Inclusive listening for audio-visual sound fiction:

awareness and perception of our everyday environment
for the creation of audio-visual narrative

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A portfolio of compositions and commentary submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In this commentary I explore ways of listening to the ordinary sounds of the everyday environment. I also consider their sound/image synergy as an implication for the choice of artistic material used in audio-visual composition.

The focus is on these two questions:
1.   How can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?
2.   In relation to question one, how should we practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds?

I investigate my personal relationship with the everyday environment, gathering material for audio-visual composition. Drawing from a context of research in concrete sound initiated by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) Paris since the late 1940s, which served as a foundation for research in sound awareness brought forward by the World Soundscape Project, my research considers the different modes of listening to everyday sound and proposes the original concept of **inclusive listening**. Inclusive listening is a state of awareness that moves us to consider audio-visual object in its entirety while selecting composition material. Although the term 'inclusive' denotes a consideration of the visual during the listening, because of my musical upbringing and background, the inclusiveness comes from a sonic point of view and an emphasis in this terminology is naturally centred on 'listening'. This concept implies selecting objects for both their visual and sonic connotations. Regarding the sonic, inclusive listening includes the sound that an object generates at the moment of selection as well as the ones it could produce. In soundscape composition, the creative process starts with sound awareness. The attention we give to the environment can determine what material we use in our creative work. With inclusive listening, both the visual and the object's sonic properties determine our choices.

Using inclusive listening I choose and collect audio-visual material, asking myself how I can use these objects in their sonic/visual entirety for the creation of a narrative. This has led to the creation of ten audio-visual works that include fixed media, live performances, and installations, which range in length from 33" (*Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures*) to 21'35" (*I Speak The City*). These compositions, are situated in an original genre I have called **audio-visual sound fiction**. In this denomination, 'audio' and 'sound' have the same meaning but a different connotation. 'Audio' as in audio-visual refers to the whole

self-standing object characterised by its visual and sonic properties. 'Sound' is the channel for which these properties are searched and gathered as artistic material. With these materials, I work towards the creation of a narrative.

It is essential to acknowledge that inclusive listening is implemented within a context of audio-visual content of the portfolio; and that this concept possesses a broader applicability beyond the field of audio-visual composition.

List of figures

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List of submitted works

Title	Duration	Category	Composed date/ Performed date
I Speak The City	21'36''	Fixed Media with Live Action	Completed in 2019 May Selected for the Sound and Vision International Film & Technology Festival September 2019 Award winner for Best Screenplay and Best Director at the Maverick Movie Awards February 2020 Award winner for Best Sound Editing at the Northern Quarter Film Festival July 2021 Honourable Mention at the Tokyo International Monthly Art Film Festival July 2022 Finalist at the Seoul International Monthly

			Film Festival August 2023
The Dysfunctional Eating Machine	03'39''	Fixed Media with Live Action	Completed in 2019 November
Evocations	06'34''	Fixed Media with Live Action	Completed in 2019 December
No Eating In The Library	05'46''	Live Performance for objects and traditional instruments	Completed in 2020 February
The Pocket Sounds Party	03'25''	Live Performance for objects and traditional instruments	Completed in 2020 March Included in the July 2021 online publication of The Mass: Objects Co-edited by Henry McPherson and Maria Sappho
The Heater's Noise Attack	02'31''	Fixed Media with Stop Motion Technique	Completed in 2020 May
Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures	00'34''	Fixed Media with Stop Motion Technique	Completed in 2020 June

The Crocodile	02'07"	Fixed Media with Stop Motion Technique	Completed in 2020 October Included in the October 2021 online publication of The Mass: Inhuman Co-edited by Henry McPherson and Maria Sappho
The Sound Dealer	18'20"	Fixed Media with Live Action	Completed in 2021 February Screened from May 3 2021 to May 9 2021 at the Galerie Analix Forever Switzerland Honourable Mention at the Athens International Monthly Art Film Festival June 2021 Honourable mention at the Sound And Vision International Film & Technology Festival September 2021 Selected for the International Sound

			& Film Music Festival Croatia October 2021 Finalist at the Tokyo International Monthly Film Festival July 2022 Finalist at the Seoul International Monthly Film Festival August 2023 Screened at the Huddersfield Electric Spring February 2023
The Trilogy Of The Elements	15'02"	Fixed Media with Live Action	Completed in May 2021 Selected for the 5th Tehran International Electronic Music Festival and Electroacoustic Music Composition Competition Reza Korourian Awards 2022.

Programme notes

I Speak The City

I speak the city narrates the day of a man whose house has absorbed the outside sounds. Moving between realism and the oneiric, this short film has been shot in the city of SiPing (JiLin), giving the viewer also the opportunity to take a glimpse at a small, fast-developing city in the North East of China. Noise is not treated as a merely acoustic event, but also as a metaphor for an ever more busy and precarious working life, that demands from people constant availability. The audio part of the composition is made up of three elements which are concrete sounds, acoustic and electronic sounds. The acoustic part is played with two Chinese instruments: a small Gong and the Erhu. Both of these instruments try to reinforce the identity of the place in which the story takes place. The concrete sounds are registrations of objects directly connected and used in the story.

The Dysfunctional Eating Machine

The Dysfunctional Eating Machine is a sound installation comprised of a motorised machine and a TV screen. A looping mechanism allows the machine to "eat" in front of a TV, which shows a series of people (also eating) watching the machine. The videos shown on the screen are taken from a call sent out in October 2019, asking people to film themselves for a minute during a meal. The machine moves in a very noisy way, it loops a few times before starting to throw food and eventually breaks down.

Evocations

This short three-movement audio-visual composition talks about the profound longing of the character to enter into contact with sound, metaphorically shown as "hunger". Initially immersed into a contaminated environment, represented in the first movement through "dirty" water, the desire for a new genuine contact is such that the protagonists' stomach aches and rumbles. Through touch, taste and smell the character searches for a fresh contact with their environment.

No Eating In The Library
No Eating In The Library, for guitar and library objects, comes to life after a series of listening sessions done in the library of The University Of Huddersfield. The performance narrates the temptation and forbidden action of eating a packet of crisps in the library.

The Pocket Sounds Party

Our pockets hide a secret world of small, sometimes forgotten objects. Selecting the objects resulting from a survey that asked the question "What do you have in your pockets?", this piece celebrates these pocket objects through a musical party. No longer hidden in our pockets, these objects and their sounds have an opportunity to have their voice heard.

The Heater's Noise Attack

This short film is realised through the stop-motion technique and has four characters constructed by objects and their sounds: a mother and her child, a heater and a doctor. What seems initially to be an ordinary day, as the mother is caring for her child, becomes a life-threatening emergency when the heater suffers from a "noise-attack" and a doctor comes to the rescue.

Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures

In this very short animation, less than 30'', an office table top is brought to life and different stationary items can be seen quickly crawling around the screen in a busy manner. The feature of these items of being alive and similar to tiny insects is highlighted by the overlap of the animation with a video of a bug walking its way through the grass. The sonic part of the video is entirely made up by the original sounds of the objects which can be seen in their sonic and visual entirety.

The Crocodile

An intimate moment of relaxation comes abruptly to an end when a woman who is having a bath discovers a crocodile in her tub. *The Crocodile* is a short film created using the stop-animation technique that focuses on the objects of the bathroom. These are used to

visually and sonically construct the characters of the work: a dog, a crocodile, the swimming soap and the loving couple of toothbrushes.

The Sound Dealer

In the sound dealer's world, speech does not exist, and sound is a trade. The main character (M) works as a sound dealer and we see his hunt for sounds sometimes also bought illegally. In this short film, sounds are not abstract and invisible but are items that can be collected. By accident, M kills another sound dealer, and, on that occasion, he can collect a new sound that has never been heard before.

The Trilogy Of The Elements

The Trilogy Of The Elements narrates the story of a bottle of water that wants to fly, and follows the water's journey to vaporisation, becoming invisible to the viewer's eye. This work has a slow meditative pace as it investigates the interaction of the unanimated with natural elements, such as the wind and gravity. The sonic part combines real sounds of the used elements (such as the bottle, the drops of water), imagined sound (the vaporisation of the water), and the flute which in the first movement of the piece plays the role of the wind.

Links to works of the portfolio

- I Speak The City
  http://youtu.be/wFwbjUJCtRU

- The Dysfunctional Eating Machine
  http://youtu.be/bE97p2MEO48

- Evocations
  http://youtu.be/eE7twx3gaYY

- No Eating In The Library
  http://youtu.be/KEuJkDSxLDQ

- The Pocket Sounds Party
  http://youtu.be/LtPvdQ5G-IU

- The Heater's Noise Attack
  http://youtu.be/DlxWTBPrv8w

- Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures
  http://youtu.be/ti_UDi3yZ7k

- The Crocodile
  http://youtu.be/avIX13zQLds

- The Sound Dealer
  http://youtu.be/pIbYDSGsa3g

- The Trilogy of the Elements
  https://youtu.be/uUz0AY3Idas

List of presentations and publications

- Anastassopulos, A. (2022). *Inclusive listening: considering the sound/image synergy of an object for audio-visual composition.* British Audiovisual Research Network (BARN) Virtual Colloquia, Interdisciplinary Considerations in Audio-Visual Composition and Analysis

Introduction

Evolution of creative practice leading to research questions

My first engagement with music was through classical repertoire, I started studying the violin as a child at the Royal Northern College of Music, in Manchester (UK). After several travels through Greece and Italy, I finished my violin studies in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in Violin Performance at the P. Mascagni Institute of Leghorn.

In April 2017 I obtained the Diploma of music therapist from the Centro Metaculturale ATMOS of Rome. The training course that I have followed as a Music Therapist has allowed me to improve my creative thinking, appreciate more interpersonal relationships and increase my musical communication. The experience of working with people in need of music therapy has led me to discover and work with music without structure, to understand music as the elaboration of the unconscious and to evaluate its more functional aspects. Music therapy has also enabled me to discover the world of free improvisation which intimately now influences my compositional practice.

In these last seven years, my focus has been directed towards audio-visual composition. From September 2016 to February 2018, I continued my studies with a Master's in Music and New Technologies at the Conservatory L. Cherubini of Florence. This path of study has been precious to me and has left me more open to innovation and musical experimentation.

After I finished my Master's degree, I felt the need to listen to new sounds. As I believe that music and languages are not far apart, I started a Chinese language course. This course led me to leave Europe for a year and move to SiPing, a city in the North-East of China. This experience has left me deeply in love with the Chinese language and culture which I continue to cultivate and study even today. It is in China, where I felt that even the ordinary was different, that my imagination sparked as I experienced through a new culture new sounds that had a distinctive character and personality. Although I had already previously worked with concrete sounds in audio-visual compositions, here I actively started exploring the use of concrete sounds for the creation of a narrative. This brought in to focus the first research question *How can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?*

out of which developed the first work of the portfolio *I Speak The City* and launched the beginning of my research. As I proceeded more deeply into my study, I understood that to answer my first research question I also had to change my awareness of my everyday environment. This led to the development of the second question *How should we practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds?*

Outline of research questions

The two questions that guide my research investigate the ordinary and quotidian sounds of our everyday environment for the creation of narrative audio-visual composition. The audio-visual productions of this research have questioned the role of the audio-visual object and searched for new ways of listening to our surroundings. In asking — *how can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?* — I am searching for the elements within my surroundings that I can use to construct a narrative (character, conflict, plot, setting and theme). In this study, 'audio-visual object' refers to an object together with the sound it is, or could be, making. This means that, although an object is not producing a sound in the moment of its consideration or collection, it will still be considered in its whole sound/visual entirety: the visual being what we can see and the sonic being the sound it could produce. To advance this idea, I have found that my first approach and relationship with the environment from where the audio-visual object is gathered had to change. From this consideration, in relation to question one, the second question has naturally arisen — *How should we practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds?*

In a certain respect my questions are connected to James Gibson's concept of "affordances" (Gibson, 1977), later applied to music by Luke Windsor (2012). Affordance is "a property of an event or object, relative to an organism, which represents its potential for action" (Gibson, 1977; 1979, as cited by Windsor, 2012, p. 104), in other words, the perceived possibilities for action that an object or environment has for a utiliser. In this sense, in investigating my relationship with the environment, I am looking for what the environment affords for me. However, my study does not intend to progress Windsor's research, nor engage in depth with the psychological or semiotic reasons behind certain sociologically-constructed meanings that come out through my relationship with the environment. My research explores primarily the use of ordinary everyday sound for an

audio-visual construction, using a deeply personal creative approach that does not align with the theoretical framework of semiotics. As stated by Windsor, who considers affordances in music-making (instruments, social perception, and action) (Windsor, 2012), as well as affordances in listening (movement, verbal or textual activities, contemplative responses, and interpretation) (Windsor, 2012):

> Ecological approaches do not sit well with discussions of imagery and representation, however situated or embodied these discussions may be. Although our attempt to stretch affordances to cover a wide range of behaviours may appear speculative in some instances, we have intentionally chosen to avoid falling back on mental processes and representations as an explanation of behaviour in order to test how well the concept can be extended, and we would expect that such hypotheses should attract further empirical as well as philosophical investigation. (Windsor, 2012, p. 116).

Building on the existing theories on sound awareness, beginning from Schaeffer's concept of '*écoute réduite*' (Schaeffer, 1966) Michel Chion's 'added value' (Chion, 1993), Diego Garro's 'audio-visual object' (Garro, *2*005), Joseph Hyde's 'visual suspension' (Hyde, 2012), Maura McDonnell's 'visual listening' (McDonnell, 2020*)*, and Myriam Boucher's understanding of meaning in the audio-visual practice (Boucher, 2020) - all of which will be discussed in the following sections - I have been investigating the relationship the listener has with the environment, searching for a more abstract view that goes beyond the present moment. This has led to the emergence of a new technique which I have called 'inclusive listening'. Whilst inclusive listening constitutes a prominent aspect of the portfolio, various other forms of audio-visual elements and other types of sounds, independent of the selected objects, are also incorporated. Inclusive listening examines our relationship with the environment and takes into consideration the audio-visual object as a whole entity, to use it as artistic material for the construction of a narrative in an audio-visual composition. This has brought me to identify my composition work in a genre that I have defined as audio-visual sound fiction, a narrative fiction that is rendered through objects and their sounds.

This commentary will be structured into two chapters. Chapter One will provide an in-depth exploration of the theoretical foundations that underpin my research, delving into the relevant concepts and frameworks. In Chapter Two, I will conduct a detailed analysis of the works in my portfolio, examining how the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter One

are applied in practice. Chapter Two will also showcase the practical implementation of the theoretical framework, illustrating how it informs the creation of the portfolio works.

Chapter One

1. Theoretical underpinning of portfolio, literature review and context

1.1 Methodology

The methodologies used in this research include a qualitative approach with a narrative design of enquiry that allows me to centralise individual meaning, sourcing existing material for a theoretically-informed practice and finally, an audio-visual collection of material through recordings.

In my work, everyday audio-visual objects become 'characters' that acquire a role inside the context of a fictional narrative. Through their 'performance' they develop personality using both physical movement and sonic characteristics. By engaging in this process, the audio-visual object deploys anthropomorphism, as it exhibits behaviours akin to those of a living being. This brings it to have at times whimsical features that may recall children's play. A child's view of the world connected to animated matter has also been noted by Jane Bennett who, in her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010), uses a philosophical approach to present a liveness intrinsic to objects (Bennett, 2010). In the preface of the book, she notices that what she calls a 'vital materiality' is a concept that already has a place in childhood experiences, where the world is made up by animated things rather than lifeless objects (Bennett, 2010, p. vii). The language I will use in writing this commentary will reflect the approach I have utilised during the research, personifying sound and using metaphors to explain concepts. At the same time, the characters in my audio-visual works may sometimes ask themselves the questions this research is based on, as well as bring forward the same actions I do to investigate said questions. As part of my research, I wanted to bring in a creative act right from the very first approach I had with my surroundings and wished to continue this approach all the way through the completed works of my portfolio. This means that my investigation is reflected in the characters within my works, their behaviour, as well as my behaviour whilst creating the works, and also by the language I will use to describe how they have been developed. Merging the theoretical ideas (as well as the language I use to get these ideas across) with the practice in my fictional short films, is purposely done to continue the interweaving of reality and fiction that characterises my compositions. By doing this, I wish to help the reader assume a

position of empathetic comprehension, by considering this research through the lens of my own personal experience.

My research starts from sound awareness, actively searching for ordinary sounds in my everyday life. As we can see through the main character M. of my short film *The Sound Dealer* (2021) - which will be presented in Chapter Two - sounds, especially the tiny ones, are searched for by (metaphorically) digging into the deepness of the ground or by looking under stones. Once sounds are found, they can be viewed through a magnifying glass and the surface can be scratched to find new layers of material lying underneath. Taking off their first mask, it is possible to observe which memories or ideas they contain. What I can find, each time I look at a sound, is an image that makes it have a personal meaning for me. My research does not intend to delve into the field of semiotics as it is not seeking for broader semiotic implications. However, the personal meaning I find within the audio-visual object that brings me to assign to it a feature of anthropomorphism, is an important part of this study. The listening is both inwards and outwards, searching for sounds and understanding their meaning. From my perspective and in the context of this research, listening outwards means searching for external sounds and listening inwards is reflecting on what they represent.

As the audio-visual objects of interest are found, (e.g.: a ticking clock, a screwdriver, a toothbrush as it is placed in its holder) they are collected physically or captured through recordings. These recordings have allowed me not only to build a database of audio-visual material, but also to analyse the sounds. Analysing is a natural step that goes with the recording, as our ear unconsciously starts the analysis of a sound from the moment we perceive it. An analysis of sound may also be done through a repetitive and more focused hearing that encourages an inward listening. I find this process of repeated listening to facilitate an intimacy between myself and sound, encouraging richer metaphoric connections. Finding the personal relationship or connection I have with the audio-visual object of my choice is the creative process that will guide the audio-visual composition and imaginative use of the material. The collected audio-visual material can be utilised raw (without any form of manipulation), as well as re-organised for the aesthetic development of a narrative fiction. Technological manipulation of sound does not constitute a substantial aspect of my practice.

This research has also benefitted from a qualitative approach, which has been developed using interviews, surveys, questionnaires, sound journals, and workshops which will be discussed in an exhaustive manner in Chapter Two. The material, ideas and concepts deriving from the qualitative approach to research has been used for the development of some of the audio-visual compositions included in the portfolio.

1.2 The life of sounds

Sound is always with us. We hear sound from before we are born, and we continue to make sound even after our death as our body decomposes. Seàn Street, who has conducted a study about the memory and sonic presence of place writes about how "sounds govern our sense of place, how we contribute to them and how they partner us in terms of perception, image and the sound of ourselves." (Street, 2020, p. 3). Sound is present even beyond our sensory capabilities, going lower and higher in pitch than we can hear. It can be loud enough to damage us, and so soft that we are able to feel it with our tactile sense instead of our ears. This section will present a comprehensive literature review of some of the main authors and works connected to concrete sound and sound awareness that have constituted an important theoretical background from which my research develops. Following this, I will discuss the impact of the sonic environment on individuals and the potential influence of sound awareness on our behaviour, focus, and surroundings. These concepts will be presented through a study on sound awareness conducted by Heikki Uimonen, and an experiment on the influence of sound done by Alexander Strukelj et al..

From the 1940s Pierre Schaeffer, soon joined by Pierre Henry, began working on the first experiments of what was to be called *musique concrète*. They were not the first to work with found sounds (*objets trouvés*), although they were the first to situate their ideas into a theoretical framework. The Futurist *Intonarumori* from the 1910s of Luigi Russolo, Dziga Vertov's experiments from the previous decade in Russia, and Halim El-Dabh's early sound manipulation with wire recorders, provide some of the earliest examples of works with objects. Henry and Schaeffer's research at the GRMC in France, and the works that followed, continue to influence my perception of concrete sounds today and their relation to music. They have contributed to modifying my awareness of sound, encouraging me to listen to ordinary sounds with musical ears. One example to this is Henry's *Variations pour une porte et un soupir* (1963). The composer engages with the door, practicing it for two hours a day until it became a voice, letting it speak and shout (Ina GRM, 2011-2013). Engaging with objects and finding their voice are two features that I practice in my research.

