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# Varieties of Film Sound: A New Typology

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## Introduction

While the literature on film sound has grown explosively since the early 1970's, surprisingly few attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive model which charts, defines and exemplifies a full range of sound varieties.

The best contribution to date is undoubtedly Bordwell and Thompson's (1979/1990),<sup>1</sup> which provides the most solid groundwork on which to build, beginning as it does with the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound--or sound perceived as issuing from within and from outside the story space, respectively--and then subdividing diegetic sound into external (objectively present) and internal (subjective) sound. These guidelines for further work are more useful than models taking less fundamental variables as their point of departure--such as Percheron's (1973) "syntagmatic tree" which initially bifurcates into on-screen and off-screen sound.<sup>2</sup>

The typology proposed here will draw on a number of sources, in an effort to gather together within the framework of a single model, concepts and distinctions that are scattered throughout the literature on film sound. With the exception of one minor stand I will take with regard to subjectivity, and several terms I have had to invent because the type of sound in question has not previously been described, I will use those terms most generally applied and in their usual sense--including Genette's (1972) overblown but widely accepted terminology for describing narrative voices. It is not in the way any one sound or group of sounds is defined that distinguishes the present typology from earlier models, but rather its scope, organization and degree of detail.

On the whole, I have tried to focus on the way in which the viewer understands or "decodes" a given sound in relation to the fiction. For this reason, no distinction will be made between sounds that actually originate in the way the film would have us believe, and those that are dubbed. Nor will attention will be given here to the aesthetics and functions of film sound, which involve issues that lie far beyond the scope of the present paper. However, it is hoped that the typology proposed here will be of some use to students of film who are concerned with those broader issues, and who might find some additional leverage in dealing with them on the basis of a clearly delineated repertory of sound types.

In order to make it as easy as possible for the reader to visualize how each variety of sound is situated in relation to the others, the proposed typology will

first be presented in the form of a schematic overview. A discussion of terms, concepts and examples will then follow.

## Schematic Overview

<p><b>DIEGETIC SOUND</b></p> <p>sound whose apparent source is known or presumed by the viewer to be located in the fictional situation at hand</p> <p>or</p> <p>in the mind of a character</p>	<p><b>ACTUAL SOUND</b></p> <p>sound which, according to the premises of the fiction, anyone present in the situation at hand would be able to hear</p>	<p><b>ON-SCREEN</b></p> <p>sound whose apparent source is presumed to be visible on screen at the time it is heard,</p>
		<p><b>OFF-SCREEN</b></p> <p>sound stemming from a source not visible at the moment, but understood to be a part of the situation at hand</p>
		<p><b>TRANSITIONAL</b></p> <p>sound bridging two scenes or two registers within a sequence, and which can be subdivided into: prolonged, anticipatory, intercut and pivotal forms of overlapping.</p>
		<p><b>DIFFERENTIALLY AUDIBLE</b></p> <p>sound which is objectively present, but presented as it can only be heard by one character in the situation at hand because of some special circumstance (not involving subjective distortion)</p>
	<p><b>SUBJECTIVE SOUND</b></p> <p>sound occurring in the mind of a designated character, and which other characters present would not normally be able to hear</p>	<p><b>INNER VOICE</b></p>
		<p><b>REMEMBERED SOUND</b></p>
		<p><b>IMAGINED SOUND</b></p>
		<p><b>DISTORTED SOUND</b></p>
		<p><b>SPOKEN WRITING</b></p>
	<p><b>NARRATIVE VOICE</b></p>	<p><b>PERSONAL NARRATION</b></p> <p>a retrospective narration spoken by a voice the viewer recognizes or will come to know, as belonging to one of the characters in the fiction, who--if on camera when this voice is heard--is understood to be located in a different time/space than that of the narrative voice</p>
<p><b>IMPERSONAL NARRATION</b></p> <p>narration spoken by a voice the viewer does not perceive as belonging to a character in the fiction, or to any narrator built into the fiction,</p>		
<p><b>NON-DIEGETIC</b></p>	<p><b>NON-DIEGETIC MUSIC</b> sound inaudible to the characters in the fiction, and with no apparent or implied source within the story space music understood by the viewer as not stemming from any apparent source within the story space and which no character can hear</p>	

