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Blurring the Line? Music, Sound and "Sonic Gaze" in Post-Ceasefire Troubles-Themed Film

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Abstract: *This article appraises developments in soundtracks of narrative fiction features based on the Northern Ireland Troubles, focusing on selected titles released in the post-ceasefire period that was consolidated by the Anglo-Irish ("Good Friday") agreement of 1998. It does this with reference to earlier approaches to music and sound for Troubles-themed film, and by drawing on Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's sound-design-is-the-new-score proposition. The article advances "sonic gaze" as a pertinent critical lens through which to complement artistic appraisals of historical and contemporary soundtracks in light of political and colonial contexts and legacies. In comparison to earlier Troubles-themed film, a small number of narrative fiction features from the turn of the twenty-first century propose alternative positions and/or innovations in their overall sound design. Readings of* Resurrection Man *(Marc Evans, 1998),* Hunger *(Steve McQueen, 2008),* Five Minutes of Heaven *(Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2009)* and *'71 (Yann Demange, 2014) interpret several significant soundtrack developments. These arise from the involvement of popular music producers, notably David Holmes, technological affordances (production and postproduction) and alternative artistic perspectives that interrupted a colonial-anthropological sonic gaze. The article concludes that* Hunger *comes closest to Liz Greene and Kulezic-Wilson's theorisations on the integrated soundtrack and on narrative film's potential for achieving a holistic audiovisual musicality.*

Taking inspiration from Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's seminal approach when proclaiming sound design as "the new score" in the case of selected narrative fiction films, in this article I interpret new approaches to music and sound for narrative features based on the Northern Ireland Troubles, the emergence of which broadly coincided with the period of peace following the Anglo-Irish Treaty or Good Friday Agreement of 1998. I appraise the artistic merits of a selection of these, while also considering the role of music and sound in perpetuating or interrupting outsider views of Irish political history. A framework for the analysis and discussion draws on Kulezic-Wilson's groundbreaking theory that arose from her celebrated case studies of early twenty-first century productions. It then introduces the idea of "sonic gaze" in narrative as well as documentary film. This is a concept that, I argue, has particular relevance to understandings of the earliest Troubles-themed films through to more recent productions.

In the body of the article, I focus on four narrative fiction features produced in the post-ceasefire period: *Resurrection Man* (Marc Evans, 1998), *Hunger* (Steve McQueen, 2008), *Five Minutes of Heaven* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2009) and *'71* (Yann Demange, 2014). Released just as the Troubles officially ended, *Resurrection Man* can be critiqued for reductive associations it draws between political violence and criminality, and for reinforcing images that link Ulster Loyalism with Vampirism (Baker). While recognising the need to deconstruct such representations, I explore how the film's collaboration involving the music production team of David Holmes, Gary Burns and Keith Tenniswood, along with Foley artist Diane Greaves, represents a significant interruption to established soundtrack conventions for Troubles-based

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narratives, "blurring the boundaries" (Greene, "From") between original music and sound design, and destabilising perceptions of source music across several scenes.

For *Hunger*, released ten years later, music producer David Holmes and sound designer Paul Davies collaborated to produce a highly innovative integrated soundtrack. My discussion focuses on that film's almost seamless fusion of music and sound, and on its further integration with the entire film's overarching musicality—to adopt a wider lens proposed by Kulezic-Wilson—in particular, its temporal and rhythmic aspects. Holmes went on to collaborate with Leo Abrahams in producing music for *Five Minutes of Heaven*, its screenplay based on a reconciliation between the perpetrator of a sectarian murder and a brother of his victim. Though somewhat more conventional than *Hunger* through its inclusion of some plaintive orchestral cues, I also examine how the placing and pacing of *Five Minutes of Heaven*' music and sound (the latter involving Foley artist Caoimhe Doyle and editor Steve Fanagan) is informed by a broader musicality. Holmes collaborated again with Paul Davies for *'71*. Its narrative revolves around the experiences and perspective of a young British soldier on the run in early-Troubles-era Belfast, as he becomes separated from his regiment unit following a disturbing riot. Here, I interpret how the soundtrack's rock/electronica palette integrates with atmospheric as well as rhythmically organised sounds, and with the narrative's episodic structure and relentless sense of chase and repetition. In the conclusion, I reflect on the specific political circumstances, changing artistic perspectives and technological developments that afforded a more integrated approach to soundtracks for Troubles-based narrative features at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Blurring the Line?

