**Charlotte Crofts, 2001, ‘From the “Hegemony of the Eye” to the “Hierarchy of Perception”: The Reconfiguration of Sound and Image in Terrence Malick’s *Days of Heaven*’, *Journal of Media Practice*, 2:1, 19-29.**

Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978) has been hailed as 'one of the most beautiful films ever made' (Ebert), winning Nestor Almendros an Oscar for Best Cinematographer for his experimentation with natural light and his ability to push the film stock to its limits (Riley, 29). Editor Billy Weber - who worked on all three of Malick's films - claims that the film's immense cinematic beauty detracted from the impact of its equally experimental soundtrack, stating that he and Malick were disappointed that this aspect of the film was critically overlooked:

We don't know how much people actually realised what we were doing there ... Terry's very concerned about how the picture looks and everything, but we both felt that the look of *Days of Heaven* took away from other aspects of the movie. That it was too "good looking" ... too beautiful, because people would walk out saying 'what a beautiful movie', which was really bothersome. (Crofts, 42)1

This is verified by a brief linguistic analysis of the film's critical reception. Stanley Cavell discusses the 'extremities of beauty' in the film; Curtis Fox, too, notes 'the beauty of Malick's images' and Brooks Riley claims that 'the most frequent comment one hears about *Days of Heaven* is that it's a stunningly beautiful film' (Cavell, xiv; Fox, 28; Riley, 28).2 Martin Donougho asserts that when the film was originally released, 'critics and audiences alike were divided between praise for its visual grandeur . . . and boredom with its static tableaux, its episodic construction, its self-conscious homage to silent cinema', suggesting an apparent conflict between the film's good looks and its distinctive approach to sound (Donougho, 17).

My initial interest in this film stems from my experience of watching it as a child whilst expatriated in the Mid West during my parents' divorce. I remember it as an incredibly disturbing, beautiful, morally ambiguous tale, framed by the haunting voice of its young female narrator. Returning to the film as an adult, and as a media practitioner / researcher, my interest has shifted to focus on the mechanics of the film, examining how this moral ambiguity is created through the layering of sound and image. Since its initial reception, critics have begun to acknowledge the importance of this aspect of the film, particularly in their discussion of the voice-over (see Donougho and Wondra). However, analysis of the soundtrack as a whole remains under-theorised. This is reflective of the general lack of theorisation of sound within a body of film theory and criticism which tends to emphasise the visual image (see Comolli, 126-7 and Doane: 1980, 47). Both within cinematic discourse and the film industry itself, the camera lens has come to stand metonymically for the entire cinematic apparatus, effacing its constituent technologies, including those of sound recording, dubbing, editing and mixing. This privileging of the picture and the consequent marginalisation of the soundtrack is a magnification and intensification of what Comolli identifies as a wider cultural 'hegemony of the eye' (Comolli, 127).3

My project in this article is certainly not to denigrate the film for its cinematic beauty, but to attempt look beyond the image to understand why this film remains so resonant for me. The clue to the film's ability to defamiliarise and disturb lies in its experimentation with sound and its relation to the picture and, as I go on to demonstrate, this largely occurred in post production. Drawing on detailed analysis of sequences of the film and reference to the original screenplay, I examine the complex interrelationship between the soundtrack (comprising diegetic sound, dialogue, music and voice-over) and the picture, underpinning this discussion with a look at the wider context of the marginalised position of sound within film theory. I support my argument with material from a personal interview with editor Billy Weber which has proved illuminating in many ways, not least because of the notorious elusiveness of Malick himself as a commentator on his own work.4

**The dialectics of image and voice-over**

An examination of Malick's original screenplay reveals that music and sound effects played an integral part throughout the film's gestation. Natural and agricultural phenomena are foregrounded acoustically, the wheat 'makes a sound like a waterfall'; 'tiny sounds are magnified in the early morning stillness, grasshoppers snapping through the air, a cough, a distant hawk'; the tractors start up with a 'bang' and the separating machines 'shell the wheat out at deafening volume' (Malick: 1976, 12, 13, 23). At one point, Abby's voice is 'swept away in the roar of flame and the locusts, who seem to wail louder now, and with a great mournfulness - like keening Arab women - as if they knew the fate shortly to envelop them' (Malick: 1976, 7). These directions signal Malick's intention to supplement and trouble the traditional hierarchisation of synchronised dialogue with the use of a variety of sound perspectives.