Among others, Luc Ferrari also researched musique concrète at the GRM, but his research slowly strayed from a more methodical work of combining elements of sound, expanding to include a broader range of sounds from the whole environment where the recordings took place. Ferrari found that sound contained narrative elements that were closely linked to images. This can be found especially in *Presque rien n° 1, le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (1970), which he describes as a "series of sequences that represents a natural, given situation captured by a given manner of recording.*"* (Ferrari, 1998, p. 13). Becoming an important link between acousmatic music and soundscape composition, Ferrari thought his recording to be as images for himself as well as for the listener (Caux, 2002), saying that his recordings "conveyed often contradictory images that catapulted themselves inside the mind more freely than if they could actually be seen." (Caux, 2002, p. 130). Wanting to distance himself from a "world dominated by abstraction" (Caux, 2002 p.131), he called his work, starting with *Hétérozygote* (1963), "anecdotal music" (Caux, 2002).

In 1977 *The Soundscape*, by composer and music therapist Raymond Murray Schafer, was published. The title is a new term inspired by the word 'landscape' coined by the author to describe our sonic environment. Schafer highlights the importance of sound awareness for the environment and brings it closer to sound anthropology. Schafer takes us through the history of sound, before delving into the topics of schizophonia and sound pollution. According to Schafer, schizophonia represents the detachment of sounds from their original context and the subsequent transformation of our acoustic environment. Schafer also considers a sound related to its surroundings and situation of happening, defining the 'sound event' as an occurrence that involves sound within an environment (Schafer, 1977). This is opposed to Schaeffer's *objet sonore* (Schaeffer, 1966), which is instead a sound isolated from its context. He argued that the widespread use of recorded sound and its separation from the physical space in which it was originally produced has led to a disconnection between humans and their natural sonic surroundings. This disconnection in turn, affects our perception and understanding of the acoustic world (Schafer, 1994). Schafer believed that schizophonia has significant implications for our relationship with sound, as well as our environmental awareness (Schafer, 1994). Sound influences us; it has the capacity to influence our actions, our behaviour and, in the long term, our character (Schafer, 1994). Aiming for a healthier environment, Schafer, as Ferrari, finds the innate creativity in how we perceive sounds. He views the soundscape as a gigantic composition that brings form and beauty to the world and believes that an

enhanced sound awareness can help reduce sound pollution (Schafer, 1977).

Although Western culture today predominantly presents its music by excluding or minimising the influence of surrounding sounds, some cultures perform their music in relation to their environment, as studied by anthropologist Steven Feld, author of *Sound and Sentiment*, during his ethnographic research of sound as a cultural system with the tribes in Papua New Guinea, revealing the deep intimate relationship these tribes have with their environment. Feld's studies aimed to examine the different ways in which sounds,

> […] show how an analysis of modes and codes of sound communication leads to an understanding of the ethos and quality of life in Kaluli society. By analysing the form and performance of weeping, poetics, and song in relation to their origin myth and the bird world they metaphorize, Kaluli sound expressions are revealed as embodiments of deeply felt sentiments (Feld, 1982, as cited by Stoller, 1984, p. 600).

Feld had studied concrete music techniques and believed that sound composition could have an important role in anthropology research. He joined Schafer's *World Soundscape Project* "interested in his idea that soundscape research (could) be presented as musical composition." (Feld & Brenneis, 2004, as cited by Rennie, 2014, p. 120).

Schaeffer, Ferrari, Schafer, and Feld, each hailing from distinct backgrounds and possessing unique experiences, showcase the art of having an intimacy with the surrounding environment and utilising the perception of it in their compositions. This is important in showing how different fields link together and how a musical composition can contain narrative, environmental, and anthropological elements. These studies are relevant to my research as I also search for a connection with my surroundings as a starting point for my audio-visual compositions.

From the 1970s, as well as Schafer, North American musician Pauline Oliveros also developed a theoretical and practical approach towards sound awareness. With two different approaches, Schafer and Oliveros connected sound awareness to human health and composition. Oliveros is the founder of the concept of *Deep Listening*, a practice related to a form of meditation directed towards sound. This practice aims to enlarge sound perceptions, working for including "the whole space/time continuum of sound – encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible" (Oliveros, 2003, p. xxiii).

Both Schafer and Oliveros stress the importance of sound awareness which not only brings to life artistic works, but also impacts the quality of our lives and influences the construct of our surroundings. Ione, a psychotherapist that worked closely with Oliveros, accompanied her in the *Deep Listening* retreats as a 'dream keeper', facilitating dream recall and leading dream processes (Ione 2000). Ione investigates the presence of sound in dreams and connects sound meaning with our unconscious creativity, which often comes out in our dreams in the form of metaphors (Ione 2000).

As my research revolves around the investigation of perception of our everyday environment, I resonate with the above-mentioned authors' approach to the environment. I find an empathy with Feld's saying "Just as 'life takes place' so does sound" (Feld, 2005, p. 4) and I find myself treating sound in my works as a kind of lifeform, anthropomorphising audio-visual objects in my compositions. By doing this, I am aiming at enhancing my own awareness of my surroundings to find my personal connection to the audio-visual object.

Uimonen explores sound awareness and its impact on our environment and writes about it in the article *Everyday Sounds Revealed: Acoustic communication and environmental recording* (Uimonen, 2011). This article starts from the premise that there is a necessity of making people "aware of sound as part of their daily lives and culture" (Uimonen, 2011, p. 256). It states that "people living within a soundscape not only interpret what they hear but also construct their acoustic environment according to what they are doing - whether or not they are paying conscious attention to it." (Uimonen, 2011, p. 256). This is what Uimonen calls a reactive relationship with sounds: when environmental sounds become a problem by disturbing the community, we react by constructing our surroundings in a way that excludes them (Uimonen, 2011, p. 256). One of the goals of Uimonen is to transform this reactive relationship with disturbing sounds to a proactive one: modifying our surroundings to benefit from the good qualities of our soundscape. In a proactive approach, "an understanding of the importance of sounds in everyday life and the cultural meanings related to them helps one to act so that specific elements of the soundscape will not become dominant." (Uimonen, 2011, p. 256). Uimonen's proactive approach to sound in the environment is brought forward through sound walks and recordings. In my research, this type of approach is also used in search of personal meaning implicit in the sounds that surround us, which are also inevitably predicated in the culture I inhabit, for the construction of an audio-visual narrative.

Another experiment, done by Strukelj, K. Jonas Brännström, Nils Holmberg, Frans Mossberg and Kenneth Holmqvist, 38 years on from Schafer's book, has examined the influence of sound on performing a task evaluating executive control. The authors ask themselves this question: "Imagine doing something that requires much concentration. Now imagine doing it in a room full of talking people. You would probably be disturbed by the noise, but would your performance be affected?" (Strukelj, et al., 2015, p. 996). In the experiment, several people are given a simple antisaccade task to perform while listening to different types of sound and the influence of the sound is measured by their ability to perform the task. Antisaccade is the movement the eye performs in the direction opposite to the side where a stimulus is presented. The task asks the members involved to look at the centre of a screen and, when a sudden dot was presented, to cast their gaze in the opposite direction. With 32 participants taking part in this experiment, the antisaccade task was performed with seven different kinds of sound stimuli (crying baby, children playing, babble, traffic, river, Mozart concerto, nature) and in silence. The purpose of this experiment was to investigate the ability to carry out the executive control task whilst listening to the different sounds, with the intention of identifying the influence of everyday life sound on cognition. The experiment ranked the sounds in terms of disturbance and concluded that "certain sound presentations produce a large effect on executive control" (Strukelj, et al., 2015, p. 1008). This experiment illustrates the effects of sound on our capacity to focus and consequently, the importance of sound in our everyday life. Everyday noises are part of our actions and have a significant influence on us. As demonstrated by Schafer, Strukelj, Brännström, Holmberg, Mossberg, Holmqvist and Uimonen, the constant presence of sound has a big, both positive and negative impact in our lives.

Connecting to my second research question, I ask myself how consciously we are listening to this 'sound life', what difference it makes for us to be aware of sound, how all this material is transformed creatively in our minds and finally, how it can be used in creative audio-visual composition. Awareness is a state of knowledge and consciousness. Improving our overall awareness can have a significant positive impact on our lives, our culture, and our environment (Hawken, 2007).

Our ears can filter sound in an inimitable way that no microphone can reach yet. This filter is connected directly to our personality. In the same room, two people might unconsciously choose to listen to different sounds, and the sounds that they both hear could have a different meaning for them, as happened in the situation described by Uimonen who writes:

"For the writer, the humming sound of the fridge represents the keynote sound, whereas for the salesperson its meaning was constructed in relation to her professional skill, the sound indicating that the groceries were properly stored." (Uimonen, 2011, p. 259). Each sound holds inside something more than a vibration that sparks an electrical signal in the brain. Other than giving us an image of its source, it triggers our imagination and matches associations that are part of our personality. In Uimonen's investigation, the sound of the fridge had a personal meaning for the salesman who related it to his groceries, becoming a sort of 'acoustic chain' (Adkins, 1999), a term transferred to music from Lacan's signifying chain, where an individual sounding object can prompt other associations.

When something represents or is a symbol for something else, then we are talking about metaphors. In *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson,1980), the authors explain how our thought and speech function through metaphors:

> Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thoughts are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning down to the most mundane details [...] If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (Lakoff & Johnson,1980, p. 3)

The authors, throughout their work, track down 'hidden' metaphors that we use in our everyday language to describe and interact with the outside world. This relates to my portfolio as my works also communicate and construct a narrative using symbolism and metaphors.

In 2019 the Geneva Musical Metaphors Scale was the result of the study published in the article *"'Hearing music as...': Metaphors evoked by the sound of classical music"* by Simon Schaerlaeken, Donald Glowinski, Marc-Andrè Rappaz that explores and analyses a model of metaphors. The goal of this experiment was "to produce a dimensional model of the different metaphors used in Western classical music for a population of musicians and nonmusicians." (Glowinski & Rappaz, 2019, p. 100). The study involved a total of 540 participants. It included both musicians as well as non-musicians and was done in three parts (study 1, 2 and 3) at different times. Participants' own musical experience as well as musical excerpts were used (Glowinski & Rappaz, 2019). After creating a lengthy list of

frequently used metaphors which was then reduced to only the most frequent terms, these were grouped together in categories which described the major types of metaphors. This condensed the list into a model that comprises five metaphorical scales: Flow, Movement, Force, Interior and Wandering. Flow is composed by terms such as 'float', 'glide'; Movement from 'jump', 'rhythm'; Force from 'intense', 'immense'; Interior from 'inside oneself', 'internalization' and finally Wandering from 'to leave', 'journey'. (Glowinski & Rappaz, 2019). Connecting to my wondering 'what does a sound hold inside?' in relation to my first research question; I believe sound is not only a matter of physics but conveys a myriad of images and metaphors. It contains a mirror with many facets that reflect our past and future. A single droplet of sound is a kaleidoscope of seasons and moods, with life and personality. In my work I consider daily sounds to be like living creatures. The sounds that we continuously hear, make, and sometimes visualise, can be watered and grown into new creative material.

Increasing our awareness of the surrounding environment can bring us to notice the unique sound sprouts of all shapes and measures that we have around us. Schafer's studies include a collection of lectures that were part of an experimental music course at the Simon Fraser University published in *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course.* Schafer's ear cleaning exercises often result in compositions, Oliveros often starts her practice from compositions, that even non-trained musicians can play, to increase sound awareness.

> Sounds carry intelligence. If you are too narrow in your awareness of sounds, you are likely to be disconnected from your environment. [...] The level of awareness of soundscape brought about by Deep Listening can lead to the possibility of shaping the sound of technology and of urban environments. Deep Listening designers, engineers and city planners could enhance the quality of life as well as sound artists, composers and musicians. (Deep Listening, 2003, p. xxv)

As I practice my listening and awareness not only outwards towards the sounds, but also inwards towards myself, I become conscious of the creative images that take place as I listen to my surroundings. These images are creative material from which I can take a further step of abstraction, using them as a starting point to create a narrative.

Relating back to my second research question, I believe that our listening and perception practice should treat sound as a peculiar form of life that, when touched, changes from ephemeral to memory, from vibration to mirror, reflecting our personal sense of the world. By engaging the original technique which I have denominated inclusive listening, our listening changes to view the audio-visual object as a whole sonic-visual entirety and to include its possibilities of sounds. Inclusive listening welcomes the metaphors that spontaneously arise in our interpretation of the audio-visual objects' essence. As we embrace the meaning an audio-visual object has for us, we are collecting the sound and looking at it as a live creature, going towards the creation of what in literature is called a round character, meaning – in opposition to a flat character – a more complex figure whose inner personality, conflicts, and motivations unfold as the story develops.

The next section (1.3) will examine the audio-visual object in relation to some artists that have been influential to my research.

1.3 The audio-visual object

Garro investigates the relationship between what is defined the *objet sonore* (sound object) and the visual, arriving to defining the *objet audiovisuelle* (audio-visual objects) as "entities possessing specific gestural behaviours, trusted with expressive roles within the compositional montage" (Garro, 2014, p. 4). Dealing with an object as an audio-visual element changes the mindset of a composer, as well as the perception of the viewer/listener. The choice and the role of a determined audio-visual object become elements that act as agencies to the composer's metaphorical mind structure.

Garro also states:

> The addition of moving images does not merely complement the sounds: it brings about a wealth of new compositional challenges and shifts both the creator's and the viewer's experience to a position that is undoubtedly fascinating, yet quite removed from the one they occupy when they deal with sounds only. (Garro, 2005, p. 16)

However, my research diverges from Garro's in its consideration of the audio-visual object. I do not think of the two elements, audio and visual, as artificially combined, but I select an object in its entirety, complete of its sound properties. In this section I will introduce some of the artists who deal with objects in their artistic practice, discussing how they have influenced me and my works.

Tarek Atoui is a visual artist from Beirut who works with materials and electronics that come to life through installations. Although also using motors, his instruments are often activated through touch and breath (Simonini, 2021), managing what I interpret as transferring life to matter. Atoui wants sound to be objectified (Atoui 2021), rendering it tangible and interactive. In his series of works *The Whisperers* (2021) he creates what he defines as "listening environments" (Atoui, 2021), where sound moves through different materials. His idea of 'touching' sound, giving it a somewhat physical identity, resonates with my approach to the audio-visual object, as I address it as if it were a living character in constructing my works. This can be seen especially in *The Sound Dealer* (2021) which, as well as other works mentioned here and in the coming sections, will be introduced in Chapter Two. Part of Atoui's inspiration for *The Whisperers* was to approach sound as

vibrations (Atoui, 2021). I relate to Atoui's search for delicate and subtle sounds, which are often qualities that characterise the sonic part of his installations.
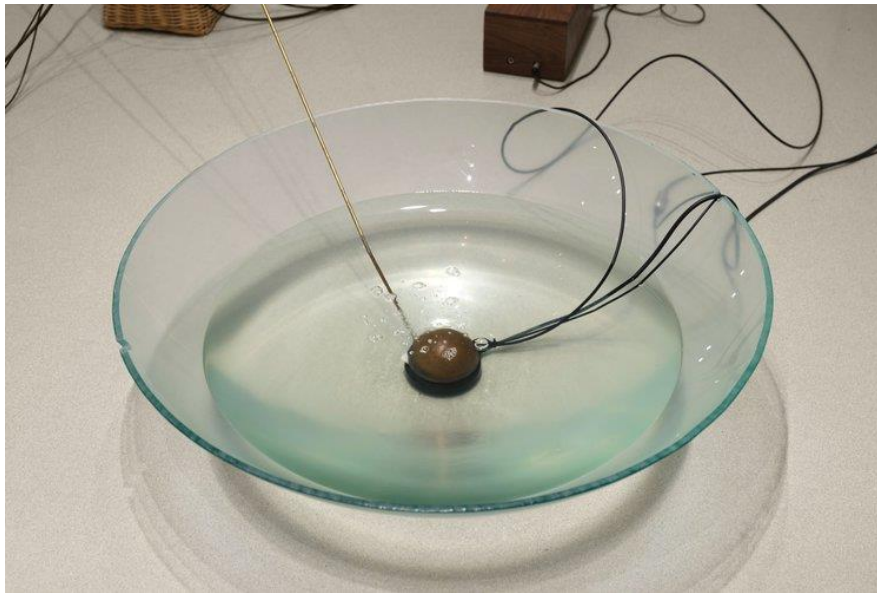
Another composer who has a close relation to objects is Hanna Hartman, whose process involves field recording, collecting objects, building her own physical instruments or props to play. In her works, the sound object is reconfigured in a new context and identity. As Atoui, Hartman may use touch, breath, and movement combined with technology to what I see as 'breathing life' into objects. The creative and suggestive ambience we can find in *Termite territory* (2019) or *Message from the lighthouse* (2009) bring to my mind imaginary worlds and events. In my works I try to create parallel worlds and fictional stories through the use of audio-visual objects.

Fig. 1.2: We Spoke playing Hartman's *Termite Territory*, Phipps Hall, Huddersfield, 2019 (photo: hcmf/Brian Slater)

During my period of research, I have also come to know Cathy van Eck and her works and have found a deep resonance with the themes used as well as with her approach to objects. In my works I aim to bring on stage the object as living characters, and van Eck's objects also appear on the scene with their own unique behaviour and personality. van Eck, as I do, also questions the connection objects have with people and how to bring this forward creatively through audio-visual works (van Eck, n.d.), as we can view in her works *What We Keep* (2021) and *Empty Chairs (2018)*. *Empty Chairs* shows three empty chairs "brought to life" (van Eck, n.d.) through recorded sounds and electronic processing. In describing her work, she says: "I enjoy looking at empty chairs. How they are placed, how their positions tell me something about who sat on it or who will sit on it." (van Eck, n.d.). My impression in viewing this work is that the chairs are on stage performing as much as the performer that interacts with them. In my research I ask myself how objects can perform on their own or with people rather than be performed by people. van Eck uses technologies while I usually have objects performing through 'tricks' like stop motion or invisible threads guiding them as though they were puppets.

Steven Kazuo Takasugi works with electronics, recorded samples, and computer-assisted visual performances. In a general description of his compositional techniques he discusses how an archive of thousands of fragments made up of sampled recordings is modified using various algorithms "until the resulting emergent sound phenomena, energies, and relationships reveal hidden meanings and bewildering contexts to the composer" (Takasugi, 2017). Takasugi's visual approach to live performance is a feature I look up to, as it completes the work giving it a visual sense of narrative through the theatrical movements of the performers. His works, including his composition *Strange Autumn* (2003/2004), connect to me through a sense of theatricality evident in his live performances. In these immersive experiences, I find the performers to merge seamlessly with the sounds they produce, which almost seem to be coming out from their bodies as well as their instruments which manage to elevate to an equal status with the performers, establishing a harmonious unity on stage.

Fig. 1.3: Plus-Minus Ensemble performing *Strange Autumn*, Edinburgh college of art, 2022 (photo: Andy Catlin)

American/Swiss artist Christian Marclay works with videos, objects and installations. Among Marclay's works, the pieces that resonate with my audio-visual compositions are his performances involving dynamic installations. These mobile objects exude an impression of vitality, as Marclay seems to engage in a collaborative interaction with them rather than merely manipulating them as inanimate entities. This connects to my approach of treating objects as a form of living entities. Also, a facet of humour permeates these

performances, wherein both Marclay and, in my view the objects too, appear to derive enjoyment from their shared experience on stage. Marclay, together with cellist Okkyung Lee, played in 2017 with Alex Calder's mobile sculpture *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* (1932/1933) expanding the traits of playfulness that already characterise the installation. This playfulness can also be found in other performances such as the meta-concert (2018) at museum Tinguely (in relation to the work of Jean Tinguely). Here he performed with a pre-existing installation playing with percussionist Luc Müller and once again with cellist Okkyung Lee.