Liz Greene and Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's theory of an "integrated soundtrack" was first advanced in 2016 in a coedited volume. In a later monograph, Kulezic-Wilson expounds further on this theory, primarily through case studies of early twenty-first-century narrative fiction features drawn from art house-oriented and other alternative cinema (*Sound Design*). Through these she considers the potential for a holistic relationship between a film's soundtrack and its visual and narrative components. This comes to be realised through processes of musicalisation that go beyond music and sound elements, and that aesthetically can be read in terms of a film's overarching musicality. At first glance, my recent film music interests may seem somewhat removed from Kulezic-Wilson's unique approach and from the contemporary genres on which her studies are based. However, when looking back over the broad range of material I surveyed for my research monograph on the history of Irish-themed and/or Irish-produced music for screen, I now propose that the subcategory of narrative film most closely approximating the "blurring" of creative lines between sound design and musical score—in the ways set out by Greene ("From") and Kulezic-Wilson (*Sound Design*)—is a small but significant corpus of Troubles-themed narrative features produced in the wake of the peace settlement achieved for Northern Ireland at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Drawing on principles and perspectives developed in Kulezic-Wilson's *Sound Design Is the New Score*, I propose the idea of "sonic gaze" as an additional pertinent lens, since all of the films explored in the article require scrutiny in respect of political representation, as well as meriting appraisals of any potential artistic breakthroughs, whether conceptual, aesthetic or technological. A primary aim of Kulezic-Wilson's book is to highlight "the growing tendency to dissolve the boundaries and hierarchical relationships between music and other elements of the soundtrack, giving rise to new aesthetic tastes and modes of perception" (22). I examine the extent to which some of these lines can be considered as blurred in the case of selected

Troubles-themed narrative film. Linked to this, I seek to ascertain whether innovative approaches to the soundtrack can additionally dissolve boundaries between insider/outsider and reductive ethno-religious binaries, or whether they might in fact perpetuate such (post)colonial-anthropological perspectives.

The films featured in this article have common denominators beyond political themes, and all of these to some degree accord with the production contexts and aesthetic principles identified by Kulezic-Wilson. First, all four can be said to eschew traditional approaches to soundtrack hierarchies, instead involving creative collaborations that cut across music, sound, directorial, editing and postproduction departments. Second, it can be noted how David Holmes is variously involved in creating music for each film, in some cases co-composing with other producers. Holmes's prior and continuing portfolio as a DJ/music producer presents an example of the significance of new technologies for many innovative soundtracks in the early twenty-first century, alongside the emergence of many composers and sound designers from a popular music background. From his earliest electronica tracks in the 1990s, many regarded Holmes's music as "cinematic" (Paphides), in part owing to its perceived spatial dimensions and expressive character, and also because of his lifelong interest in film and soundtrack. This was evident in his 1993 dance track "De Niro" with Ashley Beedle (as The Disco Evangelists) and based on Ennio Morricone's main theme for *Once Upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984), and two years later in Holmes' first album titled *This Film's Crap, Let's Slash the Seats*. Holmes later became well established as a prolific soundtrack composer, with music for Steven Soderbergh's *Out of Sight* (1998), *Oceans 11* (2001) and its sequels, and *The Fall* (2013–2016), among his many outputs. More importantly for the present discussion, his work for albums and soundtracks alike draws on an eclectic range of sources (for example, his use of field recordings on the 1997 album *Let's Get Killed*),[1] and his creative approach consistently explores the intertwining of music production and postproduction sound (Holmes, "Rhythm").

A third common denominator for the cases featured in this article lies in the relationship between each film's soundtrack and what might be considered as its overarching musicality. However, the extent to which priority is given "to musicality over narrative function and to sensuous experience over intelligibility" varies considerably from film to film (Kulezic-Wilson 25). Differences can be interpreted in cases where a film's musicality acts to support narrative structure, rather than, or in addition to, disrupting narrative conventions and hierarchies. Further, privileging sensualness over intelligibility can be highly contentious in narrative film that is most usually categorised as political, although such an approach can be read into some of the examples discussed for this article. This particularly applies to *Hunger*, which is set during the Maze prison hunger strikes of 1981.

