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When Is the Now in the Here and There? Trans-Diegetic Music in Hal Ashby's *Coming Home*

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Abstract: *While it would be a stretch to classify Hal Ashby as a postmodernist filmmaker (with that term's many attendant ambiguities), his films of the 1970s regularly evince post-Classical stylistic and narrative strategies, including non-linear time structures, inter-textual self-references, open endings, and nuanced subversions of the fourth wall. Ashby's most consistently playful approach to form comes by way of his integration and development of trans-diegetic musical sequences within his body of work. Music in Ashby films creates a lively sense of unpredictability, and each of his seven films of the 1970s employs this strategy at least once. Moreover, trans-diegetic music in Ashby's films becomes a device that allows the director to elide moments in time. It functions as an editing tool, creating a bridge between often disparate events. However, it is also a narrative device that both compresses and stretches time, allowing for an on-screen confluence of events that at first appear to take place simultaneously or sequentially, but which actually occur over different moments or lengths of time. Yet while Ashby is not alone as a Hollywood director interested in exploring the formal possibilities that trans-diegesis might bring to his movies, film studies has begun only relatively recently to explore and analyse this technique. After briefly discussing the current critical discussion of trans-diegetic music and explicating patterns of its use in Ashby's career, this paper explores an extended display of the strategy in the film Coming Home (1978). By interrogating its use as both narrative device and formal convention in this instance, the paper attempts both to understand trans-diegesis as a key component of Ashby's filmmaking style and also to forge ahead in expanding the discussion of trans-diegesis within film studies.*

The films of Hal Ashby overflow with music. His particular approach to the use of music in film developed as he served as an editor on five Norman Jewison films in the 1960s.[1] Ashby expressed preferences for music that not only made its way into the films—particularly his choice of Ray Charles for *In the Heat of the Night* (1967)—but also affected the distinctive editing style for which those films are still known.[2] It was during his years as an editor that Ashby developed the practice of looking at film and devising his cutting strategy while listening to music. According to Jeff Wexler, Ashby's long-time sound assistant, "Hal hated to watch MOS picture … and so he would put up music he had behind the MOS footage" (Wexler 2009).[3] This practice resulted in two distinct elements that would become typical of Ashby's filmmaking style: the music that he listened to while editing tended to make its way into the film; while editing the film, Ashby often allowed the rhythm of the music to dictate, or at least influence, his editorial choices. As a result of this editing practice, when Ashby started directing, his films regularly began to incorporate instances of trans-diegetic music.

The term trans-diegetic refers to music (or any element, including other types of sound) that either begins as diegetic source music and then becomes part of an extra-diegetic (or non-diegetic) soundtrack or score, or, vice versa, when the extra-diegetic becomes diegetic.[4] Writing in *Offscreen* in 2007, Henry M. Taylor describes it as "sound's propensities to cross

the border of the diegetic to the non-diegetic and remaining unspecific" (3).[5] Although there has been a recent growth in scholarly interest in instances of trans-diegetic music in Hollywood cinema, it remains an underexplored area of filmic sound.[6] With some notable exceptions, trans-diegetic music generally would have been out of place during the classical era of Hollywood cinema, when background music was meant to be invisible and diegetic music, even when acousmatic, tended to be clearly sourced.[7] In *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, Edward Branigan briefly touches on the question of trans-diegetic music (a term which he does not use) in his discussion of levels of narration as related to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956). Branigan does not theorise or spend substantial time discussing Hitchcock's use of trans-diegesis; he does, however, make one intriguing remark when he describes the technique's effect: "The 'same' music functions very differently depending on the context, precisely because several distinct contexts are made to fit it" (97). In other words, trans-diegetic music, by acting as a bridge between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic, also acts as a bridge between such concepts as place and time in film; it can even act as a bridge between meanings of particular on-screen occurrences (a possibility Ashby seems to have been well aware of). Michel Chion gives a much more thorough description of trans-diegesis in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (Chion prefers the terms "pit music" and "screen music" to "extra-diegetic" and "diegetic"), and provides examples of its use in several films (80–2), but also refrains from detailed analysis of the practice's effect, both generally or in any particular instance.