Fig. 1.4: Marclay and Lee performing with Calder's *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2017 (Photo: Paula Court)

Bill Viola is a video artist "engaged in the study of time, consciousness, and the human spirit" (Ross, 1971, as cited in Marc, 2010, p. 5) shown in his works through the use of extreme slow motion. Elements such as water and fire, and slowness are recurring themes in his works, as we can see for example in *Three Women* (2008) and *The Raft* (2004). As he states himself:

I use slow motion in my work to help see details of an event or an image that I would not

normally notice. It allows you to look at the whole image and not just part of it because it is going by too fast. It slows us down long enough to experience something in the present, in all of its expansiveness (Viola, 2014, as cited by Gascoigne, 2014).

I find a deep resonance in the way Viola often integrates his works with the spaces they inhabit. His pieces, often showcased on freestanding monitors, invite viewers to navigate around them, drawing them so close that one can almost reach out and touch the figures depicted. Through this approach, Viola merges his art with the fabric of reality itself. Furthermore, I personally connect with Viola's deliberate manipulation of time, as he embraces a languid pace that instils a contemplative ambiance within the viewer. It is this intentional slowness that imbues his works with a meditative quality, fostering a profound sense of introspection.

Fig. 1.5: Viola's video/sound installation *The Raft*, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), 2004 (photo: Kira Perov)

Matthew Herbert has a more political and provocative approach to sound. *One Pig* (2011) follows the life of a pig, from birth to plate, excluding the process of slaughtering. Herbert says:

I was very disappointed to not be able to witness and also have to have on the record a complete cycle including the death of the pig from an artistic point of view, but politically it tells a great deal that we in this country don't have any rights to see our food. We're kept at

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great distances from it in Britain it's kept behind this veil of corporate secrecy. My motivation for wanting to witness that was to acknowledge the realities of what it is to eat meat and for me part of the problem we have in our society is a huge disconnect between what we do and the consequences of our actions (Herbert, 2011, 05'58").

His philosophy is founded on the idea that "any sound can be turned into music" (Herbert, 2023). In *One Pig*, Herbert uses different elements around the pig (such as wind, a cow, or the sound coming from his own video recorder) to create a dialogue effect with the sound of the pig. This talks about Herbert's relationship with the environment, an aspect that I find inspiring in my own works, as when I choose what narrative role the different elements take in the final composition.

David Cronenberg, a director whom I greatly esteem and from whom I have drawn much influence, shares with my works an incorporation of metaphors and connections with insects, as can be seen in *The Fly* (1986) or *Naked Lunch* (1991). In his most recently directed short film, *The Nest* (2013), the character Celestine declares to Dr. Molnar that she has insects in her breast. The film is based on a dialogue between the two characters regarding how to solve this problem, including the consideration of involving an entomologist. In Cronenberg's works, the relationship with insects is associated with physical or psychological breakdown, involving a decay of the body, and positioning some of his works within the body horror genre. Although in some of my past works such as *Parlarsi* [Dialogue with oneself] (2017), I used insects as a metaphor of emotional distress,in this research they are a metaphor of 'livingness', and I apply in practice the image this conveys by showing 'live' everyday objects.
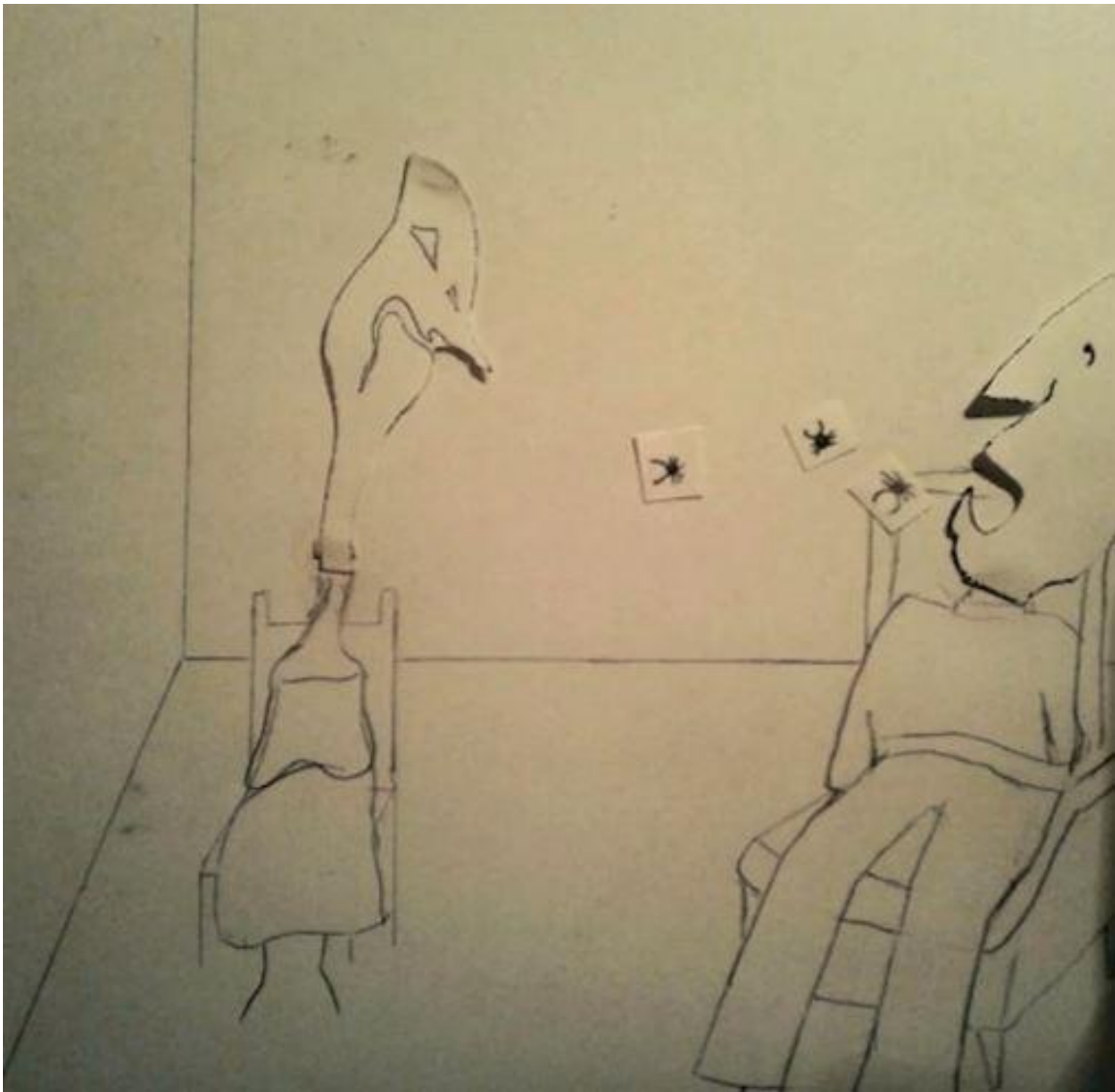
Adam Pesapane, also known as PES, is a stop-motion artist that creates humorous and surreal short films using everyday objects and food items. He has influenced my works through his use of ordinary objects which, in his animations, transform and morph into other items and have new meanings. *Fresh Guacamole* (2012) shows the assembling of various objects such as a light bulb or baseballs, used as if they were ingredients to make guacamole. The objects transform as he chops and mixes them together. PES uses the sounds of the objects, as well as the sounds of the objects he wants to represent in the soundtrack of his shorts, enhancing the narrative and giving more sense to the visual.
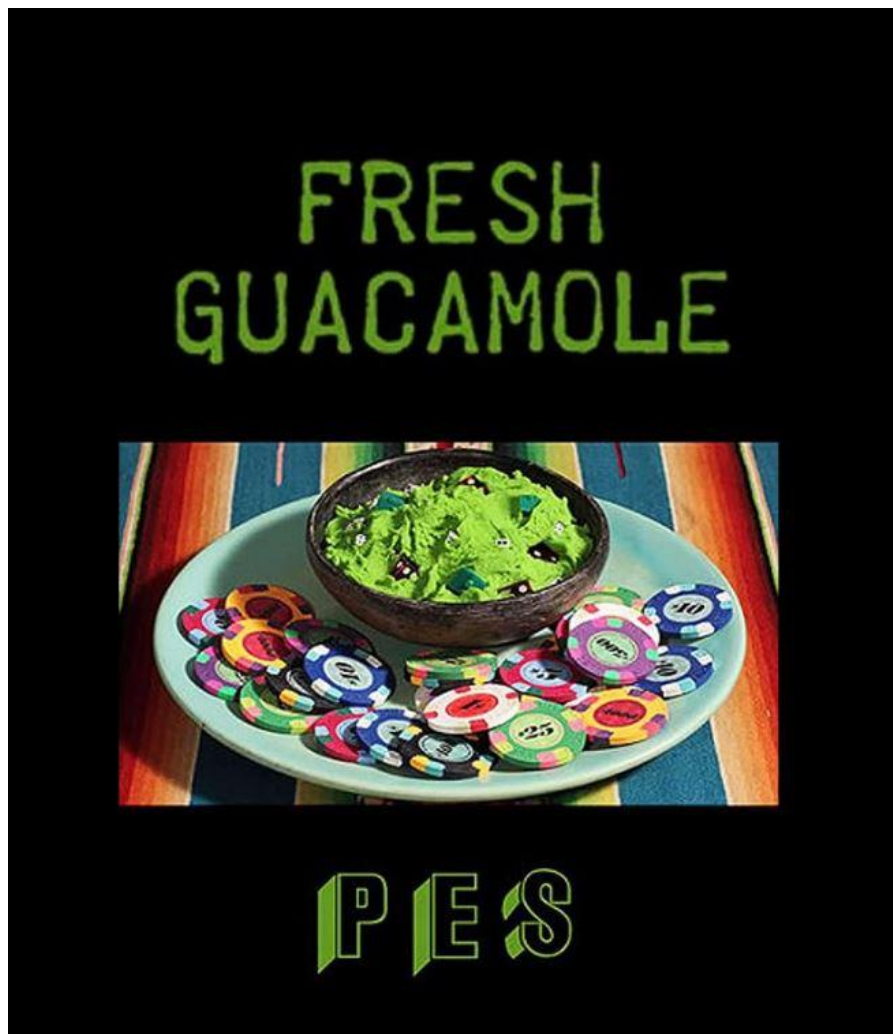
Fig. 1.7: *Fresh Guacamole* poster, PES, 2012

The research I am undertaking does not consider all the surrounding soundscape but focuses specifically on my relationship with ordinary everyday objects, giving them life and a role in a fictional narrative. In my audio-visual sound fiction setting, the sounds and images can be re-arranged for the musical narrative purpose, but the first choice, the thing that stimulates the recording of the object in the first place is the audio-visual as a unity. This brings us to the topic of listening inside a 'visual' soundscape.

1.4 Inclusive listening

Listening can be done in many ways and expressed in different terms based on if there is a purpose and what this purpose is. This section will examine several approaches to listening, in particular listening in connection to the visual. Based on these different concepts I have developed my own idea of inclusive listening.

Écoute Réduite (reduced listening) is a term coined by Pierre Schaeffer referring to a way of listening that focuses only on the sound, disassociating it from its context, cause or meaning (Schaeffer, 1966). Chion later expands this, inserting reduced listening among three listening modes, the other two being causal and semantic. He also adds to the theory of reduced listening the requirements needed to do it, its effects, and inserts it in the audio-visual context, talking about the *added valu*e that a sound gives to the image (Chion, 1993).

In opposition to reduced listening, Hyde proposes a visual equivalent that he calls *visual suspension* (Hyde, 2012), where the image is isolated from its context and the cultural context within which we would usually find it (e.g.: cinema, tv, internet). "In freeing visual imagery from these associations and histories, it might make available new audio-visual relationships within the context of visual music." (Hyde, 2012, p. 174). McDonnell also contributes to expanding the initial notion of reduced listening, introducing an extended form of listening, which she calls *visual listening*. With her approach, several listening compositional techniques applied in music, when working with concrete sound, can be transferred to the visual.

> An extended form of listening takes place where one comes to know the sounds in a music composition with a view to creating a visual work with the music. The listening entails a type of attention focused just beyond auditory concerns to a concern for the visual potential of a sound's qualities, characteristics and behaviour in the composition. This visual listening attends to the sonic details of a music composition, capturing what is of interest in sound events [...] (McDonnell, 2020, p. 253)

My research, developing out of all these ideas, offers its own original contribution to the field bringing the new listening technique 'inclusive listening'. Inclusive listening always considers the audio-visual object as a whole sound/visual entity, even when an object is

not producing sound in the moment of contemplation; the audio-visual object is thought of as a packet that already comes with its sonic properties determined by the object itself. Inclusive listening means being aware and choosing an object together with the sound it is producing or that it is capable of producing, making sound awareness a starting point of my research.

Enhancing sound awareness through listening and sound walks are central in the practice of Yolande Harris, a visual artist that explores ideas of sonic consciousness (Harris, 2020). Harris introduces a concept of 'sonic colonialism' as a consequence of sound being displaced, forcing the listener to approach it as an outsider, biasing its understanding (Harris, 2020). Similar to my investigation, in her project *Scorescapes* (2009-2012) she explores the connections between image, sound, and place, asking herself how sound mediates our relationship to the environment and how this can be articulated by contemporary multidisciplinary arts (Harris, 2020). With these questions in mind Harris wants to improve her awareness of the environment. *Scorescapes* focuses particularly on underwater sounds and comprehends a number of installations, performances as well as walks and writings. Part of the *Scorescapes* project is *Fishing for sound* (2010). The title is a metaphor for listening in a noisy environment which resonates with my own metaphorical 'hunt for sound' approach used in my research. Harris' research shares several aspects with my work, exploring different typologies of listening and also working with 'hidden' sounds, progressing towards ways to make the "inaudible audible" (Harris, 2015, p. 117). Although Harris works with the score and technology as a medium of relationship with the surroundings, she also, views working to expand personal awareness of the environment as a central aspect of her research, as do I.

Another artist with whom I share a search for life in the surroundings, as well as an understanding of the personal relationship with the environment and enhancement of sound awareness is Annea Lockwood. A search for "aliveness" in untreated sound from natural environments (Lockwood, 2020, as cited by Hanson, 2020, p. 4) has been the focus of Lockwood's compositional interest since her early career. Her practice includes expanding sound awareness and understanding the influence of sound on the body's wellbeing (Anderson & Lockwood, 2021). In regard to this, influenced by the teaching of Oliveros, a booklet called *Hearing Studies* (2021) that contained a series of exercises was published by Lockwood together with her partner and composer Ruth Anderson. Like Harris, Lockwood is also extremely attracted by water, in particular rivers, to which she has

dedicated two significant recordings, *A Sound Map Of The Hudson River* (1982) and *A Sound Map of the Danube* (2005). Her strong connection with the natural environment can also be seen in *Wild Energy* (2014), an installation created through a collaboration between Lockwood and sound engineer Bob Bielecki. The installation is designed to provide a listening experience for the participant, who is placed within a hammock and exposed to a range of sounds from both the infrasonic and ultrasonic spectrums. These sounds include those from gas vents, the internal workings of trees, and the Earth's magnetic field (Lockwood, 2011-2023). Although her more recent works are composed for instruments rather than objects, "she might not appreciate the distinction, being more concerned with sound as a transfer of energy than their categories" (Allan, 2021).

Chris Watson also has strong connections to the natural environment, though with distinctly different sonic outcomes. He is known best for his work as a field recordist that include animals, insects, and environments from several locations around the world. *El Tren Fantasma* (2011) is a sound journey along a disused railway line that runs north to south from Los Mochis to Veracruz, two cities on the opposite coasts of Mexico. Watson is an artist that manages to find and capture beauty in the sound world, transforming soundscape into art. I find a particular affinity with Watson's relation with the environment, that becomes apparent through his recordings. The beauty that he is able to see and the meticulous attentions he devotes to the intricacies of sound are exemplified vividly in his works, such as *Outside the Circle of Fire* (1998), that collects twenty-two animal recordings.

The sonic awareness these sound artists demonstrate link to Truax's writing on soundwalking. Truax states:

> My own practical suggestion with regard to the soundscape recording and composition is not to begin with recording or processing in the studio but rather with the experience of soundwalking in the soundscape. Soundwalking is best done with the only intent being listening, without the distraction of operating a recorder. (Truax, 2012, p. 7)

Quietness and intimacy with the environment are two elements used for sound awareness. Schafer, Oliveros, and Lockwood all treat quietness as a means to discover the sound world in which we are immersed in. In their three manuals, respectively *Ear Cleaning: Notes for an Experimental Music Course* (Schafer, 1967), *Deep Listening, A Composer's*

Sound Practice (Oliveros, 2005), and *Hearing Studies* (Lockwood, 2021), the authors all explore the theme of quietness for listening as a creative practice to achieve awareness and connection with the environment. Various listening awareness techniques (among these: sound meditation, ear cleansing exercises and sound walks), can be used as an initial phase for soundscape composition, aimed at gathering or discovering compositional material. For my works, through inclusive listening I choose an audio-visual object. What I gather as material for further use is an object and its audio properties, which are the sound it is making, or the sound it could make. This does not imply that the meaning cannot change by reorganising the gathered material, but my first awareness and choice is audio-visual, not audio or visual alone. This expands the way we are used to thinking about sound awareness.

If we look up the word "awareness" in the *Collins English Dictionary* we can find the definition: "knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience" (Collins, 2019). This definition can be converted to my interest by inserting the word 'sound' in the place of 'something' and 'situation or subject', becoming "knowledge that sound exists, or understanding of a sound at the present time based on information or experience". This sound awareness, which is central in Schafer's book, (Schafer, 1994), and that is the foundation of soundscape composition, differs from phonological awareness, which is sometimes also called sound awareness. Phonological awareness implies an awareness aimed at an ability to recognise speech. The central aspect to which I wish to give further consideration, is the entailment of the 'present moment', in the Collins definition of awareness. Right now, sound awareness practice and pleasure refer to an opening of the ears to the happening sounds. However, with inclusive listening, this becomes an awareness not only of the present sounds, but also of the multiple possibilities of sounds that could come from a determined environment. 'Awareness of sound possibilities' implies already having an attention to the surroundings, with an added creative act of imagined sounds happening in the mind. This occurs whilst employing the visual, and also includes a visual awareness of the environment. Considering this entire progression within the framework of my ongoing research, I envision the application of sound possibilities to extend to our commonplace objects in daily life.

There can be four broad ways of producing sound (which have inside them an infinite number of subcategories). These are: by human interaction, by interaction with other

objects, by interaction with natural elements, by the objects' own movement (produced by an electrical or mechanical mechanism). These four ways can overlap and combine bringing infinite possibilities. The infinite universe of sounds that unfold every time I look (or think) of an object is reduced to a few limited choices that are set by what comes into my mind at that moment, and I believe this is influenced by who I am, by my personality, my experience, and my culture. Remaining in a field where I want to explore my personal relationship with the audio-visual object, without delving into research of semiotics, in my study I have been exploring what our everyday objects are and my awareness of the possibilities of sound they contain for me through observation, annotations of our surroundings, surveys, and workshops. This has led to the creation of works of the portfolio as well as specific sounds or ideas inside them.

