.<sup>82</sup> Where the style moves to from this point could be the direction explored in the first two analytical chapters: the complex use of pre-existing music, not as some form of coda refrain (as already suggested as being partly present in films by the likes of the Dardennes Brothers) but as a transcendental disjoint caused by the thematic implications produced through carefully chosen and contextualised use.

There is also the potential to produce musical scores of original content that somehow tap into this same invitation, perhaps through the referencing of cultural material through quotation or by harnessing the transcendental nature of music itself whilst resisting attempts to allow such musical scoring to lead the immanent interpretation of narrative. How scores could do this, however, is so open to analysis and argument that only its potential can be suggested here. However, the thematic impetus outlined throughout this thesis can act as some form of groundwork, both for recognising musical practices that already attempted to create such an invitation, and setting out future aesthetic paradigms for scores to experiment within.

Essentially these are all areas that have potential for further exploration, both practically and theoretically. With this potential clearly in reach, at the least on a theoretical level, it is then pertinent to ask what the merit and the point of a label such as transcendental style really is. The split in this thesis has been one highlighting several binaries; the recontextualised and the reduced aesthetic, the Schraderian and the anti-Schraderian, the abundant and the sparse. Like Schrader's analysis, my application of transcendental style has been retroactively formed from an already-existing set of parameters. Though it has been suggested that Schrader's

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<sup>82</sup> The transcendental style today can be seen as reactionary.

ideas have been taken on board in some way today, perhaps even accidentally, it is worth noting that few (if any) of the films have been knowingly made with such a label in mind. How, therefore, does this augment the potential accuracy and effectiveness of the term when applied to cinema that, by all accounts, *could* have openly used Schraderian parameters in the making of films? The main point is that, combined with aesthetic choices that are reactionary to the digital age of filmmaking - influenced by television, video games and a huge variety of hyperactive multimedia - the transcendental style has so far occurred naturally and with little overt reference to the style's genesis or theory.

Perhaps such an outcome could render the term redundant in that analysis has been so far unnecessary to produce further examples of this style of cinema. This raises the question of its usefulness as a term though it is normal for such terminology to be of more use to academia than to the industry. Perhaps transcendental style as a whole can be considered, in its inception and in its future analysis, as a form of contextualised hindsight functioning in the way that new genre formulations arise but with an explicit emphasis on the effects of the parameters set as only a part of the form.

The last aspect to note is in regards to Schrader himself who suggested via the social media platform of Facebook that he was considering the publication of a second volume of analysis on transcendental cinema with an emphasis on films made after his first volume was published (2017). A new edition is due to be printed in 2018 by the University of California Press though only with a new introduction by Schrader rather than a completely new examination of the style as a whole. His recent comments suggest a number of intriguing points and positions

that highlight the original necessity for this thesis. He posed the question of where such a style sits today and then, on Facebook, opened it out to public comments. The chief implication of the passing of time between the digital age and his work being, in his view, to find films that have been made since which still fit within his original parameters of reduction. The question highlights a lack of evolution in thought in regards to the new audio-visuality of the medium, where progression has only come from new work fitting older models rather than seeking to at least question how such models sit today in the twenty-first century with all of its technological and analytical progressions in regards to the consumption of cinema.

To further the point, Schrader has this year revisited the text for a number of events. He previewed a new introduction to his work at the *Opening Frames: Cinema and Transcendence* conference organised by a number of film departments and even a theological department (Ryerson University and the IMAGO organisation). Schrader was the keynote speaker (his speech being a summation of this new introduction) with a variety of other more academic speakers whilst a separate filmed question & answer session was uploaded online with Joseph G. Kickasola in May 2017. Various interesting points were raised at this recorded session. When asked what has happened in between the publishing of his book and today, Schrader suggested the following:

What happened to Transcendental Style? Well Gilles Deleuze happened, then Andrei Tarkovsky happened and then slow cinema happened. (2017).

His reference to Deleuze is the theorisation of the time-image, though he's unsure whether the work of Tarkovsky and slow cinema generally really fits into his own mould of spirituality.

The mention of Deleuze is worth briefly investigating as the concept of the time-image has been mentioned several times in this thesis. Deleuze finalised his thoughts on this evolution of cinematic impetus in *Cinema II* (1985), writing that:

Time as progression derives from the movement-image or from successive shots. But time as unity or as totality depends on montage which still relates it back to movement or to the succession of shots. This is why the movement-image is fundamentally linked to an indirect representation of time, and does not give us a direct presentation of it, that is, does not give us a time-image. The only direct presentation, then, appears in music. But in modern cinema, by contrast, the time-image is no longer empirical, nor metaphysical; it is "transcendental" in the sense that Kant gives this word: time is out of joint and presents itself in the pure state. The time-image does not imply the absence of movement (even though it often includes its increased scarcity) but it implies the reversal of the subordination; it is no longer time which is subordinate to movement; it is movement which subordinates itself to time. It is no longer time which derives from movement, from its norm and its corrected aberrations; it is movement as false movement, as aberrant movement which now depends on time. The time-image has become direct, just as time has discovered new aspects, as movement has become aberrant in essence and not by accident, as montage has taken on a new sense, and as a so-called modern cinema has been constituted post-war. However close its relations with classical cinema, modern cinema asks the question: what are the new forces at work in the image, and the new signs invading the screen? (2013, p.271).