### 1. DIEGETIC/NON-DIEGETIC, ACTUAL/SUBJECTIVE SOUND

Near the start of *BETTY BLUE* (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1986), when we hear orchestral music as Betty approaches Zorg's bungalow and walks up the stairs, we understand that neither Betty nor Zorg can hear that music, which issues from a source lying outside the story space. It is non-diegetic. Minutes later, as Zorg and Betty are on their ladders painting the side of a bungalow, we hear the same theme played somewhat unprofessionally on a saxophone, and are soon given a shot of a minor character playing his sax while seated at a carousel. Here, the music issues from a source established within the fiction, and is therefore defined as diegetic.

No distinction can be more fundamental than this one, which takes into account our understanding of the sound's relationship to the fiction. Whether we are aware of it or not, any time we hear music while seeing a film, we immediately interpret it as either diegetic--and therefore audible to the characters in the setting--or non-diegetic, in which case we understand that the characters cannot hear it. (Since music which is diegetic is defined as issuing from a source built into the fiction, it is sometimes called source music, while the non-diegetic variety is commonly referred to as background music.<sup>3</sup>)

Filmmakers guide our interpretive "processing" of such sounds and sometimes enjoy disorienting us for comic effect. This is the case, for example in *HIGH ANXIETY* (Mel Brooks, 1977) which spoofs not only the themes of Hitchcock's thrillers but also their use of non-diegetic music. In a scene in which the psychiatrist played by Brooks is being driven to the clinic he is to run, the driver states that the former head of the clinic was a victim of foul play. Dramatic orchestral music is then heard, as would happen in a Hitchcock film to punctuate a startling line and heighten tension at such a point, and as seasoned movie-goers familiar with the conventions of the medium, we immediately perceive this as non-diegetic music. To our surprise, however, Brooks and the driver start looking around the car for the source of the music, and are soon relieved to see a bus drive by transporting a symphony orchestra in full swing, so that the music turns out to have a source within the story space after all.

The Aristotelian term diegetic was first revived by Souriau in 1953, who defined it as including "everything which 'in the [viewer's] understanding' belongs to the story that is told, to the world supposed or proposed by the fiction of the film."<sup>4</sup> Many years passed before that term gained wide acceptance in discussions of film sound, and until that happened, the opposition actual versus commentative sound--also first proposed in 1953 by Karel Reisz and subsequently adopted by Kracauer (1961)<sup>5</sup>--was used to describe essentially the same boundaries. Reisz's definitions are as follows:

Actual sound: Sound whose source is implied to be present by the action of the film: e.g., words spoken by a character on screen; words spoken by a character whose presence has been previously visually established; the ringing of a bell which is either visible on screen or accepted to be present in the room"

Commentative sound. Sound whose source is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the action. Sound which is artificially added for dramatic effect, e.g., music, commentary, subjective sounds heard as if through the mind of a character.<sup>6</sup>

One important difference between the opposition diegetic/non-diegetic and actual/commentative sound, concerns the location of subjective sound, which of course is very much a part of the fiction. What I have done, following the lead of Bordwell and Thompson though with a slightly different terminology, is to situate both actual and subjective sound within the boundaries of the diegetic.

Actual sound is defined here as sound which, according to the premises of the fiction, anyone present in the situation at hand would be able to hear.<sup>7</sup> Subjective sound is defined as sound occurring in the mind of a character. (We will return shortly to the subdivisions of actual and subjective sound.)