Objects and the relationship I cultivate with them as I collect them from their environment have a central role to this research. Underlying Schaeffer's *Traité des Objets Musicaux* (1966) and Chion's *Guide des objets sonores* (1983) is the triad of the sonorous, the musical and the meaningful. With all his research group, throughout the years, Schaeffer looks at the sonorous for suggesting ways of accessing the musical (Schaeffer, 1966). Since then, the world and music have changed as technologies have evolved. Daniel Terruggi patiently retraces these changes in his paper *Musique Concrète Today: Its reach, evolution of concepts and role in musical thought* (2015). Augoyard and Torgue's *Sonic experience a guide to everyday sounds* (Augoyard and Torgue, 2005) collects more than a decade of interdisciplinary research undertaken by CRESSON regarding the experience we have with sound and, more importantly, the effects of sound on listeners. This massive study already investigates the third part of the listening triad, the meaning, in a practical way. While it does include physics and acoustics, it also steps into psychology and physiology of perception of sounds, also mentioning how sonic effects are perceived in sociology and everyday culture.

Myriam Boucher writes about meaning in her audio-visual practice. Just as "every piece of music reflects the outer world" (Truax, 2012, p. 4), "any video music proposes an invented place, the reality of which we, as viewer-listeners contribute to defining" (Boucher, 2020, p. 234). Boucher searches for an answer to what gives meaning to elements in audio-visual art, finding it outside the object and inside the experience of every individual, "The relationship between seeing, hearing and feeling is thus at the heart of the process of mental imagery [...] and meaning, […] is constructed as a poetic form, built from mental

images, metaphors and symbolism" (Boucher, 2020, p. 237). In my research the mental images and metaphors are present as an active practice right at the start of the creative process. This happens through an inclusive listening that looks at the object as an audio-visual whole. This way of listening to our surroundings changes our state of alertness and attention, bringing an awareness of the possibilities of sound. This kind of awareness captures beyond the happening moment, including the future possibilities of the present. The audio-visual material gathered can be rearranged together to create an audio-visual sound fiction, that originating from soundscape composition finds its place beyond the representation of the real. This process fluctuates between the real and the imagined and through personal meaning and metaphors, it generates an audio-visual composition that reflects not only my outer creative world, but also my inner one.

1.5 Audio-visual sound fiction

This section will discuss the relationship between a person and the environment and how this is encountered in creative compositions. I will connect to Truax's research to situate my own works in the field of audio-visual art and talk about my own relationship with the environment.

In his paper *Sound, Listening and Place* (Truax, 2012), Truax writes about the relationship between a listener and the acoustic space, discussing the developments in soundscape composition. Soundscape composition is broadly a composing technique that can vary from recording the sounds of the environment and organising them in a musical discourse, to recording a particular environment at a particular time, always listening to what the world's self-playing gigantic composition has to offer (Schafer, 1994). Truax situates soundscape composition somewhere in the middle of a continuum. One extremity is the outer world used as inspiration - and every piece of music reflects the outer world (Truax, 2012, p. 4), the other extremity is entirely contextually driven, where we find a representation of the real. What changes in the different points of the line is the use we make of our surrounding sounds in music composition; the relationship that we have with our environment and the meaning those sounds have for us. In Truax's words "sound is not merely information exchange but is capable of creating relationships between listeners and their environment in a dynamic process of embodied cognition." (Truax, 2012, p. 3). My comprehension of Truax's continuum is that how much of the sounds' original environment is brought into a composition can depend on our relationship with it, meaning how much we intend to include and talk about ourselves in the composition, other than about the environment. In this research the audio-visual objects are collected for the purpose of creating a fictional narrative, therefore, my relationship with the environment aims at revealing the connections and meanings that I have transferred to the audio-visual objects. The recognition and realisation of the act of transfer is what transforms the audio-visual object into a character, making it full of feelings and personality. For this reason, in the works of my portfolio, considering Truax's continuum, little remains of the original environment from where the audio-visual objects are taken. What Truax describes as a continuum can be seen as a crossover from the artistic field to the environmental one. This may at times result in uncertainty in where to situate soundscape composition within the

musical field, arriving at John Drever's concept of Sonic Tourism or Sonic Fetishism, where "the concert performance is akin to a public showing of personal holiday slides" (Drever, 2002, p. 21). If we had to place Drever's Sonic Fetishism in Truax's continuum, it would be sensible to place it on the side of the line which is contextually driven, where compositional techniques are blended with ethnographic methodologies. I would also place as contextually driven visual artist Nick Cope's works which represent and explore cultures through creative documentaries (Cope, 2023) constructed with archives of recordings from his travels. His works, however, such as *Journeys East* (2013) about Buddhism, aiming to bring the viewer into the essence of the place he is experiencing (Cope, 2023). The film *Niú Pí 牛皮 [*Oxhide] (2005), directed by Chinese filmmaker Liu JiaYin, is also a contextually-driven work as it depicts the economic struggles of a family of three, played by Liu and her real parents and shot at their real home. The film showcases the family's difficult financial situation as their business is not doing well. Despite the stress, moments of affection and irony are also present, rendering the narration multi-layered. Talking about the sequel of *Oxhide* (*Oxhide 2),* comparing family life to the narrative of her works, Liu discusses the nature of family life, stating that:

> In family life there is always a lot going on at the same time, and things don't have a start to them and an ending, so we should have a multi-layered narration and multi-layered themes to it (Liu, 2009).

The film is constructed from twenty-three still shots taken from a stationary camera. Sound plays an important role in the film, as it remains controlled and clear even when the characters are not visible. This work conveys intimacy and everyday life, two features present in my works. In her film, JiaYin allows intimacy and everyday family life to be tangibly conveyed to the viewer and exposes the family's relationship within their small home.

Truax also imagines other possibilities beyond the representation of the real, moving from the abstract to the virtual, invoking implicit aspects of soundscape perception, which include metaphor and symbolism (Truax, 2012). Moreover, going further beyond that, there is "the creation of a purely imaginary or virtual world, one that perhaps seems 'hyper-real' with recognisable elements and structure, yet logically impossible, and possibly interpretable as mythic" (Truax, 2012, p. 195). It is in this imaginary sound world that my

research sits. I connect this extreme section of Truax's continuum with magical realism. Magical realism uses imaginative storytelling to seamlessly integrate fantastical elements into otherwise realistic settings and narratives. As examples of this I want to introduce three films that fit into this genre and which I feel share some elements with my work.

Ali Abbasi's film *Gräns* (2018) shows the main character Tina having a unique bond with nature and the woods on the border of Sweden where she lives and works for the Swedish Customs Service. Appearing to have a slightly deformed appearance that she thinks is a consequence of a chromosome deformity, as the plot of the film unfolds Tina discovers she is a troll. Abbassi's work achieves a remarkable fusion of magic and reality by tapping into the inherent and primal connection that humans share wih the forest which is ingrained with legends and mythology. I profoundly connect with the sentiment evoked throughout the film by the environment, which is conveyed to the observer through Tina's relationship with the forest. Sensing a subtle indication In *Gräns*, nature encompasses more than what meets the eye. This is another aspect that relates to how I approach my research, as I endeavor to transcend the superficial layer of reality in order to connect with audio-visual objects as if they were living creatures.

Fig. 1.8: *Gräns***, Abbasi, 2018 Still: Camera Film. Archive: DFI Stills & Posters Archive**

In *El Prófugo* (2020), a film by Argentinian director Natalia Meta we come across a parallel world invaded by sound. There we see Inès, a dubbing actress who faces a psychological crisis as microphones seem to pick up strange sounds directly coming from her vocal

cords. This threatens her job, leading her to believe she is invaded by intruders who might be the characters she has played. In Meta's film we glimpse a 'parallel world' made up by Inès' thoughts and anxieties. Here sound is personified and alive and electromagnetically comes through to our world from Inès' body. Meta was inspired by the book *El Malmenor* (1996) by Carlos Eduardo Feiling that has an idea of a parallel world where dreams take place (Meta, 2020), and purposely leaves the viewer in her film dubious as to what events are real and what are imagined. In this film we are confronted by two elements that relate to my works, the theme of a parallel world and the one of personified, alive sound.

Fig. 1.9: Official poster of *El Prófugo*, Meta, 2020

Korean director Kim Ki-Duk's film 빈집 *Bin-jip* [*3-Iron*] (2004) shows the story of Tae-Suk, a young man that breaks into people's home when they are empty and becomes intimate with the house, repairing broken items, cleaning the floors, and watering the plants. In one of these occurrences, he breaks into a house where Sun-Hwa, a woman married to an

abusive husband, is living. Tae-Suk saves her, and they flee together until the police capture him. In prison the protagonist practices moving with such lightness that he seems to become invisible and goes back to living at Sun-Hwa's house. Her husband senses a presence but is not able to see him.

Fig. 1.10: *3-Iron*, **Ki-Duk, 2004. From left to right, 'invisible' Tae-Suk, Sun-Hwa. and her husband**

The film, despite its lack of dialogue, effectively establishes an atmosphere of delicate intimacy by portraying the challenging circumstances faced by its two main characters and their love story. This intimacy is made possible by the characters' ability to transcend reality through achieving a state of total bodily weightlessness, rendering them invisible to the world around them. Quietness and intimacy are two main features of this film and are also two important features of sound awareness that I use in my research, not only to approach my surroundings, but also creatively in the finished works. How quietness and intimacy are used in the works of the portfolio will be discussed in Chapter Two.

In music, magical realism can allow the creation of sonic landscapes that blur the line between reality and imagination, blending fantastical sound elements with real-world sounds.

Can this type of artistic work still be called soundscape composition? I believe it derives from it, and the soundscape element is still crucial. However, it goes beyond the continuum described by Truax. My work, in extending Truax's notions of soundscape, offers a new compositional methodology and re-framing of soundscape realised through inclusive

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listening. Inclusive listening brings us to search for materials and their existing or imagined sonic properties, acknowledging our personal connections with our everyday environment. Allowing us to identify a personal connection with the audio-visual objects and providing them with a character and personality, the collected audio-visual material become elements that form a narrative.

From representing the real to representing a realistic fiction, the research I am undertaking creates a narrative fiction through the use of sound. This has some parallel with the concept of 'cinema for the ears' (Dhomont, 1996), but my research differs by the use of visual images, therefore, not relying solely on sound to create a narrative. Constructed upon the field of soundscape studies, to contextualise my research I introduce the term audio-visual sound fiction. I am choosing the word fiction because of the meaning of invented narrative that it embodies. This distinguishes it from the soundscape, which is a word that is originally and strongly related to landscape that finds an aesthetic and creative value in the beauty and awareness of the surrounding sounds. Several soundscape composers have already very effectively worked with compositions that overlap and expand soundscape reality with an extra imaginative layer, as we can find in Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1996) and others also bring the audio-visual as a whole into the concept of soundscape, as can be viewed in Janet Cardiff's *Nightwalk for Edinburgh* (2019). Cardiff adds a new stratum to reality as she accompanies a person in a walk around Edinburgh in real life as well as through a video on a mobile phone which shows a different version of what is happening at that moment. However, in my research what differs is that I want to go back to that initial relationship the listener has with the environment, looking at it through an abstract imaginary setting and an audio-visual channel of communication. In the words *audio-visualsound fiction*, audio and sound could at first come across as a redundancy, but the use of synonyms is to stress that audio-visual is a distinguishing and inseparable element that is used to work towards a narrative fiction, through the use of sound (of an audio-visual object).

1.6 Summary

Starting with the question *How can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?* I have been investigating our relationship with ordinary, everyday objects, treating them as living characters, and searching for the personal connection I have with them as a starting point for my creative practice. This has naturally raised the second question: *How should we practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds?* which has brought me to explore our audio-visual relationship with the environment, examining the topic of sound awareness and its influence on different aspects of our persona such as human behaviour and attention, as well as the construction of our surroundings. I have done this starting with concepts brought forward by Schafer in his studies that introduce the definition of 'soundscape', followed by presenting Strukelj, Brännström, Holmberg, Mossberg, Holmqvist's experiment that examine the influence of sound on performing an antisaccade task, and I have introduced Uimonen's research on the impact sound awareness has on our environment.

Concrete sound studies, (Schaeffer, Henry), creative sound awareness (Oliveros), anecdotal music (Ferrari) and the sound relations other cultures have with the environment (Feld), are the major things that have brought me to develop my own personal approach to listening to objects. In my research, anthropomorphising objects and treating them as if they were living creatures, has brought me to search for my own connection to sound.

Several artists have influenced me as I have been seeking my own connection to audio-visual objects, among these Atoui for his search for subtleness in sounds, Hartman for the imaginary worlds she is able to evoke, van Eck for the way she brings object on stage, Takasugi for his sense of theatricality in his live performances, Marclay for his whimsical interaction with objects during performances with installations, Viola in his slow and meditative approach in his creative works, Herbert for the way he uses different elements of his recordings to assign different roles in his compositions and Pesapane for his unique use and meaning he attributes to common everyday objects. Following also Garro's consideration in defining the *objet audiovisuelle*, and relating it to my first research question, I have found myself searching for my own use of the audio-visual object, viewing it in its whole sonic and visual entirety. In doing this I have examined diverse forms of

listening. Starting from Schaeffer's *écoute réduite*, Chion's added value, going through Hyde's visual suspension and McDonnell's extended form of listening, I have arrived to offer my own contribution with inclusive listening, a way of approaching and being aware of an object taking into consideration the sounds it is producing as well as those it can produce. Inclusive listening has brought me to reflect more on what I find within the audio-visual objects of my choice, inspired by Augoyard and Torgue's research on the experience we have with sound and its effect on us as listeners, and also by Boucher's meaning in her audio-visual practice.

Among the composers that have the environment as the core of their works I have found particular affinity with Harris for her exploration of listening methods and hunt for hidden sounds, Lockwood for her search of life in our environment and Watson for managing to transmit the beauty and the art that is present around us. Connecting back to sound awareness I have looked at the various existing techniques proposed to gain acquaintance with the sonic environment, and I have found that I share listening and intimacy as two elements I also use in my practice.

Bringing my two questions together, in exploring the relationship we have with the environment and how we can use the audio-visual object creatively, I have referred to Truax's continuum. Truax situates soundscape in the middle of a continuum, that sees one extreme as a representation of reality and on the other extreme, the environment used as inspiration. Beyond the representation of the real, Truax imagines other possibilities and I have connected this concept to magical realism, a feature also present in my audio-visual works.

Building on the discussed theory regarding concrete sounds, sound awareness and soundscape composition I have situated my practical works in a genre that I have defined as audio-visual sound fiction. Through the term 'audio-visual', I want to convey the sense of entirety I give to the audio-visual object, and through the term 'sound fiction', the feature of fiction narrated through sound.

The chapter that follows moves on to consider the works of my portfolio, their construction and how the theoretical background that I have discussed so far is applied in practice.

Chapter Two

2. Portfolio Analysis

Fig. 2.1: Still from *Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti_UDi3yZ7k

The figure above shows a still from *Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures*, a 34" stop motion audio-visual composition completed in June 2020 that represents an audio-visual summary of my research. Although the work itself will be examined in the following sections, the reader is invited to follow the link and view it as a 'postcard' introduction before delving into the portfolio analysis.

2.1 Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss how I have applied in practice, through the works of my portfolio, the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter One. This chapter will go through the evolution of my research, examining the workshops, surveys, and questionnaires I have used to develop my study. It will refer to the sound journals I have kept and discuss documentation of the development of the works, to illustrate the development and findings

of my research questions through the audio-visual compositions. The works cited in the 'List of submitted works' are in chronological order and thematically show the advancement of the research with time. This will be discussed in depth in 2.5.2. As there is not a precise word in English that includes 'viewing' and 'listening' together, I will be using these two verbs interchangeably to refer to either meaning. This chapter will explore the works of my portfolio categorising them under thematic headings rather than presenting them individually and sequentially.

In Chapter One I have discussed the influence sound has on our behaviour, focus, and the construction of our surroundings. Within this framework, guided by my two questions I have developed my research. Starting from finding an intimate relation with my surrounding environment, I discuss how I engage with the audio-visual object, approaching it as a kind of living creature and searching for its voice, welcoming its distinctive features and behaviours. The last two sections of this chapter discuss how inclusive listening has been implemented in practice and finally, how I have constructed a narrative through the audio-visual object, placing the final compositions in a genre called audio-visual sound fiction.

2.1.1 Finding a relationship of intimacy with audio-visual objects

The values of solitary and calm inward exploration, as well as the value of quietness, have been important in my search for a relationship of intimacy with audio-visual objects, and they have been significant for the creation of the works of the portfolio.

Quietness is an important element in sound awareness, used as an approach to attain consciousness of our sonic surroundings and intimacy with the environment. Schafer, Oliveros, and Lockwood all use quietness as a technique to increase sound awareness. Kim Ki-Duk uses quietness to achieve an atmosphere of intimacy in the love story portrayed in his film *3-Iron*. In this film quietness also contributes to add an element of magic, as we see Tae-Suk's effort to achieve a mute and weightless body, rendering him invisible to others.

As accomplished in *3-Iron*, in my works I want to pursue a state of intimacy with ourselves

and with the environment, that blurs the border between reality and imagination, creating an ambience that is intrinsic to my audio-visual compositions. This is at the foundation of my second research question *How should we practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds?* and has ultimately led to the elaboration of the inclusive listening technique. I identify in solitude, calm, and quietness the values needed to create the circumstances for approaching a propinquity with the audio-visual object. I find these three values to work together, positively influencing each other. Solitude, when approached with calm and quietness, allows me to connect deeply with my surroundings; I meet calm through solitude and quietness; finally, solitude and calm enhance quietness.

My search for intimacy is often reflected in the setting in which the narrative of an audio-visual composition takes place, as we can see in the opening of *The Heater's Noise Attack,* that shows an intimate moment of a 'clock-ticking mother' cleaning the ears of her child. *The Heater's Noise Attack* is a short audio-visual composition for fixed media, realised through the stop-motion technique. Whilst a mother tends to her child in a routine moment, the room's heating system suffers a sudden failure akin to a 'noise' attack, to which a doctor promptly comes to the rescue.

Fig. 2.2: *The Heater's Noise Attack* **opening scene showing a mother cleaning her child's ear**

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Stop motion artist PES gives new meanings to everyday objects. In his works objects can morph into new things with new purposes. The previously mentioned work *Fresh Guacamole* ends with a poker token in the role of a potato chip that dips into a guacamole sauce and snaps in half. In *The Heater's Noise Attack*, characters are visually and sonically constructed in a symbolic way: a clock represents a mother's face, and an ear is the face of her child, whilst the doctor is made up by a toolbox. The tick of a clock is a sound that I find can go from barely audible to profoundly resounding, from soothing to deeply disturbing. It is in a solitary, silent, and calm environment, however, that I notice it more, as it mixes with the sounds of my thoughts and materialises into a character. Imagining a clock as a face is a shared metaphor, as the part of the clock that displays time is called a 'clock face'. The incorporation of a clock to represent the character of the mother can also be regarded as a pre-existing metaphor, since some veterinaries recommend placing a ticking clock next to a sleeping puppy, as the rhythmic sound may serve as a reminder of the mother's heartbeat and provide comfort to the animal (Gill, n.d.). Whilst these considerations were flowing during a moment of calm where the only sound to be heard was a clock, this is how the role of the character of the mother slowly developed and found its form. The act of hearing also finds a place in the role of the child, represented by an ear.

Intimacy as a setting can also be found in *The Crocodile*. This work, like *The Heater's Noise Attack*, is also an audio-visual composition realised through the use of the stop motion technique. In this short film, a dog is sleeping, and a woman is having a bath while a crocodile slowly enters the scene.