But, the most significant difference between the screenplay and the film is the absence of scripted voice-over. Whilst his first feature, *Badlands* (1973), was specifically shot with Holly's (Sissy Spacek) ironic narration in mind, Malick had not originally intended to make use of voice-over in *Days of Heaven*. Indeed, the role of Linda, whose voice-over became such an integral part of the film, does not exist in the screenplay. Linda was originally conceived as the more sexually aware and mature teenager, Ursula, who runs off with vaudavillian George at the end of the script. Weber attests that Ursula's character was reformulated in pre-production as a result of casting the younger Linda Manz.5

Malick returned to the narrative device of the voice-over when it was becoming clear that the dialogue-heavy script was not working in front of the camera. According to Peter Biskind:

Malick decided to toss the script, go Tolstoy instead of Dostoyevsky, wide instead of deep, shoot miles of film with the hope of solving the problems in the editing room ... the editing took over two years - Malick was famously indecisive. Or just meticulous, depending on who's footing the bill. Says Jim Nelson, who worked on *Badlands*, "Terry wouldn't let it go. He'd nit-pick you to death." As more and more dialogue ended up on the cutting room floor, the plot became incomprehensible, and Malick struggled with various ways of holding it all together, finally seizing on a voice-over. (Biskind: 1998a, 297-8)6

Despite Biskind's bitchy tone, this account is ostensibly accurate. Weber confirms that the film took two years to edit and that Linda Manz's compelling voice-over was written and recorded in post, in an attempt to restore narrative cohesion. 'The story was weak and needed something to tie it together...the dialogue wasn't working so we had to replace it with something', Weber maintains.7

Although it was apparently stuck on as an afterthought, the voice-over in *Days of Heaven* does far more than simply tie up a loose narrative structure. It fulfils just as complex a function as the one in *Badlands*, where Holly's impassive narration contrasts with escalating scenes of violence. Both films offer an ambiguous double articulation in which the voice-over reveals one thing, the images another: neither world is commensurate with the other. Much has been written about the voice-over in *Badlands*, and it is useful to refer to it, briefly, here in order to contextualise Malick's recourse to voice-over in *Days of Heaven*. Holly's naive narration sets up a series of contradictions between what we see and what she tells us. This is apparent in a scene where Kit and Holly are gathering the fruits of the forest - the rapid camera movement from a lo-angle shot of Kit up in the tree, down to an extreme hi-angle shot of Holly down below, gives a sense of joy and adventure whilst, in voice-over, she blithely discusses her father's mortal remains. Critics have been quick to point out how defamiliarising this narrative technique can feel for the viewer. J.P. Telotte remarks on the 'divergence between what Holly says and what the film shows' (Telotte, 101). James Monaco notes the 'distantiation' created by the voice-over in *Badlands*: 'Malick creates an electric current between the positive pole of the voice-over narration and the negative pole of the images on the screen' (Monaco, 32). Brian Henderson also comments on the subtle interplay between voice and image:

In film a voice-over presenting events, characters, settings and interpretations may be belied by the image, by what we can clearly see for ourselves. *Badlands* often counterpoints voice-over and image in this way, sometimes very subtly and ambiguously. (Henderson, 42)

As Michel Chion similarly notes, 'in his debut feature *Badlands*, Malick had already attempted to bring new poetic power to the voice-over, breaking conventions of narration to destructure the spectator's point of view' (Chion, 56). An interesting example of this occurs when Holly describes her relationship with Kit in romantic terms whilst the image betrays a different story. When she asserts 'mostly though we stayed in love', the image of domestic bliss she attempts to create is undermined by the actualities of daily life in the forest - she wanders around with curlers in her hair, bemoaning the death of one of the chickens, whilst Kit shaves, dropping his razor in the wash stand.