## 2. NARRATIVE VOICE

Another difference between Reisz's actual versus commentative sound and the diegetic/non-diegetic opposition adopted here, concerns the location of narrative voices--undoubtedly the most complex problem for anyone trying to work out a typology of film sound in relation to the fiction, though it was easy enough for Reisz, who could call all narrative voices commentative.

Following Genette's lead, I will propose two key variables for this part of the typology. The first is whether or not the narrator heard in voice-over is present as a character in the story he relates. If so, Genette calls him homodiegetic<sup>8</sup>, designated more simply by Kozloff (1988) as a first-person narrator;<sup>9</sup> if not, what we have is a heterodiegetic or third-person narrator. The second and equally important variable is whether the narrator is situated within or outside of the story space inhabited by the characters in the fiction's here-and-now. If within, the narrator is infradiegetic (Genette) or embedded (Kozloff); if without, the voice is extradiegetic or framing. Perhaps the easiest way to determine whether the narrator is infra- or extradiegetic, is to ask whether or not he is speaking a character in the story. If so, he is within the story space; if not, he is outside. Another test is to ask whether we have ever seen him in the act of speaking the narration: if not, he is outside the story space. Some examples will help to clarify the meaning of these variables.

Near the beginning of RASHOMON (Akira Kurasawa, 1951), the woodsman--who is one of three men waiting in a shelter for the rain to end--is shown on screen as he tells his two companions: "Three days ago I was in the forest to gather wood." A flashback then shows him walking in the forest, finding a hat and other articles of clothing, then a rope and finally a corpse, and as the flashback continues, showing him running away in terror through the woods, we

hear him say excitedly in voice-over: "I reported it at once to the nearest police. And then today, three days later, I was summoned as a witness." Because those voice-over lines are spoken by a character in the fiction and addressed to other characters in the fiction, the narration is homodiegetic or first-person as well as infradiegetic or embedded. (Note, however, that when the narrator is on camera, his lines are simply on-screen actual sound.)

The same is true of the voice-over narration in *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR* (Alain Resnais, 1959), when the woman played by Emmanuelle Riva speaks to her Japanese lover about Hiroshima and her past in Nevers. Here again, the voice heard while images of Hiroshima or Nevers are shown on screen, is that of a character who is very much present in the here-and-now of the fiction.

The situation is somewhat different at the start of *SOPHIE'S CHOICE* (Alan J. Pakula, 1982). As a picture of a young man riding in a long-distance bus fades in from black, we hear a voice with a Southern accent say:

It was 1947, two years after the war when I began my journey to what my father called the Sodom of the North: New York. Call me Stingo, which was the nickname I was known by in those days, if I was called anything at all. I had barely saved enough money to write my novel, for I wanted beyond hope or dreaming to be a writer but my spirit had remained landlocked, unacquainted with love and a stranger to death...

We understand that the voice belongs to the older and more experienced man Stingo, has become, and who is now looking back at the young man he was on his arrival in New York. Since the narrative voice belongs to a character in the fiction, it is homodiegetic or first-person. However, in contrast to *RASHOMON* and *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR*, the narrator in *SOPHIE'S CHOICE* is never visible to us while in the act of telling about his past; nor is he addressing any character in the fiction, as the woodsman speaks to his two companions and Riva to her lover. Only we are addressed, and from a space lying outside that of the events shown on screen. Here the narration is not infradiegetic or embedded, but rather extradiegetic or framing.

Yet another kind of narrative voice is heard at the beginning of *CASABLANCA* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) as the rotating globe fades in from black:

With the coming of the Second World War, many eyes in imprisoned Europe turned hopefully or desparately toward the freedom of the Americas. Lisbon became the great embarcation point. But not everybody was able to get to Lisbon directly...

Here the narrative voice does not belong to any character in the story, and is therefore heterodiegetic or third-person. Nor will we ever catch a glimpse of the narrator on screen, who speaks only to us, not to any character in the story, since his voice does not issue from within the story space of the fiction. This narration is therefore extradiegetic or framing.