Fig. 2.3: The 'hair-dryer dog' from *The Crocodile*

A snore, similarly, to the ticking of a clock, transmits a regular rhythmic sensation and happens in what could be our most fragile and intimate of moments: sleep. There we unconsciously elaborate our thoughts and feelings through our dreams. A bath is another example of a calm, solitary, and silent moment that creates the ideal condition for inclusive listening, and it is reflected in *The Crocodile* through the character of the woman. She is shown enjoying a moment of tranquillity that will be disrupted by the arrival of the crocodile.

In real life, a serene environment generates the conditions for listening, whilst in fiction it provides an ideal setting for the creation of a story by favouring the appearance of conflict, an essential element in narrative construction. An example of conflict can be found in Abbassi's film *Gräns*, when Tina discovers that her facial deformity is not due to a chromosome flaw but to the fact that she is a troll. This represents a turning point in the film as, from that moment on, Tina is able to elaborate past experienes and look forward to the future in her new found persona. My audio-visual composition *The Trilogy Of The Elements* comprises three movements: *Wind, Gravity* and *Heat*. Conflict here comes at the beginning as a magic bottle tries to fly and breaks, whereas calm is found at the end with the third and last movement of the piece. This work looks at the production of concrete sound without human interference, leaving the elements to take charge and letting them slowly overcome every presence until there is nothing left in the scene. The way objects appear resonate with van Eck's works that bring objects on stage as if they were the central performers, highlighting these more than the people manipulating them. Through technology, the objects of her compositions are brought to life and are presented to the viewer with a defined and distinct personality. In *The Trilogy Of The Elements* there is both musically and visually a game of rising and falling developed by the straight horizontal line that divides the surreal landscape into two, and by the movement of the bottle and the water that crosses this line: the bottle initially flies, then falls, the water coming out of the bottle drops low, but its remaining splash evaporates.
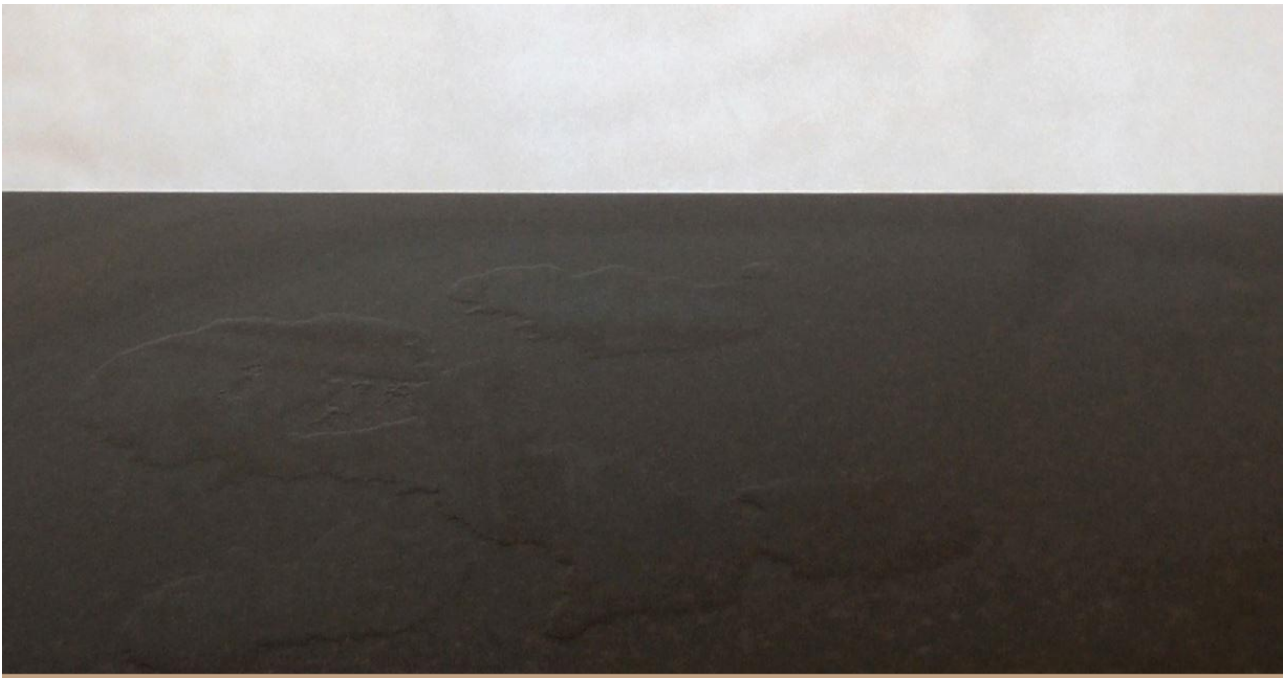
Fig. 2.4: Water slowly evaporating in *Heat*, the last movement of *The Trilogy Of The Elements*

The last movement of the work, *Heat*, shows the slow evaporation of spilled water from a tabletop, a performance I imagine a person would rarely stop to see. I have found that stillness encourages my contact and awareness with the surroundings. Stopping to observe events stream by stimulates my listening and imagination. This is the sensation I have wanted to recreate in *Heat,* meant to distract the listener's attention, allowing him/her to drift into a silent distraction.

The library is another example of solitary, calm, and silent place, often depicting rows of tables with single people immersed in their own world. I have spent some time there becoming acquainted with the place's sounds and glimpsing into people's own sound intimacy. While also keeping a sound journal, these library listening sessions have served as a foundation for the piece *No Eating In The Library*, a composition for guitar and library objects*.* In such an environment, sounds appear mellow and gentle although still maintaining their character, as strong emotions are also expressed through whispers. Although sounds are slower and softer than their usual selves, they still stand out as loud in the silent environment. Speed will change an object's sound pitch, as I noticed while listening to a jacket being zipped. In the library environment, tiny sound details also emerge. As I annotated in my sound journal:

> An accompanied closing door: The gripping of the fingers on the door handle allows you to
> hear the sound of the cleanness of the skin rubbing against the metal. A greasy hand is

almost silent. The handle is pressed down with a metallic sort of whistle, the opening door becomes a miniature organ of hisses and pipes travelling from low to high. The contact of clothes that touch on exiting produce soft cotton cloud layers of numb sound. The closing door sounds like an organ reply to the opening sound, pipes and hisses this time descending from high to low. Then the closing mechanism can be heard, being pushed in and then out as two Russian matryoshka "clonks", one popping out from a bigger other as a sudden loud rectangular thud covers all sounds marking that the door is closed. Soft toot of the handle turning in an upright position again.

A full list of sounds annotated during my library listening sessions can be found in the Appendix. I imagined the library similar to the study of entomology, envisioning a tiny world of sounds crawling around in a silent field. This image is also a recurring metaphor of my relationship with everyday small object sounds that bring in my mind images of tiny creatures that scatter, buzz, flutter, and crawl away whilst we are busy with our daily routine, as in *Sounds Are Like Living Creatures*, the audio-visual composition used as introduction to this chapter. As already mentioned in Chapter One, a reality contaminated by insects is also a recurring motif in Cronenberg's works. In his films insects are a metaphor for body or psychological deterioration. Although resonating with his fantasy, in my works insects are initially an imagined metaphor for life, which is then developed in the audio-visual compositions through the animation of small objects.

In my library listening sessions, as I annotated in my sound journal, I also replicated the sounds I had been listening to, becoming myself another number in the row of desks, each a micro-environment of sounds. As my sounds were made within my designated bubble, I could feel them even more intimately and internally. From my library sound journal:

> As for when I cover my ears allows me to hear my own body sounds louder, so I feel with my own tiny personal library sounds. In this sense it is like my desk contains as an imaginary moving body, so my breath, cough and body internal movements are all substituted by the library sounds.

In opposition, a loss of intimacy with sound and, consequently, a loss of identity, can be seen through the resignation and discomfort perceived by the main character of *I Speak The City.* This short film is narrated through an interview with a man whose house has absorbed the outside sounds, leaving the viewer without the possibility to hear his voice. The values of calm, solitude, and quietness are lost as the traffic noise invades the man's

most intimate place.

Fig. 2.5: *I Speak The City* opening scene

Being the first work of my portfolio, *I Speak The City* reflects my first approach to sound awareness, my discomfort with sound pollution and my search for a renewed contact with my surroundings. Sound pollution is one of the topics addressed by Schafer in *The Soundscape* where the authors states that: "today the world suffers from an overpopulation of sounds; there is so much acoustic information that little of it can emerge with clarity" (Schafer, 1994, p. 71) and "the overkill of hi-fi gadgetry not only contributes generously to the lo-fi problem, but it creates a synthetic soundscape in which natural sounds are becoming increasingly unnatural while machine-made substitutes are providing the operative signals directing modern life" (Schafer, 1994, p. 91).

The instruments and sounds that I have used in *I Speak The City* try to restore an identity of the place in which the story takes place, animating the house and giving back to it fragments of lost sounds. The acoustic part is played with two Chinese instruments: a small Gong and the Erhu. The concrete sounds are registrations of objects directly connected to the story, including clothes pegs, bowls, chopsticks, and fish bones, connecting to my first research question *How can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?*

Evocations comprises three audio-visual portraits featuring a single individual who, throughout the three pieces, endeavours to establish a visceral sense of intimacy with sound. These three portraits are part of a period of listening awareness sessions held around the topic of food and cutlery, that included the *Sound Awareness Whilst Eating* questionnaire and also brought to the construction of *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* installation. The questionnaire is designed to investigate and enhance sound awareness during meals, whilst at the same time gathers ideas regarding the benefits of this action. Starting with three questions regarding personal eating habits, it then asks the candidates to listen to four different recordings containing four different eating styles, asking the listener to recognize each style, which sounds are found pleasant or unpleasant and if there are any particular sounds noticed during the listening. Furthermore, the participants were asked to be involved in a practical exploration of the sounds, using a plate, fork, and knife. This part is meant to activate in the individual a sense of control and pleasure of awareness over the sounds that are part of our daily life, as well as listening to the voice of our unique and personal way of handling cutlery. Finally, the candidates were asked to have a meal and complete the last part of the questionnaire that asks for feedback of his/her experience and if he/she has found an improved sound awareness. The questionnaire can be viewed in full in the Appendix.

The recordings used in the questionnaire were successively used as material for the creation of *Evocations*, which contains the three audio-visual portraits *Ordinariness, Hunger and Taste*. These portraits show my search for close contact with sound, metaphorically done through taste, touch, and smell, comparing the finding of a connection with the audio-visual object to the satisfaction of hunger.

I find *Hunger* the second portrait of *Evocations,* to have a connection with Cathy van Eck's work *Groene Ruis.* Through a plant, that when played with a violin bow rumbles like an empty stomach, *Hunger* shows a synaesthetic experience that aims to surpass the margins of the senses, longing for a physical connection with sound that will satisfy an emptiness, represented by hunger. Eck's piece utilises a plant and a hair dryer to investigate the relationship with our environment (van Eck, n.d). Through her work she wants to explore human, nature, and objects, blurring the borders between these categories (van Eck, n.d). In both van Eck's *Groene Ruis* and my audio-visual work *Hunger,* the performer's face remains hidden, giving more space to the objects and plants.

Although conscious that sounds cannot be eaten, in shooting the video I realistically identified with the character of the three portraits who searches for a palpable connection with its environment.

Fig. 2.6: A still from *Hunger*, the second audio-visual portrait of *Evocations*

I have found through calmness, solitude, and quietness the conditions to connect with the audio-visual environment that allow me to develop an inclusive listening practice. The search for these three values is reflected in some settings and characters of the audio-visual works of the portfolio. A state of intimacy brings me to listen to the secret sounds of objects, which is the topic of the next section, and to understand their point of view. This will allow the audio-visual object to have a voice and role in a narrative.

2.1.2 Listening to the secret sounds of objects

Certain sounds are a constant part of our daily life, and they can be in deep contact with us and our state of mind; nonetheless they often occur without any witnesses.

In *The Sound of a Room* (2020), Street investigates 'missed sounds' and the spaces created by sound through mind and memory (Street, 2020). He writes "[…] a room is more than an inhabited physical space, it is a field of consciousness, a sonic energy field with ourselves at its centre." (Street, 2020, p. 3). Boucher also finds the meaning to the elements of audio-visual art inside her own experience with objects (Boucher, 2020). In seeking a connection with our everyday ordinary sounds, I have found myself hunting to discover what goes on in locations such as inside a pocket, inside a drawer or under a bed. Yolande Harris and Tarek Atoui are two artists that work with hidden or very subtle sounds. Harris searches for sound that go beyond audibility often in inaccessible environments such as underwater (Harris, 2020); Atoui explores evoking a nuanced atmosphere through moving installations he describes as 'listening environments' (Atoui, 2021). This search is reflected in M's character in *The Sound Dealer* short film as he drives to isolated locations in search of sounds to capture, finding them under the dirt, between branches or under stones. In this world of fiction, speech does not exist, and sound is a trade. Sounds are not abstract and invisible but are items that can be collected. The main character (M) works as a sound dealer and we see his hunt, sometimes at the border of legality. By accident, M kills another sound dealer, and, on that occasion, he can collect a new sound that has never been heard before. Attracted by the almost perceivable, I have provided the hidden sounds M. collects with a quality that I have perceived as 'secret', as the viewer is not able to discern clearly what these objects are, or their purpose in that determined environment.

Fig. 2.7: M. from *The Sound Dealer* collecting a sound from the woodlands

In *The Trilogy Of The Elements'* last movement *Heat,* the process of water evaporation occurs in an isolated and not completely identifiable place, leaving the listener witness to a secret event. The tabletop on which the scene takes place is purposely not entirely recognisable, aiming at creating an effect of a large stretch of concrete land, with a straight line resembling a horizon. The audio-visual experience I wanted to create through *Heat* is connected to Viola's works, in the aspects of searching for a slow, meditative audio-visual experience, and for the use of water as a theme. *Heat* also utilises slowness to enable the viewer to immerse themselves fully in the present moment, following the meditative movement of the piece.

There are objects that speak although not directly touched, as the items in a backpack whilst we walk. Others produce a sound through contact, but their voice may be too soft for us to detect. Our interaction with objects may reflect our state of mind. Their sounds mirror our rush or our calm. As I dissociate from a scene of action, I observe the audio-visual object, imagining it is an independent creature. The human traits with which I have equipped the sounds used in my works are personal, however, as I myself am absorbed into a historical time and culture, the metaphors used can be shared with others. A particular hidden environment I have investigated is our pockets, and in November 2019 I conducted a survey asking fifty people what they had in their pockets.

We carry around with us a micro ensemble that secretly performs in a dark place without an audience. The secret world of sounds that goes on in our pockets resembles an ensemble constituted by some old performers that stay with us throughout our lives, some that are long forgotten and others that we carry only for a few days, hours or sometimes minutes. This special ensemble can play by itself but is also often conducted by us, and not rarely we join in as musicians, playing these special instruments with our hands, as we would do for more traditional ones. The pieces that are created talk about our personality through the items we have in our pockets, and about our emotions through the way we move and walk. As we tear to pieces a bus ticket that is in our pocket, we can almost imagine it screaming a little muffled horror soundtrack to accompany our fervour. In my survey, the first most common object that people had in their pockets was "a tissue", the second one was "keys". This brought me to reflect on how our pocket sound environment changes with seasons as well as with gender. Recording the sounds of the different objects that came out from the answers of my survey allowed me to study the character and timbre of each object in an artificial environment.

My investigation on pocket sounds continued with *The Pocket Sounds Party*, a piece for balloons, pocket objects, and three traditional instruments. This work celebrates the objects resulting from the survey, arranging for them a musical party, which is the piece itself. The balloons, symbolic for parties, also conduct the piece. The pocket object performers are expected to play with the objects, that are laid on a table, as if they had their hands in their pockets, feeling for them whilst guided by the balloon that conducts the piece. The score reads "With your sound follow the changes of the balloon. You can follow the change of colour as it changes shape. You can follow its breath. You can follow its growth. You can follow its fear when it's about to explode". Joy, laughter, or fear should be expressed through the objects. The score also comes with three ostinatos to be played by conventional instruments, that have the role of creating the setting in the narrative of the piece.

In relation to the first research question *How can ordinary quotidian sounds be used for audio-visual narrative?* the next section will discuss the use of the audio-visual object as if from the point of view of the object itself.

Alessia Anastassopulos

THE POCKET SOUNDS PARTY

for balloons, pocket sounds and traditional instruments

- THE BALLOONS START AND END THE PARTY!

BALLOONS *(one person only)*:

YOU HAVE SEVEN BALLOONS. COLOURS CAN BE DIFFERENT. BLOW ONE BALLOON AT A TIME UNTIL IT EXPLODES. **BOOM!**

POCKET SOUNDS:

Tissue, keys, a mobile phone, a wallet, nothing, a hair bobble, holes, 1 coin, coins, a lipstick, a lip balm, a tablet, a pencil case, a student card, a flat card, a credit card, snacks, a very tiny perfume flask, headphones, an address, a supermarket list, screws, a lighter, a string, an eraser, a pear, a watch, a pen, a napkin, money, a gym discount coupon, a clove of garlic, a USB pen drive, a folded paper, a receipt, a flyer, pack of Kleenex, a toothpick, a paper-clip.

WITH YOUR SOUND FOLLOW THE CHANGES OF THE BALLOON. YOU CAN FOLLOW THE CHANGE OF COLOUR AS IT CHANGES SHAPE. YOU CAN FOLLOW ITS BREATH. YOU CAN FOLLOW ITS GROWTH. YOU CAN FOLLOW ITS FEAR WHEN IT IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE.
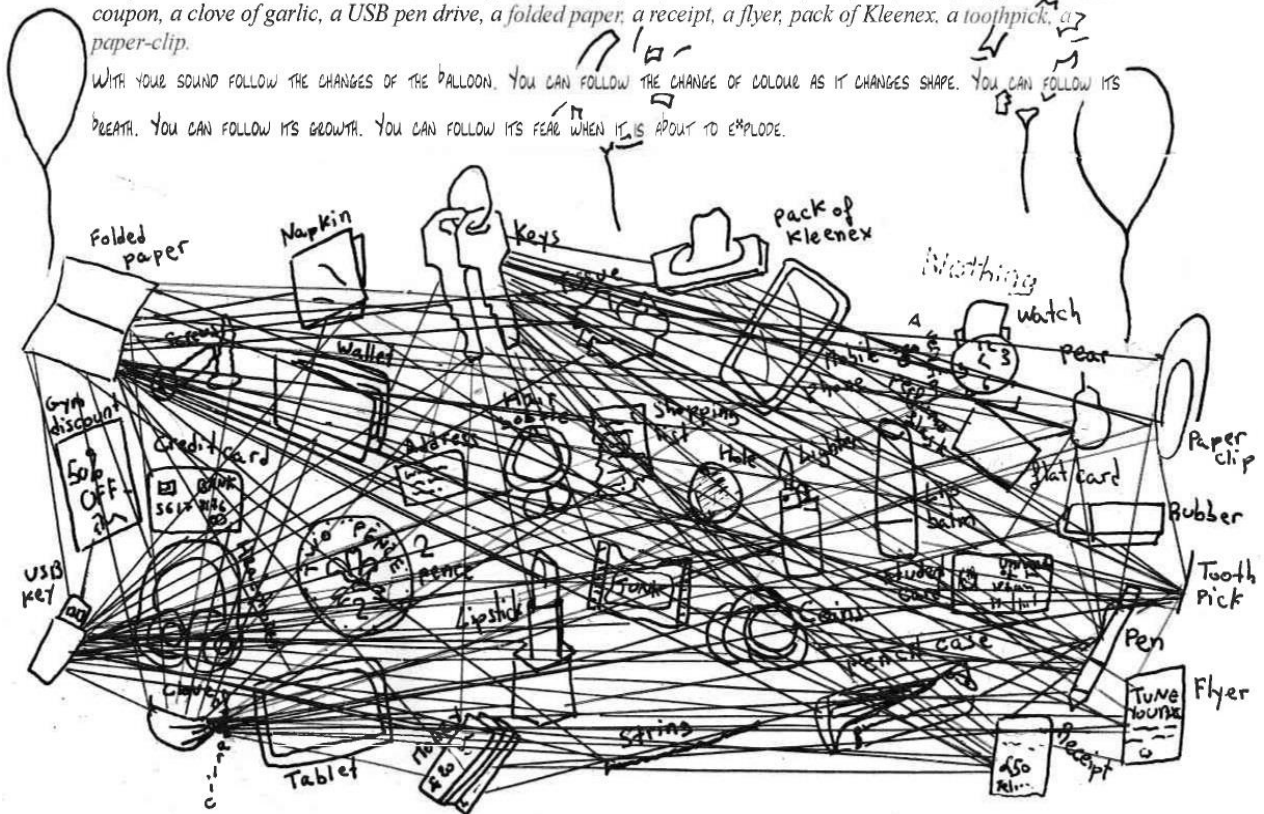
TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS:

CHOOSE AN OSTINATO TO PLAY. WHEN THE BALLOON EXPLODES STOP IMMEDIATELY, COUNT UNTIL 4 AND THEN START AGAIN WITH AN OSTINATO OF YOUR CHOICE. YOU SHOULD PLAY SOFT ENOUGH TO TO HEAR THE POCKET SOUNDS.