Sonic Gaze

In adapting the word "gaze", I am cognisant of Laura Mulvey's seminal essay on the male gaze which has been highly influential in feminist literature and film studies, and has more recently been adapted to intersectional studies contemplating race, class and other social factors alongside issues and perspectives of gender. I first used the term "sonic gaze" when surveying Irish-produced feature-length documentaries from the early twenty-first century (O'Flynn 240). What I then observed was a conventional aesthetic distance drawn between the lived sound worlds of film subjects, and soundtrack elements that reinforced authorial perspectives, and that also suggested commentaries on subjects' lives and values. An example of this is the creative documentary *Broken Song* (Claire Dix, 2013). Based in Darndale, an area

of North Dublin officially designated as "disadvantaged" (Nolan 17), its depiction of emerging hip hop artists and rappers is underscored by ambient electronica cues composed by Hugh Drumm. Such an approach might be expected from a creative documentary, as opposed to an ethnographic film, but critical questions might still be asked about the representation of participants and their "voices". For example, what distinctive levels of musical authority might be suggested through the contrasting diegetic and nondiegetic tracks? Another music-themed example from the same period was the soundtrack to the documentary feature *The Yellow Bittern: The Life and Times of Liam Clancy* (Alan Gilsenan, 2009), with recordings of Clancy's upbeat ballads contrasted with Ray Harman's contemporary minimal score. There is a clear "retro" sonic gaze implied by this, while also suggesting a disjuncture between, on one hand, the expressive character and lyrics of Clancy's songs and, on the other hand, his life circumstances, choices and experiences.

Recently, and independently, T Storm Heter has employed "sonic gaze" in reference to the racialised consumption of jazz recordings and other musics of African American origin. While this can sometimes overlap with my use of the term in relation to film soundtracks—for example, John Williams's fetishisation of "African" musical ideas for *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997) and the popularity of his choral and orchestral music following the film's release—I propose sonic gaze as a broader idea to encompass the positionality of directors, editors and soundtrack producers, whereby music and sound often contribute to an outsider sonic commentary on real and fictional Others. This has direct relevance to screen productions with colonial and postcolonial themes, including those set during the Northern Ireland Troubles, while also intersecting with other critical categories, not least, race, ethnicity, class and gender.

In a sense, sonic gaze can be more readily observable in highly stylised soundtracks of the early twenty-first century, where the intentionality of producers in distinguishing authorial and subject perspectives is highlighted. A striking example of this is in *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004) where the combination of slow-motion cinematography and Arvo Pärt's *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten* provocatively aestheticises (and mutes) some of the feature's most harrowing actuality footage in the aftermath of the Twin Towers bombing. A less controversial and more celebrated example comes in the narrative fiction feature *I Am Love* (*Io sono l'amore*, Luca Guadagnino, 2009). This occurs during a formal family lunch at a restaurant in Milan where Emma (Tilda Swinton) tastes food prepared by Antonio (Edoardo Gabbriellini), a young talented chef and friend of Emma's son, later to become her lover. As Emma tastes the prawn dish Antonio has prepared, the camera and lighting focus on her eating and pleasure. Others in her party (her mother-in law and son's fiancé) are then further excluded by the gradual removal of the dialogue track (reflecting Emma's disinterest in their polite conversation) and by a heightened awareness of sounds emanating from the kitchen (suggesting the agency and perspective of Antonio). At this point, the introduction of John Adams's music, an excerpt from his orchestral work *Fearful Symmetries*, heightens the moment's implied orgasmic and metadiegetic significance. Given the focus on Emma's sensory pleasure through close-ups of her mouth, lips and eyes, this might be conventionally viewed as a male cinematic gaze. However, the film's integrated sound design suggests a sonic gaze that is more subjective than authorial, inviting the audioviewer to indulge momentarily in its Epicurean philosophy that is presented in opposition to the conservatism of a wealthy Italian family.

For the present discussion, but also more broadly, I suggest that sonic gaze can further be applied to earlier sound film. This includes features produced long before a fully articulated conception of sound design emerged from experimental approaches to filmmaking, music and

sound art, or through technological affordances from the late twentieth century (Kulezic-Wilson 11–15). A high-profile Irish-themed example from the early decades of sound film is the ethnofiction feature *Man of Aran* (Robert Flaherty, 1934). What can be interpreted here is a colonial-anthropological and authorial sonic gaze that denies its subjects' vernacular language (*Gaeilge*/Irish) in the film's limited dialogue track, and through its classical Hollywood-style score by John Greenwood that arrogantly claims to represent the music of the Aran Islands in the film's opening titles. Furthermore, the film's outsider gaze privileges depictions of bleakness and silence over insider experiences and perspectives of kinship and local culture, including the vernacular language and communal music making (Ní Chonghaile).