Even if the style of the narrative voice is more informal and sounds more personal than the documentary style of *CASABLANCA*'s opening voice-over, it can still be hetero- and extradiegetic if it does not belong to a character in the

fiction and the speaker is not located within the story space. This is the case with the narration added by the director to the start of *THE THIRD MAN* (Carol Reed, 1949):

...Oh wait, I was going to tell you--Shots of bomb-sites--about Holly Martins from America--he came all the way here to visit a friend of his.--Shot of soldiers standing on parade in a square. The name was Lime., Harry Lime. Soldiers are now seen marching. Now Martins was broke and Lime had offered him--I don't know--some sort of a job. Anyway, there he was, poor chap, happy as a lark and without a cent...<sup>10</sup>

In addition to hybrid narrative types, combining features of those already mentioned--such as the voice-over narration in *ANNIE HALL* (Woody Allen, 1977), which belongs to a partially embedded character in the film--there would also be a fourth possibility according to Genette's model, namely that of a narrator who is not a character in the fiction (heterodiegetic) but is present within the story space (infradiegetic). There are in fact rare cases of a narrator who is not a character in the fiction and yet is shown on screen. But because they speak only to us, never to a character in the fiction, they are not really situated within the same story space as that of the fiction,<sup>11</sup> and cannot be regarded as embedded or infradiegetic in the same sense as the woodsman is in *RASHOMON*.

The funniest example of this narrative type is found in *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (Edward D. Wood, 1959), which has been "hailed as the worst movie ever made."<sup>12</sup> We meet the narrator in a pre-credits sequence entitled "Criswell Predicts," during which he is seated at a desk and addresses us ("My friends, can your heart stand the shocking facts about grave robbers from outer space?"). After the credits, we hear the same man in narrative voice-over, as we see Bela Lugosi and other mourners stand beside a grave:

All of us on this earth know that there is a time to live and that there is a time to die. Yet death is always a shock to those left behind...

Cases of this type are so rare that I have taken the liberty of omitting it from the schematic overview.

### 3. ON-SCREEN/OFF-SCREEN SOUND

Although some commentators conceive of off-screen sound in extremely broad terms, in some cases allowing it to cover all sound that is not on-screen, most writers define off-screen sound more restrictively, as sound which issues from a source presumed to be objectively present within the situation at hand, but which is off-camera at the moment. Kozloff, for example, suggests that when a line of dialogue is said to be off-screen, "the speaker is merely temporarily off-camera, the camera could pan around the same scene and capture the viewer" (p. 3). On-

screen sound is defined as sound whose apparent source is present in our visual field.

Odin (1978, 1990) has indicated a number of problems raised by the on-screen/off-screen dichotomy, arguing for example that if a shot of a village is shown, with the village church in view, while organ music and the singing of the congregation is faintly heard, it can be difficult to determine whether the source of the sound is on- or off-screen.<sup>13</sup>

While Odin's point is well taken, the distinction between on-screen and off-screen sound is perfectly operational in the vast majority of cases. As long as the dichotomy is not taken as the starting point for a typology of sound, occasional difficulties in classifying given sounds as either on- or off-screen are of little consequence.

Furthermore, off-screen sound is too valuable a concept to discard, particularly since some directors make more creative use of off-screen sound than others. For example, in *THE FOUR SEASONS* (Alan Alda, 1981), sound that was off-screen for characters as well as for the viewer, was exploited to the fullest in a scene on a yacht, when the love-making of one couple is heard by two other couples in their respective cabins. And some directors use off-screen sound contrapuntally. In *LACOMBE LUCIEN* (Louis Malle, 1974), the schoolteacher is tortured by the Gestapo in the upstairs bathroom of their headquarters, while soft music that had been turned on in the bar below in the previous scene, continues to be heard--the affective contrast between what we see and hear making the experience far stronger than it would have been without the off-screen music. Or again, Horn's face is shown on screen for eleven seconds, while we hear his daughter and Lucien laughing off-screen, their carefree laughter setting the heavy-heartedness of the powerless father in almost unbearable relief.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. TRANSITIONAL SOUND

A scene in the film, *T. R. BASKIN* (Herbert Ross, 1971), ends with Candice Bergen standing in the doorway of an apartment while the landlord (off-camera) is heard saying:

..What's the matter? You're worried about the neighborhood, huh? You're worried about walkin' about this neighborhood at night, right?