2.2 The life of sounds

Having established a connection of intimacy with the environment and with the audio-visual object, I worked towards viewing things from the objects' perspective, which has resulted in a tendency to anthropomorphise and imbue them with playful and humorous attributes. With my first research question in mind, this has constituted the initial phase in endowing an audio-visual object with a character and imparting to it a voice.

2.2.1 The audio-visual object's point of view: an element of play and humour

In his research, Garro defines the *objet audiovisuelle*, stating the importance of adding the visual to sound, enhancing the experience of the viewer. In my research I collect the audio-visual object already with its sonic and visual features, although these can be successively re-arranged and modified in the context of a narrative. Conscious that I am transferring to them features that reflect the meaning the object has for me, I regard the audio-visual objects I encounter as if they were living creatures. "Can nonorganic bodies also have a life?" (Bennett, 2010, p. 53) is a question that Bennett addresses through a political and philosophical approach as she explores life within metal (Bennett, 2010, pp. 52-61). As also observed by Bennett, the concept of animated objects may evoke childhood, where expressions and voices appear from the inanimated. The act of bringing to life that recalls child's play, sometimes contributes to give the objects amusing features. In my research, searching for the perspective of the objects and a first relationship with the surrounding environment has also been approached with a light-heartedness and playful attitude, as if engaging in a child's game. I employ objects for audio-visual narrative by embracing their point of view, through which I have found them to have elements of humour and play. An example of playfulness with objects can be seen in Marclay's engagement with mobile installations, his performances convey an impression of enthusiasm and spirit as the artist as well as the objects seem to be having fun.

My work *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine*, is an autonomous installation that mimics eating movements and sounds.

The installation functions in front of a television screen displaying videos of people eating, powered by three motors. One motor rotates a plate that encounters a fork, producing the sound of cutlery on a plate. The fork holds a slice of pink cake. The second motor operates an auto-cutting knife that simulates cutting the piece of cake. The knife's operation required a mechanism that converts circular motion to linear motion, which was then attached to the motor. Finally, the third motor powers a loop mechanism designed to throw colourful candies onto the rotating plate, collect them, and throw them again. The choice of a pink cake and multicolour candies contribute to the element of play. As its title implies, the installation is intentionally designed to malfunction, starting as a regulated machine with a repetitive action and slowly becoming increasingly unpredictable, getting stuck and scattering the candies throughout the room. *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* loses control, failing our expectations.

This installation is the second work of my portfolio and, together with *I Speak The City*, it explores the theme of sound pollution. Connected to this is Schafer's discourse about Lo-Fi soundscape. In opposition to Hi-Fi, Lo-Fi is a soundscape where drone sounds cover each over and they are described by Schafer through flat, curved, and dotted lines. (Schafer, 1994.). Schafer writes that:

> The flat line in sound produces only one embellishment: the glissando – that is, as the revolutions increase the pitch gradually rises, and as they decrease the pitch descends. The flat lines become curved lines. But they are still without sudden surprises. When flat lines become jerky or dotted or looping lines – the machinery is falling apart (Schafer, 1994, p. 80).

This last sentence resonates with *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine*'s audio-visual role and meaning. Beginning as a constant noise that covers the people's eating sounds, the noise transforms from flat to 'dotty' as the machine breaks and its silence allows the listener to hear the people on the screen eating.

A wild, ill-mannered object that dares without remorse to challenge the limits of human good behaviour creates a whimsical element in a narrative and is a common underlying element in my audio-visual works. *No Eating In The Library* also deals with challenging the norms, as a packet of crisps is secretly opened and eaten in a place where food is forbidden. Visualising the sound of the crisp packet as if it was a living creature, I have imagined it attempting to disguise itself in the library sound environment, moving slowly and secretly. Standing out so different in texture from all the other sound species, the crisp figures as an awkward, shady individual, ending up making too much noise in the silence. It is this element of being too loud and too different, as well as its failing in its action of secrecy, that provides this work with a twist of humour.

Viewing things from the objects' perspectives occurs from the initial stages of listening and collecting audio-visual material, and persists until the ultimate realisation of the final work as an aesthetic accomplishment. *The Crocodile* presents a few secondary characters enjoying their time. Following the crocodile approaching the woman in the bath, the camera pauses allowing us to view the sink where a couple of toothbrushes are kissing, and a soap bar is having fun jumping in and out of the sink. This small scene reflects my idea of viewing things from the audio-visual objects' perspective, as we see objects having their independent life whilst other events carry on.

Concealed from us, I imagine objects having fun. This is the idea behind the work *The Pocket Sounds Party*, where objects are having a secret party in our pockets. Fun is represented visually and sonically also in the way objects move and produce sound, as we can view from the character of the doctor in *The Heater's Noise Attack*, who arrives moving unsteadily causing his tools to jolt with each step he takes. Embracing the object's

point of view has brought me to imagine worlds in which they have a supremacy over humans and speech, a topic which will be addressed in the following section.

2.2.2 The parallel world of the audio-visual object

By adopting the viewpoint of objects, I have conceptualised an alternate reality in which they operate in a manner that defies intuition. In my works, parallel worlds governed by objects are materialised in different ways, which I will discuss drawing from examples from my portfolio. These ways include, but are not limited to, the occlusion of sounds by objects (e.g. *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine*); the substitution of individuals' audio-visual presence by objects (e.g. *The Heater's Noise Attack*); and the superimposition of objects onto verbal speech (e.g. *I Speak The City* and *The Sound Dealer*).

In Meta's film *El prófugo*, personified sound creates a parallel reality. The main character's psychological breakdown is represented by noises of intruders coming out from her vocal cords. *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* presents a reversal of roles between the object and the human, wherein individuals observe the boisterous machinery from the television, in contrast to the conventional scenario of a person consuming food while watching TV. A call for videos was sent through social networks asking for a one-minute self-filming during a meal. The participants were not told about the installation in advance, nor that the project involved sound research. Some generic guidelines of filming were given regarding the length and the framing. With the videos received I created a loop that is shown on a big screen sitting in front of the machine. At first, the eating noise of the machine covers the eating sounds of the people, creating a parallel scenery of fiction where objects have supremacy over humans. However, in the end the human/object roles are inverted again as the machine slowly breaks and becomes silent. This installation was created following a reflection on everyday sound awareness brought forward through the *Sound Awareness Questionnaire*. *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* lasts only a few minutes before breaking and, each time it is put in action, it performs in a different way.

The Heater's Noise Attack presents four characters constructed by anthropomorphic objects which move as people. In particular, I want to consider again the character of the

doctor which is visually and sonically constructed by its tools of work and a white coat. Starting from an object's point of view, I have reflected on what sort of doctor would live in an object's world. This has influenced my choice for its tools of work, mixed between a medical stethoscope and workers' tools such as hammer and screwdriver, to create an appropriate 'objects' doctor' character. Sonically, the doctor is made up of the rattling of its toolbox which accompanies his movements.

I Speak The City and *The Sound Dealer* are two works in which human speech is not audible. The viewer is compelled to rely on subtitles in order to comprehend and follow the sequence of events. Both follow a solitary male protagonist throughout their day; whilst in the first work speech is covered by the outside world's noise, in the second work, language does not exist at all. In *The Sound Dealer*, sounds are tangible objects used as trade. The audio-visual objects are alive and although we do not have a close acquaintance with them, their liveliness is omnipresent throughout the whole work. Although this work does not contain explicit whimsical qualities, it does contain the point of view of the objects that are part of the character's everyday life and are heard throughout the soundtrack of the short film. Both works deal with a parallel world of the audio-visual object that prevails onto verbal speech.

The Pocket Sounds Party also presents a parallel world as it brings to light, in the form of a party, what is usually hidden in our pockets. This celebration is viewed from the objects' perspective as I imagined taking them out from the secrecy of the pocket and giving them voice through a celebration. Within this parallel realm, the balloon assumes a pivotal symbolic role as an audio-visual object representing the celebration, while traditional instruments also join in as significant components of the performance. The performers of this production are expected to adopt a concealed persona, akin to being tucked away in a pocket, and gradually blend into the setting as a puppeteer surreptitiously manoeuvres the strings, fully assimilating with the objects and becoming an integral part of them.

Examining objects from their perspective has enabled me to conceive a parallel reality in which they operate in a counterintuitive manner. Upon delving into their covert existence, I have imbued them with whimsical and amusing qualities. The unconventional conduct of these ordinary items will serve as the focal point of the upcoming section.

2.3 The Audio-visual object

In my research, the audio-visual object is imbued with features that transforms it into a character to be used in a narrative fiction. As previously discussed, I have found that to use ordinary sounds for audio-visual narrative I need first to find a strong connection with the audio-visual object, listening to its 'secret' sounds and empathising with its point of view. This brings us to the creation of a parallel world where objects are paramount. In the next sections I will discuss their unexpected behaviour within this parallel world and how I have given the objects a voice through the works of my portfolio.

2.3.1 The unexpected behaviour of everyday objects

In the imagined parallel worlds shown in the works of the portfolio, objects do not always behave as expected. PES' works also feature common everyday objects that assume new roles in his animation which often revolve around the theme of food. In *Western Spaghetti* (2008), we can see a Rubik's cube and a one dollar note used as spices to cook some spaghetti represented by Mikado sticks, a block of sticky notes as butter and a ball of yarn as cheese to grate on the food.

In my works, objects appear clumsy, rebellious, and somewhat ill-mannered. We can view these features in the already discussed dysfunctional eating machine, that boisterously throws food in a chaotic manner. Other objects sometimes may fail in what they attempt to achieve such as the magic bottle in *Wind*, the first movement of *The Trilogy Of The Elements*. *Wind* shows an enchanted bottle trying several attempts at flying, succeeding for a short period of time before crashing on the ground and breaking. The visual background is minimal: the bottle starts from a horizontal dark ground whilst behind her a white veil "is moved by the wind played by the flute." This is delineated by the score that reads: "In this movement you are the wind". The harmonics played by the flute reflect the transparency of the bottle, as I find the conventional notes thicker, since they are rich in harmonics. The sound of the flute's keys creates a dialogue with the sound of the bottle oscillating on the table. Some long minimal notes reflect the bare setting. I found the double harmonics played by the flute ideal for creating a magical oneiric sensation, needed by the bottle for attempting its flight. A failure in magic, especially a failure in flight

is a trope in film literature. Failure in magic usually leads to consequence that marks a turning point in the story, aiding the advancement of the plot. An example of this can be seen in the third episode of *Fantasia* (Walt Disney Productions, 1940). The animation follows the music *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Dukas, 1897), (based on Goethe's poem *Der Zauberlehrling* written in 1797) and shows Mickey Mouse losing control of his master's magic tricks. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Rowling, 1998) also shows character's Ron Weasley and Harry Potter losing control of a flying car.

In the case of *Wind*, the flight of the bottle bears a resemblance to my experience of flight in my dreams. In her handbook *This is a dream!* (2001) Ione talks about different flying methods she has come across in the dreams of her clients, including "arm flapping, straight armed superman style, still others go for push ups, leaps and pogo stick type hops" (Ione, 2001, p. 110). My flight in dreams is often characterized by instability, the need for abdominal strength, limited distance, and oscillations in altitude. These features are expressed by the bottle in *Wind*. The magical flights in my dreams are also fleeting in nature, and do not last for an extended period of time.

An additional illustration of a failure can be observed in *The Heater's Noise Attack*, wherein the heater's character experiences a condition akin to a cardiac arrest, denoted as a 'noise attack'. The story is set in a rather tedious and drowsy environment, created visually by an action of routine, performed by the mother cleaning her child's ear done in a room lacking light and sonically by the ticking of the clock. The heater adds to this atmosphere by repetitively moving left and right, emitting its characteristic low drone note when functioning. Although the heater does not have any added embellishments that transform it into a character (it simply plays itself as a heater), it is anthropomorphised by unexpectedly suffering a failure and needing the doctor's intervention.

All three movements of this score are to be performed while following their visual counterpart.
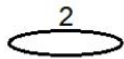
1. Wind

The starting, ending point and duration for each event is to be considered as free unless specified by a vertical dotted line.

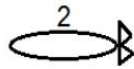A solid vertical line represents an end of section.

Legend of sounds:

First kind of blow: blow inside the flute. Lips are open around the lip plate. Use just one breath. Fingers on low C.

Second kind of blow: blow inside the flute. Lips closed inside the lip plate. Fingers on low C.

Sound of keys playing low C and low D.

Second kind of blow with sound of keys. Keys play low C and low D.

Breath in with lips closed, reach an octave below the low C.

Lips around 5cm from the lip plate. No keys (C#). Find and lose focus.
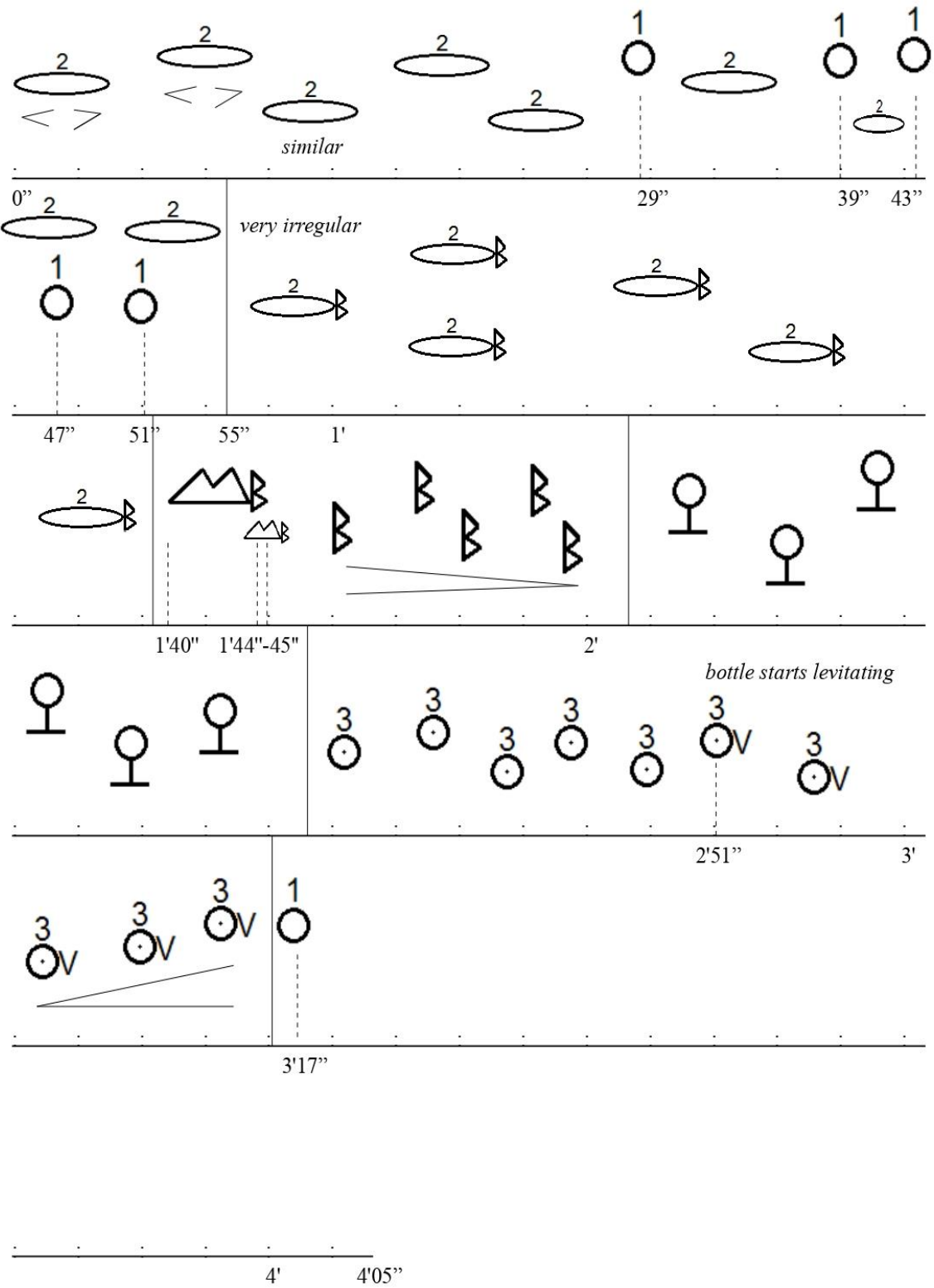
Third kind of blow: standard position for low harmonics, lips slightly more closed. Try, but don't achieve, a pure harmonic sound. Fingers on low C.

Third kind of blow with vibrato and oscillation of the flute.

1. Wind

In this movement you are wind.

similar

0"   29"   39"   43"

very irregular

47"   51"   55"   1'

1'40"   1'44"-45"   2'

bottle starts levitating

2'51"   3'

3'17"

4'   4'05"

61

2. Gravity

♩ *50*

In this movement you are gravity.

React to the drops of water

Continue into Heat

3. Heat

Same tempo

In this movement you are heat.

Continue Key sound and Glissando until End of Section

End of Section

① ◊ "Fizzy sound", pronounce "f" while playing   ③ Use one full slow breath for each multiphonic

② ✕ Key sound

2

repeat until 0

irregular in rallentando

③

like a small insect crawling by quickly
G position, trill low C key

Repeat for the length of a full breath   Repeat for the length of a full breath

Repeat for the length of a full breath

p

No Eating In The Library shows instead an example of a rebellious behaviour, in this case coming from a crisp. Set in a library environment, a standard routine is in place, and we can hear the sounds of books, paper and a pencil diligently working. Tension gradually increases as a packet of crisps makes its appearance in an environment where it is deemed inappropriate. The piece ends with the emergence of the 'forbidden' crisp, causing silence to fall throughout the surrounding space. In composing this work, I chose a few of the sounds from my library listening sessions to represent the library. Specifically, I chose the bang of a thermos flask when it is put on the table, and the screeching of its lid when unscrewed; the shuffling, the tearing and the crumpling of papers; the sound of going through a book and its thud when it is placed on the table; the writing and the tapping of a pencil; and finally, the handling of a packet of crisps and the eating of a crisp.