A third way that I consider sonic gaze in this article has to do with constructions of tribalism that fail to address the complexities of Northern Ireland's (post)colonial status as the part of Ireland that remained in the United Kingdom following partition in 1921. These come across forcefully in soundtracks that highlight markers of identity, supposedly representing distinct communities involved in the Troubles. The absence of equivalent music and sound components to portray any British ethnic presence is precisely why the concept of sonic gaze has such relevance to Troubles-themed screen productions.

Alternatively, the inhabitants of the Northern Ireland state are portrayed as an undifferentiated tribal Other (to British, and sometimes also to Irish film audiences). Whichever way tribalism is projected, soundtracks adopting this perspective typically include recordings from actuality footage to represent ethno-religious strife, the selection and editing of sound and/or music to represent a sense of Otherness, and music compilations/compositions that perpetuate Irish or broader Celtic musical stereotypes. While all of these tendencies might justly be criticised on ideological grounds, collectively they led to unique patterns of assembling and editing sound and music for Troubles-themed documentary and narrative film over many decades. Though controversial, a small number of productions among this corpus also proposed innovative approaches to sound design.

Troubles-Themed Film at the Turn of a New Century

In the decade preceding the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, several Irish-produced features looked back on earlier decades of the Troubles. This retrospective lens was accompanied by a marked change in approaches to music and sound. Critically, many music soundtracks avoided the conventional orchestral scores that typified those from the 1970s and 80s (O'Flynn 115–21), notwithstanding the resilience of "ethnic" musical tropes evident across many documentary and narrative fiction features since then. What can be interpreted from the 1990s onwards were more stylised and, in some cases, more aestheticised treatments of archival audiovisual sources to accompany retrospective narratives of conflict. However, just as these productions involved the reimagining rather than the eschewal of embedded "images of violence" (Hill 178–84), so too were conventional "strains of violence" adapted to contemporary contexts and perspectives. It was around this time also that Britain's historical role in Northern Ireland began to come under scrutiny.

The music soundtrack for *In the Name of the Father* (Jim Sheridan, 1993) is among the most innovative from this period, in large part owing to score composer Trevor Jones's skill in developing thematic elements from its featured songs by Bono, Gavin Friday and Maurice Seezer (Cooper et al. 100–06). This includes advance evocation of the upbeat track "You Made Me the Thief of Your Heart", sung by Sinéad O'Connor at the film's end. Meanwhile, the

film's most innovative audiovisual sequence is also its most controversial. This disturbingly represents the 1974 IRA bombing of a pub in Guildford, England in which five people were killed and many more seriously injured. Although Friday and Bono's singing of "In the Name of the Father" alludes to and otherwise expresses the human tragedy of the Troubles (with lyrics suggesting an outsider depoliticised gaze), the track has a relentless driving beat and hip-hop vibe that communicates aggression. In particular, the addition of Lambeg drums and a prominent ostinato on EWI (electronic wind instrument), just at the point of the bomb explosion, implies a triumphal commentary on the scene. This heralded an approach that was developed in subsequent retrospective features on the Troubles, with a similar audiovisual aestheticisation of political violence also adapted for several Northern Ireland–based documentary series (O'Flynn 121–3). *In the Name of the Father* proved inspirational for many subsequent sound and music personnel, including a young David Holmes whose 1995 track "No Man's Land" was reportedly a direct response to the film (Bailie).

Overall, it can be observed that many involved in soundtrack production for Troubles-themed productions throughout the early to mid-1990s employed novel approaches from digital electronics, including sampling. Moreover, popular music compilations and compositions gradually replaced orchestral scores. However, these technological and stylistic shifts did not propose any substantial integration across music, sound and dialogue; nor did they necessarily interrupt the predominant sonic gaze that had characterised representations of conflict and political violence in previous decades. This reflected a continuing tendency for film representations of the Troubles through the crime thriller genre (Gallagher).

A range of Troubles-themed films in the late 1990s and early 2000s signalled new approaches to original score and sound design. Some featured little or no original music, a strategy that may have been adopted during a period of reconciliation on ethical grounds and/or as part of a social realism approach. They included *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2002) which depicted the events of 30 January 1972 when the British Army shot dead twenty-seven civilians during a civil rights march in Derry, and *Omagh* (Pete Travis, 2004), based on the bombing atrocity carried out in the Co. Tyrone town by a breakaway IRA faction in 1998. The soundtrack to Omagh contains no music components, while music for *Bloody Sunday* is limited to two original cues by Dominic Muldowney, audiovisual footage of the resistance song "We Shall Overcome" and, predictably perhaps, U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday" for end credits. Commenting more generally on these two films, Ruth Barton notes how both "share similar shooting styles—fast zooms; swift editing; fragmented sound tracks interspersed with almost complete silence" (144). This suggests that not only did these films eschew traditional soundtrack hierarchies and conventions, but that they could also be appraised in terms of an overarching musicality—in spite of the absence, or minimal use, of music. For the remainder of the article, I explore the extent to which these holistic approaches might also be read in Troubles-based narrative features of the postceasefire period, in which music featured more prominently.