There is a great deal to unpack here but several relevant points post-Schrader are defined. The first is how, even when time (or slowness of some form) was present in movement-image-orientated cinema, it was still at the mercy of movement techniques (in this case, montage). Of all of the forms that Deleuze mentions as bypassing this to express a direct sense of time, music is poignantly what he suggests. The second interesting point is that Deleuze actually labels time-image-orientated cinema as actually being "transcendental" yet, even more interestingly, suggests this specifically to be in the Kantian sense of the word. This highlights the link suggested earlier in the Introduction whereby there actually is a crossover between the meanings of the word and its potential application. Here, the link between the slowness of the time-image and the direct relation to (ineffable) knowledge - that obtained without experiential reasoning - is made, only missing the potential spiritual character of that knowledge which Schrader, Callaway and

others define. And finally Deleuze highlights the questions raised in modern cinema, the "forces at work" in the actual aesthetics. Bringing these points together marks out exactly why Schrader sees Deleuze as a pivotal moment after his own theorisation and why he is still relevant to this thesis.

Music when mentioned, however, is not treated with the same sense of questioning by Schrader but instead in exactly the way it was in 1972. He suggests that "The same holds true with music. The simplest and most effective way to dictate a viewer's response is underscoring... There is very little underscoring. Or often if there is, it's inappropriate." (2017). The latter point is of note as it briefly touches upon the suggestions of Chapters 1 and 2 though without any sort of detail in regards to what is appropriate or inappropriate in terms of music. More telling is that at the least, he has acknowledged that the removal of scoring has wider aural effects on a film's use of sound:

...heightened sound, the wind is too loud... It starts when you remove underscore. The moment you remove underscoring, they're having to figure out what their emotions should be. (2017).

This was the argument that underpinned Chapter 4, and Schrader, with some prompting from Kickasola, mentioned the sound of wind several times, often as an element that aids the "duration" of a film (the elongating process).

However, in the time that has passed, very little seems to have been acknowledged about the musical or aural potential of the transcendental style. The removal of music is still an aspect "at the buffet" of aesthetic choices, to use Schrader's phrase from his talk, that filmmakers can pick and choose from when seeking a more spiritual style or sense of cinema. The key aspect to note is that, even in 2017, the style is still simply not considered from an aural angle or point of

view and with no speakers from any audio-visual departments at the conference.

New material, if considered under the banner of transcendental style in some way, is denoted as such because of the parameters being brought forward, not from opening out or questioning the nature of such parameters.

With consideration as to how sound and music has changed since 1972 in cinema - in its use, its production and its academic assessment and analysis - this must surely show an unresolved blind spot with the style being considered almost in its entirety through visual and thematic heavy departments rather than from scholars of an audio-visual angle. The effects of technology on new forms could have multiple effects on transcendental style - in aural and visual contexts, some of which have already been suggested in Chapters 3 and 4 - but the main point to make is that, either way, the transcendental has been augmented by these new technologies in the cinematic form even if subsequent analysis avoids addressing it. As Schrader himself said this year, however, "I think the confinement of the box of the theatre is good for Transcendental Style." (2017), suggesting that new media, with its flexibility in where, when and how it is viewed will still struggle to attain the reception of the style. Sometimes this new technology does allow it to flourish as in the forms argued as slow cinema (by Diaz and Costa as mentioned earlier) but does at other times hamper it (at least in popular cinema with the increase in musical leading and rapid editing).

Writers such as Nayar, Callaway and many others mentioned in this thesis highlight just how essential the acknowledgement of music is to some sense of the transcendental being properly contextualised though this rarely figures such effects of technology. The negation of musical analysis through the inability to denote fully

the centre of musical affect renders the style in the past tense, in an older and arguably more problematic mode of film criticism that needs audio-visibility to evolve and progress further, technologically influenced or otherwise. Though this has been addressed in Chapter 3 especially, there is still more to cover in regards to the transcendental potential found in new media, if such a potential exists and can be theorised at all.

If works produced after the period of Schrader's writing are to be ultimately argued effectively as being made within such a style, then the new evolutions and cinematic frameworks that followed must be taken into account. If the *Opening Frames* conference and the *Rethinking Transcendental Style* conference from the year before has shown anything, it is that transcendental style, even forty-five years after its initial inception, has never really moved on from the visual heavy emphasis that undermined so many of its essential and poignant arguments.<sup>83</sup> By complying earnestly with the original parameters, the conference highlights the necessity of this thesis: its necessity in questioning the transcendental language of audio-visual scholarship, in assessing the practical nature of film music and sound design, and in evaluating the critical cinematic discourse that originally coined the phrase in the first instance.

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<sup>83</sup> Schrader first considered revisiting his work when asked to give a keynote at the *Rethinking Transcendental Style* conference organised by Kickasola in 2016.

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## Filmography

*A Man Escaped (Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut,*

1956) - Robert Bresson

*Accattone (1961) - Pier Paolo Pasolini*

*The Gospel According To St. Matthew (Il vangelo secondo Matteo, 1964) - Pier*

Paolo Pasolini

*Solaris (Solyaris, 1972) - Andrei Tarkovsky*

*Damnation (Kárhozat, 1988) - Béla Tarr*

*Satan's Tango (Sátántangó, 1994) - Béla Tarr*

*Funny Games (1997) - Michael Haneke*

*Colossal Youth (2006) - Pedro Costa*

*sleep furiously (2008) - Gideon Koppel*

*Four Times (Le Quattro Volte, 2010) - Michelangelo Frammartino*

*The Turin Horse (A torinói ló, 2011) - Béla Tarr*

*Two Years At Sea (2011) - Ben Rivers*

*The Kid with a Bike (Le gamin au vélo, 2011) - Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne*

*Silence (2012) - Pat Collins*

*Norte, the End of History (2013) - Lav Diaz*

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