We now cut to an outdoor shot of Bergen arriving at the entrance of a fancier building, but the landlord's voice continues, completing the dialogue from the previous scene:

Listen kid, I wouldn't walk anywhere in this city at night. Hey, if you want anything better, you're goin' to have to pay two or three hundred. You don't believe me? Go look for yourself, you'll see...

These lines are understood by the viewer to be actual sound in relation to the preceding scene.<sup>15</sup>

More commonly, the overlapping goes in the other direction, with sound belonging to the coming scene heard at the close of the one currently in progress. For example, near the end of the scene from *THE GRADUATE* (Mike Nichols, 1967) which ends with Dustin Hoffman standing at the bottom of the family pool in his diver's gear, we hear the following dialogue:

Mrs. Robinson (on the telephone). "Hello."  
Benjamin. "Uh, I don't quite know how to put this."  
Mrs. Robinson (on the telephone). "Benjamin."  
Benjamin. "Look. I was thinking about that time after the party."  
Mrs. Robinson (on the telephone). "Where are you?"

It is at this point that we finally get a picture of Benjamin standing in a phone booth in the new scene, whose dialogue we had been hearing while Benjamin was still under water.

There are also cases in which the same sound heard at the end of one scene and the start of the next, is diegetically anchored in both of them. An early example of this pivotal type of sound transition can be found in *BLACKMAIL* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929). As Alice White is on her way home in a state of shock after having killed the man who had tried to rape her, she screams at the sight of a beggar who is holding his hand out in the same position as that of the corpse she has just left behind. This scream continues as we cut to the new scene in which it is now the dead man's landlady who is screaming as she discovers the body.

A pivotal sound transition can also be managed in such a way that it creates surprise and functions like a gag. For example, a scene in *CINEMA PARADISO* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988) closes with the priest, who is sitting in the movie theater, ringing his little hand-held bell to signal to the projectionist that a kissing-scene is to be censored; what we hear as he shakes the hand-bell is the voluminous sound of churchbells, which now become visible as the next scene begins.

Yet another type of overlapping can occur between alternate registers of a sequence that is edited in a parallel or cross-cut fashion. For example, at the very start of *SEX, LIES AND VIDEO* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989), we hear a woman saying "Garbage. All I've been thinking about all week is garbage..." while on the visual side, we see the character Graham arrive at a gas station. With a cut to what is apparently a psychiatrist's living-room office, we then see Ann continue her "garbage" dialogue with her doctor--a dialogue we continue to hear as further cross-cutting brings Graham back on the screen several times, shaving and bathing at the gas station. Here, sound which is actual with respect to only one register of a cross-cut sequence, is heard while both registers are shown on screen.

The terms overlapping and sound bridge are commonly used. Sound advance should probably be avoided in this context,<sup>16</sup> as should sound flashback and sound flashforward when referring to transitional devices.<sup>17</sup>i

Yet another type of transition can be found in *CATCH 22* (Mike Nichols, 1970), where one scene ends with Yossarian dancing with Luciana to the music of "September Song" and the next one begins with Yossarian tending to the wounded gunner, Snowden, as wind whistles through the damaged fuselage of their bomber. Here, a sound dissolve, cross-fade, or segue<sup>18</sup>, accompanies the dissolve we have on the visual side.

## 5. DIFFERENTIALLY AUDIBLE SOUND : A SPECIAL CASE OF ACTUAL SOUND

In defining actual sound, I proposed as the decisive criterion that anyone in the situation at hand would be able to hear the sound in question. There is an exception to that rule: namely when we hear through the ears of a specific character sounds which are objectively present but as only that character can hear them because of some special circumstance.