Resurrection Man

Causing much controversy in Northern Ireland before and following its release (Donnelly, "Policing"), the screenplay for *Resurrection Man* is based on atrocities carried out by the Shankill Butchers, a loyalist gang, in 1970s Belfast. The film's narrative reinforces the trope of political terrorists as comparable with psychopathic criminals (albeit in its case based on the horrific murders of innocent citizens that actually took place). Notwithstanding the

ethical sensitivities that it raises, including its indulgence in cinematic masochism and stereotypes of Irish political fanaticism (McLoone 81–3), *Resurrection Man* can be viewed as a highly stylised text that advances an innovative approach to sound design in Troubles-based narrative film of the period.

The soundtrack abounds with mixes of heavily manipulated sound effects that combine successfully with music provided by David Holmes and his associates. Original melodic material is mostly absent, with the sampling of mechanical-industrial sounds alongside more conventional synthesised sources featuring throughout; as Holmes recalls, director Marc Evans "wanted to play with feedback, drones, and texture" ("Rhythm"). Moreover, while most of the film's dialogue fulfils a conventional narrative function, there are several instances where background speech is more musically treated, for example, the distorted sound of an evangelist preacher during a foggy street scene. Overall, the soundtrack can be characterised by a mix of "unnatural" timbres and other manipulated sources and by the use of techniques of pitch oscillation, harmonic sampling and slowed-down audio. These are critical to maintaining the film's almost constant dystopian atmosphere, heightened during scenes of particular horror perpetrated by its primary antagonist, whose overall representation throughout the film—as well as that of Ulster loyalism—draws much from the vampire genre (Baker). An extensive range of popular music recordings also feature in *Resurrection Man*'s soundtrack. While some of these are conventionally linked to diegetic sources such as a car radio or jukebox in a pub, they might more usefully be considered quasi-diegetic; several popular music tracks that are first heard in everyday and safe contexts then continue into nocturnal backstreet scenes where they mix with other elements of the sound design to connote more sinister circumstances.

The most prominent pre-existing track, and the most memorable music from the film, "La Vergine degli Angeli" ("The Virgin of the Angels") by Giuseppe Verdi, is cued at four separate moments. The operatic aria stands out in projecting a female voice amidst a male-dominated screenplay, and for its staged, pious representation of Catholicism against a background of a Protestant loyalist underworld. It acts as a redemption leitmotif for the film's primary protagonist, a journalist (James Nesbitt) who investigates the series of gruesome killings led by Victor Kelly (Stuart Townsend) and who ultimately becomes central to the narrative's final denouement. Similar to the treatment of "Libera Me" from Verdi's *Requiem* in Neil Jordan's 1982 film *Angel*, the operatic track is initially heard in an altered, distant form, in its case through the heavy use of reverb. Such prior treatment of the musical source associates it more with the film's overall soundscape than with the more literal intertextual connotations later revealed.

Hunger

One of several narrative films from the early 2000s based on the 1981 hunger strikes at the Maze prison, *Hunger* attracted a considerable level of criticism for what was read as its failure to engage adequately with the political complexities of its subject (Pine). Instead, it presented an artistic exploration of the bodily deterioration and death of hunger strike leader Bobby Sands (Barton 149–152). With a screenplay cowritten by British visual artist and film director Steve McQueen and Irish playwright Enda Walsh, the narrative could be considered in terms of a three-act play, while also visually proposing a triptych (150). *Hunger* might also be imagined as a musical form, not only because of its highly innovative approach to the balance of dialogue, sound and music, as comprehensively explored in an analysis by Adam Melvin, but also owing to its overarching rhythms in narration and cinematography.

The first third of the film presents two different openings: a focus on the home-to-work morning routine of Lohan (Stuart Graham), a prison officer; and the incarceration of a newly arrived inmate who joins other prisoners in the blanket and dirty protest. It ends with a riot in which previous shots of the prison officer washing his hand, or smoking a cigarette outside in the snow are repeated, this time after it is apparent to the audioviewer that he has been involved in the brutal beating of Bobby Sands (Michael Fassbender).