This piece tries to recreate in music a normal library situation, that culminates and terminates with the secret crisp eating. I chose the guitar to participate in the piece because I find it to have the ideal intimate sound that can be plucked, without covering with volume and presence other sounds, and because it is an instrument played with the direct touch of the hands, as are the library objects sounds. This adds to the timbre of the guitar also the sound of human skin, which I thought sonically mixed well with the objects. The guitar as well as the guitarist plays the audio-visual role of a human person handling the objects. The piece follows the library routine with the sounds that alternate through the flask, the book, the writing, and the papers. As the situation becomes more frustrating, a crumple of paper can be heard, and after that, a tearing sound is introduced too. In my library listening sessions I distinguished between what I called 'action sounds' and 'thinking sounds'. Shuffling, going through a book, and tapping a pencil are what I have categorised as 'thinking sounds' while tearing and crumpling are 'action sounds'. Thinking sounds can continue for a while until an action is taken, while action sounds happen once and then there is a change in actions. This is reflected in the piece and is used to describe a narrative. After a second tear of paper, we can hear a long moment of thought, then followed by a repetitive action, a sort of fast-forward of the library routine that is summarized in three bars. After this, the crisp pack sound comes in as an uncertain event, more 'thought sounds' follow brought by the shuffle of papers, to finally terminate in the bite of crisp that is heard alone as the last sound.

No eating in the library

for guitar and objects

Alessia Anastassopulos

Legend of symbols

Objects: (Thermos, Book, Paper, Pencil, Pack of Crisps)

Turn lid of a thermos flask making it squeak
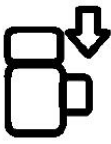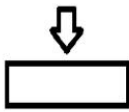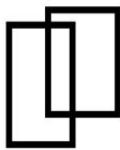
Bang thermos on the table

Shuffle through a big hard-cover book

Bang the big hard-cover book on the table

Shuffle through papers

Tear paper

Crumple paper up

Tap pencil on the table

Write

Play with crisp pack

Open crisp pack

Eat a crisp

Guitar:

Scratch strings with nails
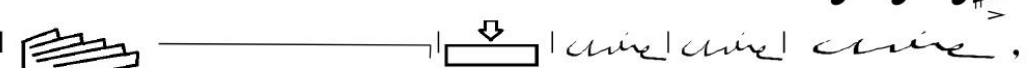
Scratch strings with fingertips

No eating in the library

Alessia Anastassopulos

2

9

2.3.2 Giving objects a voice

Once I have established a connection of intimacy and awareness with the audio-visual object, I engage in a process of mental imagery in which I speculate as to the potential reasons it produces certain sounds, thereby assigning a particular function or purpose to the objects, always bearing in mind their central role and the purpose of our interaction. My intention is not to invent a character or discover sounds, but rather to acquaint myself with the unique audio-visual personality of an object in a specific context, treating it as if it were a distinct form of being. I have found changing from an attitude of playing with the objects to playing together with them, to creatively benefit the use of concrete sounds, transforming them from static and lifeless entities to animated characters. An example of this is requested for the performance of the pocket objects in *The Pocket Sounds Party*, where the performers must 'feel for the objects' giving them their voices that are usually concealed by our pockets.

In my audio-visual stop-motion short film *The Crocodile*, I wanted to create a story with bathroom utensils, investigating how the sonic and visual presence of an object could bring together a narrative. As for the character of the crocodile, I asked myself how it could be sonically represented as well as how it could be visually represented, and these two questions were tightly connected. The way the objects are assembled reflects the way the sounds are mixed. The shaver, which is visually the head of the crocodile is also its voice sonically. For the character of the dog, played by a hairdryer, I needed two contrasting moments: a sleeping dog and a barking dog. I found the way a hairdryer is commonly placed when not in use to resemble a sleeping animal, with its tail curled up and resting sideways. Likewise, the doppler effect obtained when rapidly swaying the hairdryer left and right to dry our hair often reminds me of a bark. With these thoughts in mind, I actively engaged with the hairdryer, playing it, and producing several snoring and barking tracks, finally choosing the ones that together with the visual, gave more life to the character of the dog.

Truax describes the relationship between a listener and his/her surroundings using a continuum. This is an imaginary line that shows our connection with the outer world in soundscape composition: one extremity uses the world as 'inspiration', whilst the other extremity shows a representation of the real. Going from one extremity to the other, the

relationship we have with the environment and the meaning it has for us changes. Beyond the representation of the real, Truax talks about the creation of an imaginary world that maintains realistic features, bringing personal meaning and symbolism inside this world (Truax, 2012), and this is the part I feel resonates with my works. To achieve this, once I identify an audio-visual object with a specific character inside a narrative, I practice merging an objects' sounds with the everyday soundscape, as described above with the 'hair-dryer dog' in *The Crocodile*.

In developing *The Sound Dealer*, I have actively engaged with the objects used in the short film, as I wanted the fictional living sounds to blend in with reality's soundscape. In choosing items that represented 'sounds', I purposely sought for objects that, although common, were not always immediately identifiable, with the intention of adding a touch of enchantment and curiosity for the viewer. Reconsidering the earlier referenced film *Gräns*, Abbasi manages to create an ambience of magical realism by pushing the boundaries of what is deemed possible in reality. The protagonist, Tina, possesses a striking physical appearance that initially raises in the viewer questions about whether it stems from deformity or mere 'ugliness'. Her extraordinary sense of smell further reinforces her connection to the animal world, enhancing the mystical ambiance. Additionally, Abbasi employs the enchanting setting of the forest, where Tina seems to effortlessly belong, to intensify this otherworldly atmosphere. In *The Sound Dealer* I also wanted to create a magical realism, relying on the natural mixture of sounds that the woodland offers, as well as its intrinsic mythical traits. With the objective of merging sound objects with nature I practiced playing them out in the woods, searching for the voice that better blended in with the rustle of leaves, the moving of branches as well as with birds and animals of the woodland. I successively brought home recordings of the woodlands and continued rehearsing from there. My final objective was to achieve a sonorous quality that emulates an orchestra as a cohesive unity, amalgamating nature with objects and leaving the single sound of the item to be gradually discerned as it was approached. The sound objects in *The Sound Dealer* become part of nature. Video-documentation of rehearsing the sound items with the recordings of the woods can be found in the Appendix.

In November 2020 I held a workshop called *Our Objects' Voice*, that explored the relationship we have with everyday familiar objects of our choice. The purpose of this meeting was to gradually understand the meaning we transfer to an object of our choice through the particular and unique relationship we have with it, arriving at finding its voice

and letting it speak. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the workshop was undertaken through the Zoom platform and the participants were limited to three in total. Each participant was asked to bring to the meeting an object that was familiar to them and of everyday use. The objects presented were a pen, a cup, and a pot, while my object was a thermos. The session lasted two hours and was divided in three parts. In the first part, called 'Introduction to the object', each participant was asked to state the object's name, material, common use and known history before moving to introducing the use and meaning it had for them. Finally, the participants were asked to describe the sound their object made, how their use of the object made its sound different, and what other sounds it could make. I invited the participants to utilise graphic signs to help them annotate the sounds they made to remember them for the next part of the session. Part two of the workshop was called 'Speaking through the object'. Participants were asked to go through the description of their object from part one, this time using their object to speak instead of their voice. Finally, they were invited to continue 'speaking', if they or their object desired to add something to say, through sound. By doing this, the object was effectively introducing itself and coming out with its unique personality through the hands of the player. The last part of the workshop was called 'Dialogue' and saw two rounds of free improvisation done with through the objects, followed by verbal feedback and discussion. The handout of the workshop can be found in the Appendix. The session saw a gradual transformation that started with a verbal introduction of an inanimate object and arriving to the participants taking a step back, bringing forward their object and allowing it to speak.

The previously discussed *Sound Awareness Whilst Eating* questionnaire also asks its participants to explore their cutlery's voice, becoming acquainted with their distinct eating sound profile. This kind of practice, shared with other people through this workshop, has allowed me to engage with the objects of my surroundings and find their voice to be used in audio-visual composition. This has led my research to examine my relationship to and the listening of my surroundings, exploring ways that would lead to creative benefits in the use of everyday sounds for audio-visual composition. This is the core of my second research questions and the topic of the following section.

2.4 Inclusive listening

This section will discuss inclusive listening as a sound awareness technique in relation to the qualitative aspect of my research.

2.4.1 Searching for the imagined sounds of an audio-visual object

In the preceding chapter, I have examined my methodology regarding the audio-visual object. This led me to question and investigate my relationship with the environment and my approach to listening, and through the course of my research to develop the notion of inclusive listening. Inclusive listening is my original contribution to the field of soundscape studies and is an original listening technique that has been built upon several approaches to listening which have developed throughout the years — Schaeffer's *Écoute Réduite* (1966), Chion's *added value* (1993), Hyde's *visual suspension* (2012) and McDonnell's *visual listening* (2020). Inclusive listening is a sound awareness technique that acknowledges audio-visual objects in their whole visual and sonic entirety, taking into consideration the sounds an object is making at the moment of contemplation, if any, as well as the sounds we imagine it could make. In revisiting the literature pertaining to sound awareness techniques, it is pertinent to note again the contributions of Schafer, Lockwood and Oliveros. These authors have extensively worked on the development of guides, meditations, and exercises to develop sound awareness. These are often written creatively in the form of poems or graphic scores and can also have a creative outcome. Below are some examples.

From Anderson's and Lockwood's *Hearing Studies* (2021) exercise n° 23:

> Lying down in bed at night, for two different nights, listen for and afterwards note down and describe the internal sounds of your body.
>
> Aim to improve hearing acuity and to demonstrate the connection between your awareness of sound, and the freshness of its information content.

Cross Over (1996), from Oliveros' *Deep Listening A Composer's Sound Practice* (2005)

Sound a word or a sound.

Listen-surprise.

Sound a word as a sound.

Sound a sound as a word.

Sound a sound until it is a word.

Sound a word until it is a sound.

Sound a sentence of sounds.

Sound a phrase of words.

From Schafer's *Ear Cleaning – Notes for an Experimental Music Course* (1967), which were part of a module designed for a first-year course of the Simon Fraser University, the author asks his students to "Bring an interesting sound to class" (Schafer, 1969, p. 45).

Connecting these examples to my creative approach, inclusive listening differs from the mentioned sound awareness exercises as it also includes being aware of the visual side of our surroundings, reflecting on the possibilities of sound an object can offer, and acknowledging the set of sounds that subconsciously come first to our mind, incorporating the personal and cultural relationship we have with a specific object. In opposition to sound walks, inclusive listening has more advantages if done still in a place, allowing us to dedicate time to the audio-visual objects and allowing our imagination to consider their possible sounds. By doing this, our relationship with the environment changes, as we find ourselves surrounded by live objects full of personality. This creative act, placed during the initial stage of relationship with the environment, is the first step to becoming acquainted with the character of the audio-visual object, successively arriving at giving it a role inside a narrative fiction.
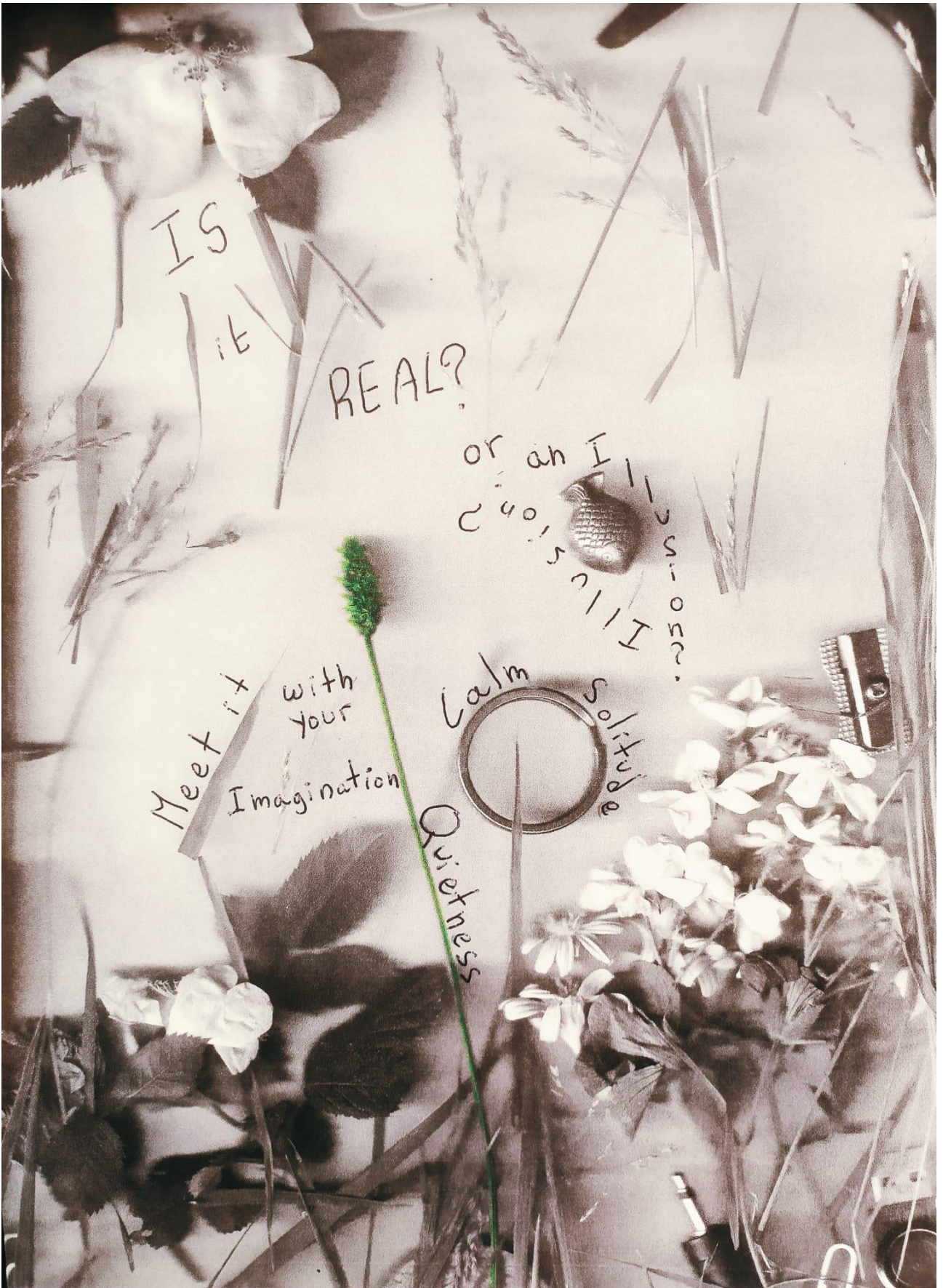
Fig. 2.9: Inclusive listening graphic score

The *Our Objects' Voice* workshop asked its participants to reflect on the relationship they had with an everyday familiar object of their choice. Their reflection was gradually translated into sound until the object would introduce itself, effectively acquiring a role or personality. The idea of this workshop was to introduce its participants to view their familiar everyday objects in a new light, giving the object its own distinctive character and voice, which was found through the relationship each person had with it. The workshop connects to inclusive listening as it asks the person to reflect on the objects' presence in their everyday life and the different sounds these could produce.

Connected to my second research question, my investigation looks at the relationship we have with our surroundings. Finding a personal and strong relationship with the environment is a common point of soundscape composition. Harris questions the role of sound as mediator in her relationship with the environment, seeking to expand her own personal awareness (Harris, 2015). This is reflected in her installations that display sounds that are usually unheard.

The audio-visual contemplation of our surroundings done through inclusive listening can be followed by an active engagement with the objects, making them effectively speak and working together with them to find their voice. This interaction makes the initially imagined sound become real, metaphorically bringing to life an object and its personality. Inclusive listening is an initial process of engagement with our surroundings. As my research's objective is the creation of an audio-visual narrative, the individual and unique perceptions we acquire from the environment can then successively be used creatively in various forms or as inspiration. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.2 Working with the imagined sounds of an audio-visual object

This section will show, through some of the works of the portfolio, examples of how the initial relationship with the audio-visual object, acquired through inclusive listening, has been developed in practice.

Truax's suggestion for beginning soundscape composition is to start with sound walking, and the best practice for him is initially developed by listening only, without any recording devices (Truax, 2012). Resonating with Truax's practice, I also have started my own compositional works using inclusive listening. As a first example to this, I want to address again, *Daily Sounds Are Like Living creatures*, the 30" stop-motion audio-visual composition that served as introduction to this chapter. This short shows a common study tabletop teeming with live everyday stationery items and is the outcome of an engagement with my surroundings. Starting with a solitary and calm contemplative session done in my home studio, I became aware of the different objects and their possible sounds. As my mind filled with these sounds, images also materialised showing them interacting between each other and rapidly crawling around, similar to the movement of busy insects. As I engaged with each item, I familiarised myself with their unique expression and personality, expressed through their length, weight, size and colour. The rubber, being 'dressed' in a paper wrap, is shown losing its 'shell', the cable cord moves in a snake-like manner across the scene whilst the paper clip unfolds and entangles with an elastic band.

Applying inclusive listening in a bathroom environment brought me to construct the different object-characters in *The Crocodile.* In the case of the crocodile, I imagined different parts of the animal scattered through the room and combined them together to bring it back to life. I subsequently engaged with the items to find their voice in the narrative. In *Heat*, the last movement of *The Trilogy Of The Elements*, I utilised inclusive listening to imagine what sound vaporising water would have, bringing forward my personal sound experience and culture to bring life to the sound. Imagining a crossover between water evaporating rapidly from a heated pan, and bubbles of water rising, part of the sound is achieved by recording an aspirin dissolving in water. These images were able to come to my mind as I am part of a culture and time where they have a specific meaning for me, specifically a culture and time where aspirin exists and can be dissolved, a culture and time where water is heated in a pan.

The Sound Dealer and *The Pocket Sounds Party* are both two examples of works where inclusive listening is brought as inspiration into the work itself and re-enacted creatively by the characters or performers. M., the main character of *The Sound Dealer*, is seen walking alone in the forest, listening to sounds, interacting with them and collecting them for his trade. His search for sounds, both visual and sonic, followed by the collection of audio-visual objects, portrays a similarity with my use of inclusive listening and gathering of material for composition. In *The Pocket Sounds Party*, the pocket object performers are asked to actively engage with the objects, transferring to them feelings and emotions. This engagement reflects my own acquaintance with audio-visual objects as I collect them.

2.5 Audio-visual sound fiction

In the context of my study, I have felt the need to situate my works in a genre that would value the different aspects that define them. I have found my own works to be characterised by the consideration of the audio-visual object as a whole and by the creation of a fictional narrative through the use of sound. In light of all these factors I have situated the works in an original genre that I have called audio-visual sound fiction.

2.5.1 Creating a narrative through the audio-visual object

Having discussed my relationship and awareness of everyday ordinary audio-visual objects as a starting point for composition, this section will address how I have used the audio-visual objects to create a narrative in the compositions of the portfolio.

Narrative is commonly constructed by five main elements that play a role in shaping and developing a story, these being character, conflict, plot, setting and theme (Lewis University, 2024, p.1). Realising that the works of my portfolio can be identified as narrative, as they present depiction of events (plot) through the above-mentioned elements, has been an important turning point in my research, because it has helped me refine my research questions and situate my study within a more specific field of literature. Meta's *El prófugo* (2020), sees Inès as the main character, the conflict arrives when strange sounds start to come from her body. The setting of the film is a sound studio, and the theme is that of psychological breakdown – although a doubt is left in the viewer of what is real and imagined by the characters.

In my works, the characters are mainly represented by objects, but also by unseen elements such as the wind in the first movement of *The Trilogy Of The Elements*. In this work, the wind is a live identity that dialogues with the bottle. Using an approach where objects are personified and alive, the food in *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* assumes the role of a character and so do the conventional instruments included in *The Pocket Sounds Party,* which play three different ostinati. These show the most static side of the

party in the narrative, representing the script of behaviour and social interaction I sometimes feel that parties follow. In this piece the party is also a character, as it has its own personality. It is represented by people and their instruments, and it also reacts to the happening events. The instruments, together with the performers playing, represent and personify the party as an event, whilst the pocket objects play the role of the guests. When the balloons explode the instruments stop playing, creating the silence that would happen for example if a glass broke at a party, only to start again playing in a monotonous way that can characterise ostinati. The guitar in *No Eating In The Library* also works as a character in the piece, as the performer is asked in the score to "play as if you were handling the objects", identifying with the character of the person at the library. In this way, the object player and the guitar player share the same role in the piece, the former speaking through the objects and visually aiding the narration through its actions, and the latter doubling the objects voice through their movements on the guitar. *I Speak The City* narrates the day of a man who is suffering from the traffic noise. In this work, the traffic is treated as a character, as it is a party involved in the narrative, and spreads into the man's house, contaminating his life, as if it was a dieases.