For Hal Ashby, though, trans-diegetic music was clearly a technique fundamental to his filmmaking practice. Indeed, Ashby incorporated trans-diegesis in every film he directed. In this paper, I will place Ashby's use of trans-diegetic music within the context of his overall approach to music in film, both as a director and as an editor. I will then discuss the effect that trans-diegetic music has in Ashby's films, particularly in its relation to narration, to editing and to the viewer's experience of his films. Finally, I will analyse a particular instance of its use in the film *Coming Home* (1978). Although not a completely unknown element of classical Hollywood film, trans-diegetic music would become a favoured technique of the "New Hollywood" filmmakers and has today become standard practice in Hollywood filmmaking. Its inescapable presence in the films of Hal Ashby offers an intriguing entry into a deeper consideration of this fascinating, but seldom discussed, element of music in film.

Music in Hal Ashby's Films

Much like his approach to other aspects of filmmaking, Ashby's use of music varies from one film to the next. His general preference was to use scored music only minimally and to rely, like many of his contemporaries, on song-based soundtracks. Three of his films from the 1970s—*The Landlord* (1970), *Harold and Maude* (1971) and *Coming Home* (1978)—avoid scored music completely, while *Shampoo* (1975), which is billed as having original music by Paul Simon, uses one brief refrain on three occasions in the film, for a total of less than two-minutes running time.[8] Much like *Coming Home* would three years later, *Shampoo* relies mainly on the pop and rock music of the late 1960s to set its musical character.

When an Ashby film is fully scored—as is the case with *The Last Detail* (1973) and *Bound for Glory* (1976)—it still includes at least a few popular music tracks (generally diegetic) as part of its musical landscape. In *The Last Detail*, Johnny Mandel's score is derivative of typical military marches by John Philip Sousa and others, and the music serves

as an ironic commentary on the characters and narrative. Each time the sailors undertake a new leg of their journey, a snare-drum roll kicks in and the brass section pipes up as if to echo the U.S. Navy theme song, "Anchors Aweigh". However, unlike the sailors of World War II embarking for the Pacific, the protagonists of *The Last Detail* are on their own personal and idiosyncratic journey—one that is less than heroic or glorious—and the music serves as a counterpoint to that journey. *Bound for Glory* makes much more intricate use of the notion of counterpoint and contrast. Leonard Rosenman's score mainly takes the form of lush adaptations of Woody Guthrie music and, while it won an Academy Award, it has been criticised for being too intrusive. However, no critical analysis to date has considered the dialogic manner in which the score engages in the narrative of Guthrie's career by commenting on the action and foreshadowing events to come (including events that will take place after the time of the film). Throughout the film, during narrative shifts or moments of emotional intensity, the score fades in gently, perhaps with a simple string arrangement and a maudlin guitar. One example comes nearly half an hour into the film, as Guthrie (David Carradine) prepares to slip away from his family in Texas and make his way to California. From any reasonable point of view, Guthrie is abandoning his family in the early days of the Great Depression, with only the slimmest of hopes that California might promise work and therefore enough money to bring his wife and young children out to the West Coast with him. As is typical throughout the film, after the first quiet strains of the score, the guitar begins to pick out a tune that sounds vaguely familiar, in this case about forty-five seconds after the music has begun playing. Then, depending on the particular sequence, either the music swells or the guitar picks up its pace, and in both cases the score melds into a variation on an original Guthrie tune. In this particular example, Guthrie says a sad goodbye to a relative on his front porch and runs to meet an oncoming truck as the strings burst into a slow rendition of "So Long, It's Been Good To Know Yuh".[9] In one sense the song is commenting on the action (somewhat callously, it might be said) in that Guthrie is leaving his family and friends behind in order to start out on a new life. But the irony in this case is that the scene is set in 1936 and Guthrie would not write "So Long" until 1940, a year after the final events depicted in the film. We do not see Guthrie play the song, but only hear the scored version of it. Thus the score becomes a suggestion of things to come, an example of foreshadowing that might only be apparent to the careful viewer or to the viewer intimately familiar with Guthrie's life and career outside their presentation in this film. The dialogic nature of the score here also functions subtly to indicate that these events in Guthrie's life—much like the farm and labour struggles he will soon encounter—become the foundation for the songs that the future Guthrie will write.