The classic example is of course in *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931), in which a man sitting in a cafe puts his hands over his ears and the shrill sound made by an organ-grinder is dampened and then returns when the man removes his hands from his ears. Similarly, in *A NEW LIFE* (Alan Alda, 1988), there is a delightful scene in which our hero is being examined by the beautiful doctor played by Veronica Hamel. With the aid of her stethoscope, she hears Alda's heartbeat quicken whenever she touches his shoulder. Finally, near the start of the diving gear scene in *THE GRADUATE*, we get a memorable point-of-view shot through Benjamin's eyes, through the circular window of his diving mask as he walks toward the pool. We also hear--through his ears--the magnified sounds of his breathing, as he hears them, while the voices of his wildly gesticulating family are filtered out of earshot by his helmet.

I am well aware that some might prefer to classify examples of this type as subjective sound, just as the point-of-view shot just mentioned might be seen by some as an example of subjective camera. But both the sound and picture in this case are objective in the sense that what Benjamin sees is really there and what he hears is the same as what a microphone would pick up if it were placed inside his helmet. A shot that is truly subjective does not only simulate the point-of-view of a given character, but also shows something that is not objectively present according to the premises of the fiction--something imagined or remembered, as in *ENEMIES, A LOVE STORY* (Paul Mazursky, 1989), when Holocaust survivor,

Herman Broder, is on a subway train in which a little black boy is shining a passenger's shoes; suddenly, the passenger becomes a Nazi officer standing in an arrogant pose, and we understand that we are seeing through Herman's eyes as he is experiencing a momentary hallucination.

Precisely because the issue of subjectivity can be elusive, it is important to set its boundaries carefully with respect to picture and sound. A simple point-of-view shot should not be confused with a truly subjective shot.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, it is important to distinguish between actual sound which is differentially audible (what Branigan called an "aural POV," p. 94) and genuinely subjective sound.

## 5. TYPES OF SUBJECTIVE SOUND

Called "non-realistic" by Spottiswoode (p. 185), "metadiegetic" by Gorbman (p. 450), "intradiegetic" by Branigan (p. 68) and "internal diegetic" by Bordwell and Thompson (p. 256), this class that I am designating as subjective involves sound which occurs in the mind of a given character, and which other characters present are normally unable to hear. This is undoubtedly the most neglected class of film sound which, hierarchically speaking, deserves to be considered on a par with actual sound, rather than as a subclass of off-screen sound or narrative voice.

### A. Inner voice

Near the end of FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS (Sam Wood, 1943), Robert Jordan (Gary Cooper) talks to himself to keep from blacking out while waiting to open fire on the fascist troops that are approaching:

... Don't pass out, Jordan! Think about America. I can't. Think about Madrid. I can't. Think about Maria. I can do that all right[...]

As is generally the case with inner voice, the shots of the actor are sufficiently close and frontal--at least at first--to show that his lips are not moving, an essential cue for informing us that it is an inner monologue and not actual sound we are hearing.

Normally, one character's inner voice cannot be heard by any other character--a quality shared by all types of subjective sound. WINGS OF DESIRE (Wim Wenders, 1988) is a notable exception to that rule. Here, angels--visible only to children, other angels and ourselves--are able to hear the inner thoughts of other characters. In a scene which takes place on a movie set, during a pause in the shooting of a film set in Nazi Germany, Peter Falk has gotten permission to sketch a woman--one of the extras wearing a yellow star. An angel is seated nearby and several reaction shots of him remind us that he can hear Falk's thoughts (though of course none of the other characters present is able to do so):

I wonder if she's Jewish. What a dear face. What a nostril. A dramatic nostril. These people are extras. Extra people. Extra people are so patient. They just sit. Extras.