*Days of Heaven* utilises a similarly dialectical relationship between voice and image. Linda's raw voice-over serves as a partial commentary on the fatal love triangle which is the central focus of the film; partial because, by situating narrative "authority" in the mouth of a prepubescent girl, the adult world is refracted through the eyes of the "wise" child, Manz's Chicago accent often working contrapuntally to the rich visual textures of the film. As Chion suggests, Linda's 'voice plays an unusual game of hide-and-seek in terms of her knowledge about the adult world of sexual relations and violence' (Chion, 56). And, as Ebert suggests, that world is always presented 'obliquely, as if seen through an emotional filter' (Ebert). In his analysis of the use of voice-over in film, Bernard Dick hypothesises that 'if the voice of the "I" is flat and dispassionate, the narration will have a distancing effect, which may be desirable in a film in which the characters are not empathetic' (Dick, 24). Like Holly's voice in *Badlands*, Linda's voice-over creates just such a 'distancing effect'. As Donougho comments, the 'detached narrative voice' in *Days of Heaven* contributes to the film's 'dislocating experience' (Donougho, 26).

Linda's voice-over is patched together partly from fragments of scripted dialogue which never found their way into the finished movie. For instance, Ursula's exchange with George in the script - 'it's like being on a boat in the middle of a lake. You see things going on, but way far away, with no voices' (Malick: 1976, 81) - reappears, slightly changed, in Linda's closing monologue. During their flight down river on the steamboat, Linda describes the distant figures on the bank: 'you could see people on the shore but it was far off and you couldn't see what they were doing. They were probably calling for help or something or they were trying to bury somebody or something' (1:16:59).8 Whilst none of the images which accompany this narration suggest anything quite so macabre, the silent figures nevertheless remain inscrutable.

Linda's narrative also borrows lines from other characters, such as Bill's scripted conversation with Abby (Brooke Adams): 'some people need more'n they have, some have more'n they need. It's just a matter of getting us all together' (Malick: 1976, 44). In the film, Linda regurgitates her brother's philosophy in voice-over 'he figured some people need more than they got, other people got more than they need. Just a matter of getting us all together' (00:28:11). As Camille Landau and Tiare White argue, Linda's voice-over acts as a 'two-way mirror, provoking a separate truth, one that renders the voices of the other characters unreliable' (Landau and White, 220). Situating these lines within Linda's narrative, rather than allowing Bill (Richard Gere) to speak, subtly affects our perception of his character, allowing us to see through his deluded self-justification.

Whereas voice-over has traditionally functioned to shore up unintelligible narratives or resolve narrative enigma, in *Days of Heaven* Linda's narration bears a much more complex and ambiguous relation to the image. Wondra draws attention to 'the disjunction between the image on-screen and the image created by Linda's voice-over' (Wondra, 9). Rather than providing an organising centre for the film, Linda's voice sets up, what Les Keyser has described as, a 'double-edged narration' (Keyser, 69). As Wondra suggests, Linda's voice 'does not select and order the images [as] a voice-over typically does, but':

provides a counterpoint, directing our attention subtly to the separation between knowledge and power, voice and vision, vision and knowledge. Far more often this narration generates energy from its friction with the "image". (Wondra, 9)9

This 'friction' between voice and image is evident from Linda's opening speech to her closing monologue. Her narration begins over the image of Bill as he beats a hasty retreat from the scene of a possibly fatal confrontation with the foreman at the steel mill where he works: 'me and my brother - it just used to be me and my brother. We used to do things together, used to have fun' (0:03:05). The clang of a red-hot metal rod falling symbolically punctuates this last line (0:03:11), pointing up the irony of the word 'fun' in the context of Bill's flight. 'We used to roam the streets' she continues, as we see Bill heading off down a long tunnel towards the light, 'there was people suffering of pain and hunger' (0:03:15). As Wondra points out, Linda's narrative does not "match" the picture; we do not see the things she describes:

Despite the authority of Linda's voice, what we see on-screen is not what she reports - we see neither Linda and Bill adventuring together nor their gaze at the suffering people they pass, but Bill fleeing the foundry after wounding (possibly mortally) the foreman. We know immediately that there is a disjunction between camera and narration since Linda did not witness Bill's fight. (Wondra, 8)