Figure 1: Bobby Sands carried away after a beating by prison officers. *Hunger*, dir. Steve McQueen. Film 4, 2008. Screenshot.

The film's sound design by Paul Davies is foregrounded from the outset, with little or no dialogue and with the featuring of miniscule as well as percussive sounds mirroring the many camera close-ups. This varies from moving images and sounds of prisoners etching designs of faeces smeared to their cell walls, to relentless baton beating on Perspex shields by British paratroopers who are brought in to respond to the prison riot (the latter sound continuing even after they physically stop beating). Other pronounced rhythmic sequences include Sands and fellow prisoners stomping their feet in protest, simulating a *bodhrán* pattern, and then chanting, and an extended sequence of a lone orderly disinfecting and sweeping the prisoners' urine that has passed from under the cell doors. The former is accompanied by rapid jump-cuts, while for the latter the camera moves slowly in a single shot, taking in the architectural repetitions of the corridor that match the moving sound patterns of brush and urine/disinfectant moving across the ground.

The film's first music, a recording of Michael Gordon's "Industry" for cello and electronics is heard at c. 27' 30" as the replay of earlier shots involving Lohan propose different meanings in light of subsequent scenes. Based on a simple idea with slowly alternating major and minor triads and inversions (suggested through double stops on cello), a layering of artistic comment over aesthetic framing at this point is accentuated through the removal of all other sound. The music continues, now with diegetic sound reinstated, as the scene shifts to a man in protective clothing spraying faeces off a prison cell wall (momentarily impressed by the beauty of an image made of concentric circles that gives the illusion of a 3-D tunnel). It ends before the rhythmically driven prison riot sequence that ends with the severely beaten and abused Sands alone in his cell in an ecstatic state.

Figure 2: Bobby Sands in dialogue with Fr Dominic Moran. *Hunger*. Film 4, 2008. Screenshot.

The central piece of the film is a twenty-two-minute dialogue involving just two shots between Sands and Fr Dominic Moran (Liam Cunningham), a priest he has asked to visit him at the Maze. At a musical level, the dialogue, scripted by Enda Walsh, stands out for its contrast with a relative absence of vocal sounds in the first part of the film, and for its lyrical interplay between the two protagonists that is initially rich with local colloquialisms and humour. Towards the end of the dialogue, Sands reveals a belief in his own messianic role through recounting a boyhood story in which demonstrated self-sacrifice for the greater moral good. The incident takes place during a sports trip to the coastal area of Gweedore in Donegal, which is captured in Sands's imagination as a kind of paradise.

The final third of the film details the various stages of Sand's decline, with similar attention to patterns of images and sounds as in the opening sections. Although the inevitable outcome is known from the beginning of this section, the foregrounding of sound and music contribute to a parallel or alternative meaning to the film's title of hunger. A recurring sonic element throughout the film is that of a barely perceptible, low-pitch throbbing sound. As Sands lies on his prison hospital bed in incremental stages of physical and mental deterioration the sound becomes more discernible as he imagines flocks of birds outside (and later inside) the room. One of his final thoughts is of his twelve-year-old self, looking out of the bus window as his group leaves Gweedore. The pulsating sound is heard at a higher pitch than before and then answered a fifth interval higher by cello (suggesting continuity with Michael Gordon's piece). The alternating pitches of D and A form an elegiac musical pattern as the shots gently change from Sands's mother at his bedside to his inner images of birds and nature, just before he dies. While an obvious reading of Sands's "hunger" might be the Zealot-like passion for Irish Republican goals he articulates during the film's central dialogue aligned with his unrelenting sense of martyrdom, the combination of sound and moving image towards the end suggests a more deep-rooted hunger for the freedom to live, and invites the audioviewer to share Sands's sensory delirium. The death scene is followed by a series of factual titles that are somewhat misplaced after McQueen's largely poetic treatment of the film's subject. Another original music cue, this time comprising a series of chords in C modal major, underscores the end credits, its incomplete harmonisation in keeping with the overall ascetic tone of the soundtrack.

Figure 3: Bobby Sands in a state of delirium shortly before his death. *Hunger*. Film 4, 2008. Screenshot.