These humans are extras. Extra humans. Yellow star means death. Why did they choose yellow. Sunflowers. Van Gogh killed himself. This drawing stinks. So what, no one sees it. Someday you'll make a good drawing, I hope, I hope, I hope.

## B. Spoken writing

As a device for letting the viewer in on the contents of a letter or diary, filmmakers often allow us to hear the text spoken by the voice of the person who is writing or has written it. Near the beginning of *QUE LA BÊTE MEURE* (Claude Chabrol, 1969), we hear Charles' voice as he silently writes in his diary of his intention to hunt down the hit-and-run killer of his son ("Je vais tuer un homme..."). Similarly, near the end of the film, when Hélène awakens alone in a hotel room and reads the letter that Charles has left for her, we hear the contents of the letter in Charles' voice. When this spoken writing continues during shots of Charles walking toward the sea in this cross-cut sequence, it functions rather like inner voice as long as he is in our field of vision, until we are reminded by shots of Hélène reading, that it is a letter we are hearing.

## C. Remembered sound

Near the end of *SPELLBOUND* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945), the murderer unwittingly gives himself away when he forgets that he had earlier denied ever having met the victim. He now tells Ingrid Bergman: "I knew Edwards only slightly. I never really liked him." Moments later, Bergman replays that statement in her mind, as its import dawns on her (and on us): Along with some eerie music and reverberation as cues that it is subjective sound we are hearing, the murderer's voice is heard saying:

I knew Edwards only slightly. I never liked him very well. I knew Edwards only slightly. Knew Edwards slightly. Knew Edw Knew Edwrds. Knew Edwards slightly. Knew Edwards. [progressively louder] Knew! Knew! Knew!

Ensign and Knapton (p. 21) would call an example of this type an auditory flashback.

## D. Imagined sound

When an aural hallucination occurs, and a character takes the sound he hears in his mind for a present reality, then the sound we are dealing with can best be designated as imagined sound, even if it is closely bound up with a memory.

Near the end of *SCARLET STREET* (Fritz Lang, 1945), a guilt-ridden Chris (Edward G. Robinson) now alone in a hotel room, is taunted by the voices he imagines of Kitty (Joan Bennet), the woman he killed in a fit of rage, and her lover, Johnny (Dan Duryea), whom he allowed to be executed for the crime. These voices are so real to Chris that he engages in a frantic dialogue with them. His lines are actual sound, theirs imagined sound:

KITTY: Oh Johnny. Now we're together.  
JOHNNY: He killed me too, Kitty.  
KITTY: He brought us together, Johnny. Forever,  
forever, forever. (Harshly, to Chris) Oh you idiot,  
how can a man be so dumb?  
CHRIS.: No, Kitty, no!

JOHNNY: She's mine, Chris. Forever.  
KITTY: You killed me, Chris. You're old and ugly  
and you killed me, you killed me, you killed me.  
CHRIS.: No no, Kitty, it's him. You were innocent,  
you were pure. That's why he killed you. He's the  
murderer...

## E. Distorted sound

Sound stemming from a source which is objectively present, can be filtered subjectively by a character. (If filtered in a physical manner, as in the example cited from M, we are dealing with sound that is actual but differentially audible not subjective.)

Here the classic example is the breakfast scene in *BLACKMAIL*, when the heroine--guilt-ridden and still in shock over having stabbed to death the artist who had tried to rape her--hears only the word "knife" repeatedly spoken by a chatterbox visitor, the rest of whose blather is heard only as a low murmur.

## CONCLUDING NOTE

The typology proposed above might be useful: 1) as a means for including in a stylistic profile of a given director, an exact description of his/her sound "palette"--perhaps even as it evolves from film to film; 2) as a construct enabling us to deal with clearly defined varieties of sound, one at a time, in a systematic effort to chart the functions of film sound; and 3) as a basis for determining to what degree any given model for studying film aesthetics, encompasses a full range of variables with respect to sound. More generally, the typology might serve as a reminder that sound can be discussed with the same degree of precision that is routinely accorded to other aspects of film art.