A similar dislocation between voice-over and picture occurs in a later sequence in which Linda describes Chuck (Sam Shephard): 'this farmer, he had a big spread and a lot of money. Whoever was sitting in the chair when he'd come around, why they'd stand up and give it to him. You give him a flower he'd keep it fo'ever' (0:21:38). Linda's description of the wealth and social status of the farmer contrasts with images of intense physical labour. Where the farmer is associated with the static word picture of the vacated chair, this is juxtaposed against the dynamic visual image of Abby and Bill energetically pitching sheaves of wheat. The disparity between word and image draws attention to the the work of agricultural production, offering an implicit critique of the dynamics of power in operation between the rich landowner and his impoverished workers. This dialectical approach has clear parallels with the advocates of Soviet montage, such as Sergei Eisenstein, who, according to Chion, 'argued against using sounds as flat literal illustrations of images, and in favour of audiovisual counterpoint, wherein sounds declare their independence and act metaphorically, symbolically' (Chion, 11). As Silverman points out, 'the establishment of a dialectical relationship between sound and image, the replacement of sychronization with counterpoint' has also been one of the central projects of avant-garde (feminist) film makers (Silverman, 316-7). In this sense, Malick's experimentation with the relationship between sound and image can be seen to be political, a point I return to later on.

As Donougho asserts, 'the complicating voice-over is just one of the techniques Malick uses to oppose as well as integrate sound and image, in often disconcerting ways' (Donough, 18). Editing around the dialogue not only necessitated the addition of a voice-over, it also brought about a different emphasis on aspects of the soundtrack which are usually subordinate to the dialogue in the mix. Weber asserts that he and Malick experimented 'extensively' with sound in post production:

We had done a tremendous amount of sound manipulation on *Days of Heaven*. There's a whole reel with maybe one line of dialogue in it, and so we were playing with the sound all the time and using the sound as if it was almost a character.10

The reel Weber refers to runs from Bill leaving the farm to his return to bid goodbye to Abby, the fateful moment when Chuck misinterprets their farewell embrace. Only a few lines of dialogue punctuate this lyrical ten minute sequence. It is tempting, here, to agree with Curtis Fox's suggestion that Malick is 'obsessed with silent film' (Fox, 27). But 'silent film' is of course a misnomer because, as Donougho points out, *Days of Heaven* 'utilizes in full the glory of eight-track Dolby sound' (Donougho, 17), including music, voice-over and diegetic sound effects. Such a comparison between *Days of Heaven* and silent cinema is clearly prompted by the film's dearth of dialogue, not a lack of sound itself.11

**'The hierarchy of perception'**

If sound is subordinate to the image, there is a further gradation within the soundtrack, a hierarchy within a hierarchy if you like, namely the privileging of synchronised dialogue in the sound mix. Since the advent of the "talkie," film sound has been dominated by the imperative of synchronisation. As Doane asserts:

synchronisation (in the form of "lip-sync") has played a major role in dominant narrative cinema. Technology standardizes the relation through the development of the synchronizer, the Moviola, the flatbed editing table. The mixing apparatus allows a greater control over the establishment of relationships between dialogue, music, and sound effects, and in practice, the level of the dialogue generally determines the levels of sound effects and music. (Doane: 1986, 336)

Michel Chion similarly acknowledges the centrality of the voice in mainstream cinema - which he coins 'vococentrism' - arguing that 'in every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception' (Chion, 5). Doane situates this hierarchy as inherently political, recognising the 'ideological values accorded to sounds and their relationships' where 'dialogue is given primary consideration ... sound effects and music are subservient to the dialogue' (Doane: 1980, 52). Kaja Silverman concurs that 'synchronization functions as a virtual imperative within fiction film ... it organizes all sound/image relationships' (Silverman, 310).