Conflict can causes a change in an object, both sonically and visually. The failure of the machine in *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine* causes a drastic change of sound in the installation, and visually, the main spotlight moves to the people in the TV screen. In *No Eating In The library*, the conflict is represented by the urge to eat a forbidden crisp, and this causes a change in rhythm in the piece (papers shuffling faster) as the urge increases. The arrival of the crocodile in *The Crocodile* causes the hairdryer 'dog' to start 'barking', the soap bar to hide and the toothbrushes to rattle as they tremble in panic. *The Pocket Sounds Party*'s score asks for a musical change following conflict — the explosion of the balloon — instructing the performers to count until four and the start again with an ostinato of choice among the three given. In *The Trilogy Of The Elements*, the element of conflict is the breakage of the bottle which initiates a change of mood (from playful to meditative) in the narrative, as well as a change of main characters (from the bottle and the wind, to the water and gravity).

The setting establishes the backdrop for the narrative, creating the conditions for a story, and for a conflict to unfold. Some settings are straightforward, as the party setting in *The*

Pocket Sounds Party given by the use of balloons and by the title of the piece, or the bathroom setting in *The Crocodile*. *Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures* shows a mixed setting created by the overlap of a natural environment and an artificial one. *The Heater's Noise Attack* searches for a more neutral setting given by a darker environment without windows, reflecting again on the idea that objects' lives and events are carried on 'secretly' in hidden places. In *The Trilogy Of The Elements*, the table top setting is used to evoke a more anonymous neutral and imaginary environment. Other elements besides the backdrop can create a setting for a narrative, as in the piece on the radio in *The Sound Dealer*, as M. drives to the woods. Coherent with the fictional world M. lives in, where sound is a trade, the piece is made up with sounds that M. or another sound dealer has sold to musicians. A challenge in this work was giving M. a voice that would be coherent with the world without speech in which he lives in and at the same time emerge and distinguish itself from the sound objects that 'live' around him. Even though M.'s voice has an integrity in terms of length with the accompanying English subtitles, I searched for an object that would have a verbal quality to the sound it could produce, and a timbre that would reflect M.'s character. I identified this in the use of rusty metal. I found the image and sound of rust to have a connection between the disorganised and somehow blackened state of his office, as well as my knowledge of the actor playing M. being a heavy smoker with a hoarse voice.

The theme is the underlying central idea of the narrative, providing a deeper layer of meaning. The works of my portfolio are imbued with metaphors which convey the theme; this will be the topic of the next section.

2.5.2 The theme via metaphors in audio-visual sound fiction

The advancement of my research is reflected in the themes of the compositions.

My first question led me to interrogate the perception of our surroundings, examining the existing approaches and theories of listening and sound awareness. This made me aware of how our daily lives are affected by sound pollution, which is the theme of my first two works: *I Speak The City* and *The Dysfunctional Machine*. The former work contemplates sound pollution in terms of traffic whilst the latter considers it in term of technologies that

accompany us in our everyday life. Watson confronts noise pollution during his field re-cordings stating that many things he wants to record "are drowned out by noise pollution" (Turner, 2013) and also expresses worry about the damage, especially the psychological one, this issue is causing (Turner, 2013). *I Speak The City* depicts a scenario of a lonely man whose house has absorbed the outside noise, to the point that it has caused him to lose his voice. At a certain point of the video, we can see a man shouting traffic noise, a metaphor of feeling overwhelmed by traffic in our modern society. *The Dysfunctional Eat-ing Machine* addresses the issue from another point of view, as a noisy machine 'eating' in front of people watching from a television screen reflects on our loss of sound awareness in our everyday rituals that are often accompanied by technological devices. The action of the machine breaking has the meaning of redemption of our more subtle and intimate hu-man sounds.

These two first works left me with an urge and longing to enter into contact with my surroundings, which is metaphorically represented by a feeling of hunger, the theme of the three audio-visual portraits shown in *Evocations*. Dirty water and sticks represent a contaminated environment, and a rumbling stomach the need to satisfy a contact with its surrounding which eventually finds fulfilment through touch, taste, and smell.

Evocations is followed by three more cheerful works: *The Pocket Sounds Party*, *No Eating In The Library* and *The Heater's Noise Attack*, which find an acquaintance with our surrounding everyday objects, dressing them with humorous personalities and lively traits. All three works deal with the theme of 'live objects' in three different environments. *Daily Sounds Are Like A Living Creature* illustrates a summary of this found liveness in our surroundings. This is depicted through the metaphor of insects, as the video of a bug passing by in a field is overlapped to one of moving stationery.

On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the Covid-19 outbreak a global pandemic and on the 23rd of March 2020 the first national lockdown was announced in the UK, requiring people to stay at home, shops to close, advising people about personal hygiene and rationing the purchasable products per person at the supermarket. This is the context in which *The Crocodile* was born. Although maintaining a found playfulness of the audio-visual objects, the theme of this work is 'fear

of a threat', illustrating a danger that could make its way through the intimacy of our homes making people worldwide feel vulnerable. The crocodile is an animal that across cultures and times has been feared as well as revered. Present on earth for 230 million years, their bite-force is the strongest in the animal kingdom. In ancient Egypt we can find Sobek, a divine crocodile that would protect from shipwrecks. Also in Egypt, we can find Geb, a chthonic deity that becomes a crocodile at the entrance of the underworld. In Australian mythology the crocodile derives from an ancestor that has survived a hut fire by diving into water. (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, 2010, p. 200). In *The Crocodile*, vulnerability and intimacy are shown through the action of having a bath and the threat is metaphorically represented by the crocodile, a menacing animal close to water.

Fig. 2.10: Here-Ubekhet prostrating herself in front of deity Geb (in the from of a crocodile). Painting on papyrus, c.a. 1000 B.C.E. Egypt

The Sound Dealer summarises once more the work of my research, using it as the main theme. This composition represents through the main character M. my hunt and collection for hidden sounds, as well as, as a result of using inclusive listening as a first approach to my surroundings, a feeling of fiction blended in my audio-visual reality. This video, shot in nature, also represents a renewed contact and de-contamination with sound pollution, in contrast to the first video of the portfolio *I Speak The City*.

The Trilogy Of The Elements is the last work of my portfolio, and it is a hint at the exploration of new topics through the audio-visual object and inclusive listening. Using my personal 'oneiric flight' as a theme, it takes a step back from human interaction with objects, observing them as they are moved around the space by natural elements such as wind, heat, and gravity. I believe this topic to be one of the possible subjects of exploration for further research, which will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

2.6 Summary

Using quietness, calm, and solitude to enhance my sound awareness, I have sought a relationship and intimacy with my surrounding environment. This is reflected in the settings of some of my audio-visual works such as *The Heater's Noise Attack*, *The Crocodile* and *No Eating In The Library*. The three audio-visual portraits shown in *Evocations* also display my desire to become acquainted with the environment around me. Deepening my relationship with the audio-visual objects of my surroundings has brought me to search for their 'secret sounds', which is reflected in *The Sound Dealer*'s hunt for sounds, in the 'secret' pocket party celebrated in *The Pocket Sounds Party* and in finding the sound of water evaporation we can hear in *Heat*, the last movement of *The Trilogy Of The Elements*.

Relating my found acquaintance with the everyday audio-visual objects of my environment back to my initial research question, I have worked towards finding the objects' characters, viewing them as living creatures and anthropomorphising them. As I searched for the objects' point of view, I have found features of play as they misbehaved and challenged norms. This can be seen in *The Dysfunctional Eating Machine*, in *No Eating In The Library* and *The Pocket Sounds Party.* In these works, audio-visual objects have their own parallel reality.

Through inclusive listening I have used the objects' visual and sonic qualities to find their voice inside a narrative. Inclusive listening has been used as an initial creative approach to my environment, followed by an engagement with the audio-visual material of choice, as shown in *The Crocodile* or *Daily Sounds Are Like Living Creatures*. Inclusive listening has also been brought into some works as a re-enactment, as seen in *The Sound Dealer* or *The Pocket Sounds Party*.

I have identified my works as narrative as they contain the five most common elements that build up a narrative, these being character, conflict, plot, setting and theme. Drawing from soundscape studies and concrete music composition I have felt the need to situate the works in a genre that I have denominated audio-visual sound fiction. As my works put the audio-visual object at their centre, are non-verbal and fictional, this term summarises the elements that characterise the works: a fictional narrative told through sound, through

the use of audio-visual objects. In order of realisation, the theme of each work is aligned with the advancement of my research.

The next and final chapter will look at my findings and discuss avenues for further research.

3. Conclusions

Revisiting my initial research questions, this chapter will examine how my investigation has been addressed and how this has brought an original contribution to knowledge. Finally, the limitations of this research will be discussed and how these leave space for further study.

3.1 Findings from research and original contribution to knowledge

This study aimed to investigate the use of everyday sounds for audio-visual narrative. The focus was given to soft, ordinary, everyday sounds. The objective was to explore the integration of an audio-visual object within a fictional narrative, and examine how together with its sounds could be employed to create a story. The investigation and analysis of my relationship with the audio-visual objects of my surroundings, prompted the emergence of my second research question. Addressing this question became a necessary prerequisite before revisiting the initial inquiry, and this led to the realisation of a creative approach to listening which I have called inclusive listening. Inclusive listening is my original contribution to research. This technique prompts us to gain awareness of objects including the sounds they are or could be making. In answer to my second question, inclusive listening is a way to practice our listening and perception of our surroundings to benefit creatively from everyday sounds. Across the literature of sound awareness discussed throughout this commentary, we can find that research on sound awareness does not take into account the visual counterpart of what is producing the sounds, and does not suggest a practice for visual awareness. Although the *objet audiovisuelle* is defined by Garro (2014), I found there was a gap in considering and using the object with its intrinsic audio-visual properties as a character inside artistic composition. Inclusive listening has emerged as a technique to bridge this gap, empowering creative listeners to engage with their surroundings by incorporating both sonic and visual elements. Through this approach, they can develop creative composition by leveraging the relationships formed with the environment.

Returning to my primary query, I considered again my objective of exploring how ordinary

sounds could be used for audio-visual narrative, now starting from the relationship with my environment and applying inclusive listening as a first approach to the audio-visual objects of my surroundings. Following the previously discussed workshops that approached the theme of speaking through objects, I have actively engaged with the audio-visual objects of my surroundings, reflecting in them my personal culture and experience. This has meant anthropomorphising them as if they were living creatures. In answer to my first research question, I believe ordinary sounds can be used for audio-visual narrative by reconsidering our first encounter with the environment. By understanding our relationship with the audio-visual objects that we collect for creative composition, we can become acquainted with their distinct personalities; this will enable them to have their own unique role within a narrative.

Stretching beyond Truax's continuum is an area connected to magical realism. Although I felt this area resonated with my works, I observed the need of collocating my audio-visual compositions within a distinctive genre that would value and highlight the elements that characterised the works as well as the research. I named this genre audio-visual sound fiction which, as previously discussed, incorporates the element of fictional narrative, the importance of storytelling through the use of sound, and the centrality of the audio-visual object.

3.2 Avenues for further research

This study has been subject to certain limitations, due to the time constraints of the research period and to the specificity of the research. It is also unfortunate that the study took place during the years of the Covid-19 global pandemic, restricting my interaction with the outside world as well as the access to the University of Huddersfield recording equipment and studios. A restricted access to other people has meant that inclusive listening has had little chance to be explored and confronted by other people. Nonetheless, these limitations grant an occasion for further research.

In my study, inclusive listening has been investigated specifically for the purpose of audio-visual composition, although I believe it could be a starting point also for other creative outcomes. As already researched with other sound awareness techniques, its use for wellbeing purposes could offer a further avenue of research. This study has also explored the use of the audio-visual object in the role of a character inside artistic creations. The last work of my portfolio, *The Trilogy Of The Elements*, differs from the other works by interacting with natural elements such as wind, gravity and heat rather than involving people. I believe this places the audio-visual object, with the meaning I give to it within this research, in an even more central role, and will certainly be an avenue I am keen to explore more going forward.

This study has built upon research on concrete sound, soundscape composition, and sound awareness, mentioned throughout this commentary. Although limited by the research frameworks, and although affected by the years of restrictions due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, this study has contributed to a theoretical and practical approach to the perception of our surroundings called inclusive listening, that has been applied for the creation of a series of audio-visual compositions. The existing limitations of this study may offer further avenues of research, such as applying inclusive listening as a starting point in other artistic fields, exploring inclusive listening as a sound awareness technique for wellbeing purposes, and continuing a setting alluded to by the last work of the portfolio, exploring the world of audio-visual objects among the natural elements.

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Appendix

Library listening sessions - full list of soundscape

PC keyboard (Steady and uncertain)

Shuffling of paper (more thick or thin)

Writing (changes in speed)

Keys

Ruffling through rucksack (tidying up or searching)

Chair (screeching and wheels)

Zip

Velcro

Cables

Cup (on table, drinking, opening)

Footsteps on carpet (usually quick and with direction)

Coat being put on (different material)

(Forbidden) eating

Music from headphones

Crunching of crisps

Mouse clicks

Unidentified dotted sound from ceiling

Legs

folding

Tidying up

Tear of paper

Thudding on the table

Pen clicks

Cables on tables

What do you have in your pocket? **survey - full list of answers**

13 tissues

11 keys

5 mobile phones

4 Wallet

4 nothing

3 hair bobbles

2 holes

2 1-coin pennies

coins

snacks

headphones

screws

a lipstick

a lip balm

an iPad

a pencil case

a student card

a flat card

a credit card

a very tiny perfume flask

an address

a supermarket list

a lighter

a string

an eraser

a pear

a watch

a pen

a napkin

a money

a gym discount coupon

a clove of garlic

a USB pen drive

a folded paper

a receipt

a flyer

a pack of Kleenex

a pick

a paperclip

Sound Awareness Whilst Eating **workshop**

<u>**Sound awareness while eating**</u>

Age _____
Nationality _____
Profession _____
Experience with music/contacts with music _____

How much are you aware of sounds while eating?

A lot ☐   A little ☐   Few ☐   None ☐

What sound do you notice while eating?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What word describes best your way of eating?

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐   None of these ☐

If you chose "Non of these" use your own word to describe yourself:
_____

What is in your opinion a good and healthy way of eating?

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐   None of these ☐

If you chose "Non of these" use your own word to describe yourself:
_____

Briefly explain your choice
_____
_____
_____

- Listen once to this track (1)

How is this person eating? Choose one:

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐

What made you make this choice?

_____
_____
_____

- After listening

Did you notice any sounds other than the ones you usually notice

Yes ☐   No ☐

Which sounds would you describe as pleasant?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Which sounds would you describe as unpleasant?

_____
_____
_____
_____

- Listen once to this track (2)

How is this person eating? Choose one:

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐   None of these   ☐

What made you make this choice?

_____
_____
_____

- After listening

Did you notice any sounds other than the ones you usually notice

Yes ☐   No ☐

Which sounds would you describe as pleasant?

_____
_____
_____

Which sounds would you describe as unpleasant?

_____
_____
_____

- Listen once to this track (3)

How is this person eating? Choose one:

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐   None of these ☐

What made you make this choice?

_____
_____
_____

- After listening

Did you notice any sounds other than the ones you usually notice
Yes ☐   No ☐

Which sounds would you describe as pleasant?

_____
_____
_____

Which sounds would you describe as unpleasant?

_____
_____
_____

- Listen once to this track (4)

How is this person eating? Choose one:

Noisy ☐   Picky ☐   Slow ☐   Fast ☐   None of these ☐

What made you make this choice?

_____
_____
_____

- After listening

Did you notice any sounds other than the ones you usually notice

Yes ☐   No ☐

Which sounds would you describe as pleasant?

_____
_____
_____

Which sounds would you describe as unpleasant?

_____
_____
_____

- Before eating, let's explore the sound of the plate and the cutlery.
  This is your eating sound world. Search for some sound that are beautiful for you.

- Now let's eat, but don't forget to be aware of sound.

- After eating:

Did you feel more aware than usual of the sound you made while eating?
Yes ☐   No ☐

Did you search for some specific sounds while eating?
Yes ☐   No ☐

Which ones?
_____
_____
_____

How would you describe your way of eating now?
_____

Has sound influenced your eating habits?
Yes ☐   No ☐

How?
_____
_____
_____

After this session, do you think that having sound awareness while eating and during your daily actions could bring some benefits to your general health?
Yes ☐   No ☐

Date _____

Initials or pseudonym _____

<u>Our Objects' voice workshop</u>

Participants: from 4 to 6.
Required: Pc with camera, Zoom APP, Headphones
Before the meeting: send template. Template can be printed out or used on PC. Alternatively it can be copied on paper.
Session will be audio - recorded. Informative sheet and Consent of recording agreement must be signed before session.

Structure of workshop:

Part one
Introducing the object

Bring to the session an ordinary household object that is part of your daily life.

First we can observe the object from an non-person point of view.
Material. Name. Use. Its history.

Know let's think about how we think about this object.
How do we use it. Our history with this object. Does this object have other meanings for us (memories).

Let's do the same with sound.
What sounds does this object make? What is the sound that it makes when used? How is your sound when used different from other people? (Think about your hand, your nails, your character.)
What other sounds can the object make?
How would you describe this sound?

Object name	Material	Use	History	Our use	Our meaning

Describe with few words the sound this object makes in its use	Describe with few words how your use of this object makes the sound different	What other sounds can this object make? (one or two words)	Write a graphic sign next to the sound that helps you to remember them.

Part 2
Speaking through the object

Go through each section of your template and tell us about you object using only sound.
After you have gone through your template, you can also add something (with sound), if there is something you want to say, or if there is something the object wants to say.

If you want you can share what you have said.

Part 3
Dialogue

Let's have now two rounds of improvisation, with our object sounds.

Comments-feedback on improvisation

Round 2

Comments feedback on everything.

Recording of final improvisation

The link below brings to a recording of 'Dialogue', the final part *Our Objects' Voice* work-shop. In this part, the participants were involved in a session of free improvisations using their chosen object.

- http://youtu.be/DWs5PgGY6wY

The Sound Dealer **– video documentation of practicing merging sound objects with nature**

With the purpose of merging sound objects with nature during the construction of *The Sound Dealer*, I have practiced playing objects in the woodland environment and successively at home with recordings of the woodlands. The below link brings to a video-documentation showing an excerpt of this practice.

- http://youtu.be/jHD8DS6b0EY

The Sound Dealer – video documentation of giving M. a voice

The link below brings to a video documentation on my search for a suitable voice for M., the main character of *The Sound Dealer*. Looping a recording of the actor reading a text, I practiced different objects, textures, searching for the right intensity and musicality. The text read:

> *Registro questa nota in maniera da poter far comprendere il mio timbro di voce ed il mio modo di parlare. In questo modo la mia voce potrà essere sostituita da un oggetto che parlerà per me. Che tono uso faccio una domanda? NON TE LO VOGLIO DIRE! Ecco, questo era il mio tono tagliente. Ora ti saluto bisbigliando. Ciao, ci sentiamo presto!* [I record this note so that you can understand my tone of voice and my way of speaking. In this way, my voice can be replaced by an object that will speak for me. What tone do I use if I ask a question? I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU! Well, that was my sharp tone. Now I will greet you with a whisper. Bye, see you soon!]

- http://youtu.be/9yIp6RVb3Yw