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<sup>1</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990; orig. pub. 1979), pp.254-262.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Percheron, "Sound in Cinema and its Relation to Image and Diegesis," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), pp. 16-23. Originally published in *Ca/Cinéma* 3 (jan 1974). The same is true of the "tricycle" model dividing sound into on-screen, off-camera and off (or "over"), in Michel Chion, *Le son au cinéma*. Paris: Editions de l'étoile, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Ira Konigsberg, *The Complete Film Dictionary* (New York: Meridian, 1989; orig. pub. 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Etienne Souriau. *L'univers filmique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953) p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *The Nature of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality* (London: Dobson, 1961), p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, *The Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Hastings, 1968; an expanded edition of a text originally written by Reisz in 1953), pp. 397, 398.

<sup>7</sup> What I am calling actual sound is called external diegetic by Bordwell and Thomson, who define it as "objective" sound "which we as spectators take to have a physical source in the scene" (pp. 256-257). In *A Grammar of the Film. An Analysis of Film Technique* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), Raymond Spottiswoode called it "realistic" sound, defined as sounds "which originate, or are believed to originate, in the locale embraced by the microphone on the set" (pp. 174-175).

<sup>8</sup> Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit," in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 251-259.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Kozloff in *Invisible Storytellers. Voice-over Narration in American Fiction Film*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Graham Greene and Carol Reed, *The Third Man* (London: Lorrimer/Modern Film Scripts, 1969), pp. 12-13. Note that in this particular case, we have a narrative voice that is extradiegetic but not entirely third-person.

<sup>11</sup> For a different view on this issue, see Kozloff, pp. 76-77.

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- <sup>12</sup>Leonard Maltin, TV Movies and Video Guide (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 899.
- <sup>13</sup>Roger Odin, Cinema et production de sens (Paris: Colin, 1990), pp. 231-235. See also Odin's earlier article, "A propos d'un couple de concepts: son in vs son off," Linguistique et sémiologie no 6 (1978), PUL Lyon.
- <sup>14</sup>A fuller discussion of Malle's use of counterpoint will be found in my article, "Two properties of the mise-en-scène in Lacombe Lucien," Film Dossiers 2 (1985) pp. 52-55.
- <sup>15</sup>Oddly, Edward Branigan considers such lines to be non-diegetic. In Point of View in the Cinema. A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), he stated on p. 43 that a sound "is non-diegetic if it is not, and could not be, heard by a character even if the sound later also functions diegetically (as in a sound bridge between scenes)." To that I would reply that a sound bridge is also a bridge to the diegesis.
- <sup>16</sup>The term "sound advance" is generally used to designate "the distance on film between a frame and the point in the sound track with the matching synchronic sound"--the magnetic sound being e.g. 24 frames behind the image on 70mm film (Konigsberg, p. 334). It would therefore be potentially misleading to designate a sound bridge as a sound advance.
- <sup>17</sup>Bordwell and Thompson (p. 261) refer to sound which is "simultaneous in story with image" as simple diegetic and designate as displaced diegetic cases in which the sound comes earlier or later than the image--sound flashback or image flashforward when the sound comes earlier and sound flashforward or image flashback when the sound comes later. My own feeling is that any term including the word "flashback" should be reserved for cases involving memory rather than transitional devices for bridging scenes or shots in a sequence.
- <sup>18</sup>Lynne Naylor Enseign and Robyn Eileen Knapton, The Complete Dictionary of Television and Film (New York: Stein & Day, 1985), pp. 211, 58, 200.
- <sup>19</sup>What I am calling a subjective shot is called "mindscreen" by Bruce Kawin in "An Outline of Film Voices," Film Quarterly 38, 2 (Winter 1984-85), p. 40.; and "mental process narration" by Branigan, p. 85. Branigan also has an intermediate category he calls a "perception shot," in which for example an out-of-focus POV represents drunkenness (p. 89).