The soundtrack to *Hunger* is groundbreaking for the visceral qualities it achieves, for its integration of audio and visual aspects through processes of musicalisation, and for the ways in which the interplay of music, sound effects and dialogue sparingly yet effectively propose an overarching musicality for the film. Notwithstanding debates concerning its political de-contextualisation, *Hunger* eschews a voyeuristic lens through an integrated soundtrack that directly connects with McQueen and Walsh's screenplay, and through its embodied and immersive sonic perspective that reflects the central protagonist's subjectivity. For the audioviewer, this leads more to a fusion than to a prioritising of sensuous experience over intelligibility, to adapt Kulezic-Wilson's terms somewhat.

Five Minutes of Heaven

Among several post-millennial films addressing initiatives towards conflict resolution, *Five Minutes of Heaven* is a tense drama that revolves around a meeting between Alistair (Liam Neeson), the perpetrator of a sectarian murder, and Joe (James Nesbitt), the younger brother of his victim. It begins with a lead-up to the murder Alistair carried out while he was just a teenage boy in an average Protestant family in Belfast. The absence of music is significant for the first fourteen minutes here, and it is only when Alistair steals a car with other youths to enter a Catholic area and carry out a random killing that the first original music by Leo Abrahams and David Holmes is heard (the soundtrack also includes pre-existing material from Holmes's *The Holy Pictures* studio album). This is built on a quick repeated figure with electric bass, keyboard/programming and guitars. As the sequence to the murder builds up, further ostinato patterns are repeated across several cues at accelerating tempi and with increasingly frequent dissonances. This augments the adrenaline rush if not thrill felt by the teenage gang, an insider sonic perspective that is abruptly and dramatically followed by a plaintive cue, as ten-year old Joe (Kevin O'Neill) witnesses his brother's murder. Its scoring led by orchestral strings emulates a conventional sonic gaze on victimhood in Troubles-based film.

The narrative then moves to the contemporary diegesis as a formal reconciliation meeting between the two men is arranged. Here, the production emulates a docudrama style for the first few scenes involving the grownup Alistair and Joe, its "reality" signalled through the removal of music from the soundtrack. It returns, however, as Joe's trauma—and desire for

revenge—re-emerge. Alistair is unwittingly drawn into a physical conflict, and for this Abrahams and Holmes provide a series of riff-based cues that eschew conventional approaches to musical tension and release, suggesting an out-of-control and spiralling sequence of violence. However, a variation of the more melodic, plaintive material returns as scenes of reconciliation offer dramatic closure.

Although the sound design for *Five Minutes of Heaven* adheres to demarcated components of dialogue, sound effects and music—reflecting classical narrative principles and soundtrack practices (Kulezic-Wilson 4)—the placing and editing of music helps define rather than merely support the film's narrative structure. It builds contrasting soundscapes for diegetic past and present, and portrays the (changing) perspectives of both perpetrators and victims. Alongside conventional markers of pathos, the soundtrack's fast-paced cues interrupt conventional expectations of score accompaniment, with postproduction effects affording more visceral engagement, especially during the fight sequence where film and music editing are the most integrated.

'71

The last example briefly explored in this article, *'71*, constitutes a retrospective take on the early years of the Troubles. It tells the tale of a young soldier in the British Army Parachute Regiment, Gary Hook (Jack O'Connell), who on his first day of service on the streets of Belfast is separated from his unit after a disturbing riot. What follows for Hook is a night of ordeal as he encounters a range of actors—benign, malign, apprehensive, indifferent—from across the political and sectarian divides, and within British security and anti-intelligence forces. The film uniquely offers the perspective of an apolitical British soldier with little or no understanding of the background to the Troubles. Yet, although *'71*'s reading of the political situation as well as its representation of the various characters Hook meets can be viewed as generally balanced, the overall thrust of the narrative is that of a traumatised young soldier who in the end finds closure by returning to the gentle countryside of his native Derbyshire.

Figure 4: British soldier Gary Hook on the run from hostile factions and agents.
***'71*, dir. Yann Demange. Film 4, 2014. Screenshot**

The film and its soundtrack invite comparison with what can be considered as the earliest Troubles-themed film set in Northern Ireland, Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out*. Most obviously, there are similarities of narrative structure and place; both are based on various episodes of a man on the run in Belfast, albeit with a role reversal of occupier/occupied for *'71*. There are further points of comparison in the respective films' approach to mise en scène and cinematography (Barton 156).