The primacy of sync dialogue in mainstream narrative cinema is the product of a convention which prioritises the individual subject. The practice of synchronisation aims to guarantee the concept of the "self" as unified and whole, making the viewer feel safe in the knowledge of his or her coherence as a subject. Sync sound is seamlessly sutured to the image, as Doane points out, working to conceal its own 'highly specialised and fragmented process' (with the associated technological apparatus of sound recording, mixing, and "lip-sync" dubbing), thus denying the 'material heterogeneity' of the medium (Doane: 1980, 47). Silverman identifies a similar 'ideological operation':

Synchronization plays a major part in the production not only of a homo-centric but an ideologically consistent cinema; by insisting that the body be read through the voice, and the voice through the body, it drastically curtails the capacity of each for introducing into the narrative something heterogeneous or disruptive (it minimizes, that is, the number and kinds of connotations which can be activated). (Silverman, 311)

This begs the question of what might happen when this 'hierarchy of perception' is undermined, when the voice is not contained within the body, or when other elements of soundtrack are allowed to dominate in the mix, which brings me on to the next point in my discussion of Malick's experimentation with sound in *Days of Heaven*.

**'A strange new sound begins to rise'**

The imperative of synchronisation is so thoroughly subverted in *Days of Heaven* that on the rare occasions when sync dialogue is given priority in the mix it takes on a special significance. In one such sequence Chuck and his accountant assess the year's profits, their conversation punctuated by the "kerching!" of the adding machine. If the hierarchy of sync dialogue traditionally supports the concept of bourgeois individualism, then reserving it for Chuck foregrounds his position within the dominant ideology, where the concept of the individual is central, in contrast to the undifferentiated treatment of sound in the representation of the rabble of harvesters whose dialogue is not foregrounded.

Elsewhere dialogue seldom enjoys a hierarchy over other elements of the mix. When Bill argues with the foreman at the steel mill, their confrontation is inaudible above the deafening roar of industrial machinery (0:02:33). This scene represents an unnerving economy of story-telling. As Donougho asserts, 'it is typical of the film's obliqueness that we hear nothing of what is said above the roar of the furnaces' (Donougho, 20). Rather than privileging intelligible dialogue, the film utilises a sound perspective which frustrates the narrative desire of the spectator - we do not know what their argument is about or whether Bill's blow leaves the foreman alive or dead. As Ken Dancyger suggests, Malick uses 'sound effects the way that most writers use dialogue. When it rains, he wants us to feel wet, and when we are in a steel plant, he wants us to feel overwhelmed by the sound of the machines and the pouring of molten metal' (Dancyger, 285). Later on in the film, the violent noise of the threshing machines similarly dominates the mix, drowning out Bill and Linda's exchange (0:21:10). Details of the natural soundscape take on a significance of their own, demoting the importance of human communication. As Dancyger reiterates, dialogue comes to function as a 'sound effect rather than for the information it imparts' (Dancyger, 323):

When the main characters drift to work in Texas, the sound of the crickets and rustling wheat are as important as the spoken word. In *Days of Heaven*, Malick gave disproportionate sound space to nature, resulting in a sense of the natural flow of events, a kind of equity of rights between the land and its inhabitants. Despite the travails of the characters, the land has great majesty. The sound effects play an important role in creating that characteristic. (Dancyger, 285)

Dancyger's use of the phrase 'disproportionate sound space' is telling, here, because it reveals the pervasiveness of synchronisation, where overstepping the traditional ideological subordination of sound effects to the demands of sync dialogue is posited as somehow excessive.

The use of an unusual sound perspective contributes to the impact of one of the film's most powerful and disturbing sequences. Malick's screenplay is prefaced and, possibly, inspired by a quotation from Hamlin Garland's Boy Life on the Prairie (1899) which compares the farm hands who come to work the harvest each year with a 'visitation of locusts':

Troops of nomads swept over the country at harvest time like a visitation of locusts, reckless young fellows, handsome, profane, licentious, given to drink, powerful but inconstant workmen, quarrelsome and difficult to manage at times ... They came from far-away and unknown, and passed on to the north, mysterious as a flight of locusts, leaving the people of Sun Prairie quite ignorant of their real names and characters as upon the first day of their coming.