At first viewing and hearing, British composer William Alwyn's epic orchestral score for *Odd Man Out* and David Holmes's rock/electronica soundscape in *'71* may seem like worlds apart. In contrast to the lush strings and plaintive "Johnny's Walk" theme in the former, Holmes's music can characterised by incomplete melodic ideas on electric guitar over a range of percussion instruments, from drum kit to tabla (although, similar to Alwyn, a modal minor tonality is implied throughout). Alwyn's incidental cues comply with the conventions of Hollywood scoring whereas for similar cues, Holmes concentrates on atmospheric sonorities in conjunction with the sound design of Paul Davies. What both share, however, is a sense of chase and repetition. For the injured Johnny in *Odd Man Out*, this is an ambulatory lament in C modal minor that obsessively never goes away; for Gary Hook, it is a relentless driving pulse that nearly always exceeds regular bpm (reaching 220 bpm in some early scenes). However, in terms of sonic gaze, the soundtracks seem worlds apart; whereas in *Odd Man Out* the pathos of Alwyn's music underscores the production's colonial-anthropological containment of Irish republican agency (Donnelly), in *'71* it is a British soldier who is now sonically represented as the film's Other. This is achieved through the sound design's destabilising and tension-filled qualities, whereby from Gary's perspective encounters and actions emulate a video-game-like immersive experience in an alien environment. A sense of outsider sonic gaze is further interrupted through the creative involvement of David Holmes, who as a child growing up in Belfast experienced traumatic conditions of conflict similar to those represented in the diegesis (Paphides).

Conclusion

I recently speculated whether any of the cases explored in this article might have been employed by Kulezic-Wilson as examples to illuminate her sound-design-is-the-new-score theory. Although musical ways of thinking about speech and sound effects have been explored from the beginning of sound film (Kulezic-Wilson 22), it took a specific set of creative, industrial and technological developments to lead to the possibilities that she interprets in selected cases of narrative fiction film from the early twenty-first century. Employing the idea of sonic gaze, these were included to support my argument that Troubles-based narrative features traditionally employed a range of sound/music sources and strategies that were particular to the contexts during which this corpus of film texts were produced. While these variously brought about reductive representations of colonial histories and ethno-religious identities, along with the aesthetic sonification of political conflict, they also led to practices that were unique to this body of work, including some that could be regarded as innovative.

Conventions of sound assembly and music for Troubles-based features up to the late 1990s more often than not perpetuated representations of the region's political conflict in terms of inevitable tragedy and pathos. Although this did not entirely dissipate after the peace accord of 1998, with residual postcolonial perspectives signalled through recourse to stereotypical ethnic markers and residual "strains of violence" as a manifestation of postcolonial sonic gaze, for some productions there was also a noticeable shift. This came about through a combination of factors, including technological advances in production and postproduction, the prominence

of music and sound personnel from popular music industries and scenes (and in the Irish context, a gradual shift away from traditional music sources), and the increasing influence of a politics of reconciliation that questioned (and sometimes inverted) established colonial-anthropological perspectives.

Of the examples considered for this article, the artistic vision of *Hunger* comes closest to proposing sound design as the new score (ironically, Holmes's music was designated "best score" at the 2009 Irish Film and TV Awards). Allied to this, the film's musicality emanates from many aspects of its production. Indeed Holmes describes how he initially advised against including any music in the soundtrack, an artistic stance that ultimately led Steve McQueen to recruit him ("Rhythm"). In the same interview, and resonating with Kulezic-Wilson's theory, he goes on to speculate on narrative fiction features where "people are bold enough to not put any music [in the film], because the music is already there. It's got a real rhythm to it. Film is a bit like that anyway; the whole rhythm of editing can be very musical in itself."

In different ways and to varying degrees, *Resurrection Man*, *Hunger*, *Five Minutes of Heaven* and *'71* all proposed alternative integrated soundtracks for Troubles-based narrative features, while deconstructing established film scoring approaches that adopted an authorial sonic gaze. At the same time, all four narrative fiction features raise their own ethical questions concerning music and sound design for screenplays based on past traumas in real life. An innovative approach to sound design for *Resurrection Man* contributes to that film's cinematic masochism and representations of (Northern) Irish fanaticism. The overarching musicality of *Hunger* provocatively explores aesthetics of violence, bodily decay and human sacrifice. And notwithstanding the alternative sonic perspectives proposed by both *Five Minutes of Heaven* and *'71*, residues of apolitical commentary on the "pathos" of the Troubles can be read into both soundtracks.

It goes without saying that I would have relished the opportunity to discuss all of this with Danijela Kulezic-Wilson.

Note

[1] I would like to thank Reviewer 1 for pointing out this example of Holmes's eclectic approach.

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