Garland's literary simile becomes a visual and aural metaphor in Malick's film, where the harvesters are juxtaposed against the locusts by the practice of cross-cutting. A series of extreme close-ups of locusts, obliviously devouring the crops (1:05:55 - 1:06:13, 1:06:22, 1:06:29, 1:06:31), is intercut with wide shots of tiny figures frantically swatting the wheat field (1:06:14; 1:06:25; 1:06:30). The magnification of locust noises creates a dislocating aural perspective, inviting us to identify with their microcosmic world rather than with the distant yelps and whoops of the workers (1:06:08). Once again, an analysis of the screenplay demonstrates that Malick had planned to experiment with the sound perspective of the locusts right from pre-production. As in the film, the locusts are underscored by the exaggeration of their oppressive sound:

as you listen, a strange new sound begins to rise from them, a wild sea-like singing. As the camera moves over the fields and down into the wheat it swells in a crescendo until ...TIGHT ON LOCUSTS suddenly we see them up close, devouring the stalks in a fever, the noise of their jaws magnified a thousand times. (Malick: 1976, 102)

Later, the 'roar of their wings is deafening. The air hisses and pops with their electric frenzy' (Malick: 1976, 104). Here, music also plays a prominent part in the soundscape. The whirr of the insects is imitated and exaggerated by rapidly bowed violins (1:06:09), establishing the menace of the locusts and sustaining dramatic tension, Enrico Morricone's evocative score adding another dimension to the film.12 When the farm is eventually taken over by a black cloud of locusts, a mournful new theme is introduced on the oboe, underscoring this moment of defeat (1:07:00). As night falls the locusts, silhouetted against the flames of the bonfire, mirror the dark shapes of the field hands as they hopelessly collect the insects by the basketful to throw on the fire (1:07:39 and 1:07:42).

In the above examples, the hierarchy between dialogue and sound effects clearly has ideological implications. As I have already established, sync dialogue is traditionally privileged in the mix at the expense of sound effects, but here Malick uses a 'realistic' sound perspective (we hear only what would be audible from the position of the camera), rather than conforming to the 'realist' convention of privileging sync dialogue, whatever the distance from the camera. To illustrate this point further, it is worth turning to David Lynch's *The Straight Story* (2000) which similarly manipulates audience expectations of sound perspective. In one scene he uses a distant sound perspective for a long exterior shot of Alvin chatting to his host. We can't clearly hear the characters' conversation, unsettling the usual 'realist' convention of maintaining a close sound perspective even in long shot. The sound perspective moves in abruptly with the cut to close up - further drawing attention to the deviation from traditonal editing practice.

Both of these examples reveal an ideological conflict between the 'mimetic' sound perspective and the 'realism' of the image, as Doane points out:

If the demands of sound perspective are respected (that is, close-up sound "matches" close-up picture, long-shot sound "matches" long shot picture), at a certain apparent camera-subject distance intelligibility of dialogue is lost. The problem is similar to that of the relationship between dialogue and background sounds or sound effects. (Doane: 1980, 52-53)

As we have seen, conventional 'practices of sound editing and mixing are designed to mask this contradiction through the specification of allowable relationships between sound and image' (Doane: 1980, 50-51). However, although sync dialogue traditionally functions to reinforce the ideology of the unified "self", the soundtrack is also the site of a potential slippage in this dominant ideology. As Doane argues, certain cinematic conventions, such as voice-over and "mood music", sacrifice the imperative of synchronisation to the creation of an illusion of a different kind of reality:

If the ideology of the visible demands that the spectator understand the image as a truthful representation of reality, the ideology of the audible demands that there exist simultaneously a different truth and another order of reality for the subject to grasp. (Doane: 1980, 49)

The 'ineffable, intangible quality of sound', Doane suggests, brings about an emotional excess which threatens to overspill the dominant visual economy (Doane: 1980, 47-49).

This is illustrated in a sequence in *Days of Heaven*, in which music accentuates the effects of Bill and Abby's physical labour as they toil in the fields (0:19:16). As the picture moves into close-up singles of Abby and then Bill, diegetic sound is replaced by mournful notes on the flute and a rising melody on violins, creating a heightened sense of interiority, underscored by the addition of Linda's voice-over:

From the time the sun went up, 'til it went down, they's were working all the time, non-stop, just keep going. You didn't work, they'd ship you right outa there, they don't need you. They can always get somebody else. (0:19:23)

In this moment of over-signification, music and voice-over contribute to 'a leakage, an excess' of meaning which cannot entirely be subsumed by the image. According to Doane, such a reconfiguration of the relationship between sound and image 'has the potential to provoke a fundamental rent in the ideology of the visible' (Doane: 1980, 49). Silverman similarly heralds the 'reconceptualization of the relationship between cinema's two tracks' as being potentially subversive, calling for the interruption of 'their conventional and mutually impoverishing marriage, to establish different lines of communication between them' (Silverman, 316-17).

Read in this light, Malick's reconfiguration of the relationship between sound and image in *Days of Heaven* can be seen to offer a radical departure from the dominance of the visible within mainstream cinema. As I have argued, the traditional privileging of sync dialogue is the product of an ideological practice which upholds the concept of the coherent self. In its deployment of audiovisual counterpoint and its dehierarchisation of the soundtrack, *Days of Heaven* challenges this ideological status quo. Rather than operating to seamlessly support the image, this friction between soundtrack and picture dislocates the usual spectator-screen relation, subtly altering our perception of the world and our selves. Without denying the film's astonishing visual beauty, then, it is crucial to look beyond the image in order to appreciate the fundamental contribution of sound to the profound impact of the film.

**Notes:**

1. I interviewed Weber by phone on 27 April 2000 and spoke to him in person when I visited his cutting rooms in Los Angeles in August 2000. All further references to Weber refer to these conversations, unless otherwise indicated.

2. Cavell was Malick's philosophy professor at Harvard.

3. Feminist film theory in particular has, until recently, been largely dominated by a critique of the 'male gaze' put forward in Laura Mulvey's seminal essay, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (1975), which itself relies heavily on psychoanalytical discourses around castration anxiety, fetishism, voyeurism, scopophilia all of which have their basis in the act of looking. Wondra offers just such an analysis of the structure of looks at work in *Days of Heaven*.

4. Malick gave a few interviews on *Badlands* in the early 1970s (see Malick: 1973, 48; Cook, 130-32; Walker, 82-83 and Ciment, 30-34), but is well-known for his reluctance to comment on his own work (see Vancher, 10; Docherty, 4; Fuller, 5; Newman, 88-9 and Hartl), disappearing into self-imposed exile from the film industry for twenty years before returning to direct *The Thin Red Line* (1999).

5. In the screenplay, Ursula's voice is described as 'hoarse, as always' (Malick: 1976, 35), which suggests that this was a factor in the casting of Manz, whose husky accent combines a naive innocence with an uncanny maturity.

6. Biskind's equally bitchy interview with *The Thin Red Line* producers Michael Geisler and John Roberdeau caused such offence to Malick that he refused to turn up at the Oscars if they were present (Biskind: 1998b, 116-125).

7. Weber asserts that the voice-overs in *The Thin Red Line* were also added in post production: 'the film's voice-overs ... were not initially in the script. Making room for them was tricky, and most were recorded directly into the Avid. Some of that scratch track remained in the final film, according to Billy. "Terry is not really fond of dialogue, and shoots takes with and without it," he said ... "Terry lost dialogue wherever possible"' (Torgerson).

8. These and the following video timings are intended to offer an approximate guide only.

9. Whilst acknowledging the importance of Linda's voice-over, Wondra's article is primarily concerned with an examination and gendering of the gaze in the film, once again illustrating the primacy of the visual field in film theory.

10. Weber outlines the trajectory of sound experimentation in all three of Malick's films: '*Badlands* does that actually in a very primitive way and then *Days of Heaven* does that in a more sophisticated way and then we did it even more in *Thin Red Line*', explaining that he was responsible for hiring the sound editor in *The Thin Red Line*.

11. Indeed, as Doane asserts, in classical narrative cinema 'sound is never absent (silence is, at the least, room tone). In fact, the lack of any sound whatsoever is taboo in the editing of the sound track' (Doane: 1986, 339).

12. Musical cues are indicated throughout the script: Ursula (the character who later became Linda) has a 'theme'; music 'underscores' a private 'moment' between Chuck and Abby and 'builds a mood of tension' when Bill contemplates shooting Chuck when they are out bird-hunting (Malick: 1976, 22, 39, 78).

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N.B. A transcript of my interview with Billy Weber can be read at the Drama Collection, Department of Drama: Theatre, Film and Television, University of Bristol appended to the MA dissertation which is the forbearer of this article.