That the film's music should allude to and comment on the narrative is no isolated instance in Ashby's work: on the contrary, it is a regular occurrence. Christopher Beach identifies three functions which Ashby most typically assigns to music—particularly songs—in his films: "narrative commentary", "historical placement" and "aesthetic enhancement" (123). Beach goes on to explain that "narrative commentary" occurs when the lyrics of a particular song (or in the case of *Bound for Glory*, a melody which suggests lyrics) make direct reference to one or more aspects of on-screen narrative content. Such references are sometimes straightforward, sometimes ironic, but the effect is to create more dialogic layers, between the soundtrack and the narrative and between film and viewer. One example comes in *Harold and Maude* when the two titular characters sleep together for the first time. Harold and Maude are sitting on a jetty after a very emotional conversation, watching fireworks over the city. As the fireworks fill the screen, Cat Stevens's song "I Think I See the Light" begins playing. There is a dramatic cut to Harold (Bud Cort) in bed naked. He is staring directly into

the camera, almost defiantly, and blowing bubbles. As Stevens belts out the song's refrain, there is a cut to Maude (Ruth Gordon) lying in bed beside him asleep, and then a wide shot of both of them. On discovering the sexual nature of this relationship, many of the film's main characters judge it as sick and depraved; however, the song indicates otherwise: this is a moment of clarity for Harold, and his gaze into the camera almost dares the viewer to judge him. Thus the music and the mise-en-scène work in dialogue with the viewer's expectations to intensify the effect and multiply the possible meanings of this short, wordless sequence.

This aspect of Ashby's approach has not always been well received. Reviewing *Coming Home* in the *New York Times*, Vincent Canby remarked of the songs, "not one … is allowed to pass without making some drearily obvious or ironic comment on the action on the screen. Mr. Ashby has poured music over the movie like a child with a fondness for maple syrup on his pancakes" (Canby). Whether one finds the narrative commentary by the music insightful or insipid (and *Coming Home* is the Ashby film that makes most frequent use of the technique) might depend on how willing one is to indulge Ashby by looking for other, less obvious functions of the commentary. In any case, it is a formal strategy that Ashby seems to have valued and returned to frequently.

Another of the functions identified by Beach is "aesthetic enhancement", which he defines as Ashby's manner of editing to the rhythm of the music. In the *Harold and Maude* sequence, the cut from the fireworks to Harold's face happens precisely at the moment that Cat Stevens's voice can be heard singing the first word of the refrain, "I Think I See the Light", so that the music and the cut are synchronised. Such deterministic cuts are frequent in both the films Ashby edited for Norman Jewison as well as in early Ashby films, but as he became more adept at using the technique Ashby began cutting around the beat, just behind or ahead of audience expectations, thus creating additional, subtle moments of surprise. "Historical placement", as identified by Beach, is a function of music by which selected music is used to ground a film in its historical setting. This function is not at all unique to Ashby's films; however, he was quite meticulous about its use, making sure in the case of *Coming Home* that all of the songs were precisely from 1966–68 so as to pre-date and lead up to the time of the film's setting (Dawson *Being Hal* 195).[10]

Trans-diegetic Music

In addition to those uses of music that Beach outlines, I would add a fourth, which is an integral part of Ashby's filmmaking strategy: trans-diegetic music. As I have suggested, "trans-diegetic" remains an under-defined term, but it arguably offers a useful means of addressing Ashby's practice of allowing music to cross the diegetic/extra-diegetic border. In her essay "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic" (2007), Robynn Stilwell does not actually use the term "trans-diegetic";[11] she does, however, offer a sense both of the potential and limitations of this technique. She denotes the transition from diegetic to extra-diegetic a liminal space and posits that when that space "is traversed, it does always *mean*" (186 author's emphasis).[12] However, as Stilwell also points out, such instances are also ripe with uncertainty, lending themselves to a sense of "unreality" (187). The result is a playful moment of uncertainty in which the trans-diegetic contributes to narrative meaning but not always in ways that are particularly clear. Building on Stilwell's discussion of uncertainty and its relationship to (or dependence on) conditions of objectivity and subjectivity, Alessandro Cecchi complicates the question of the barrier between the diegetic and the extra-

diegetic, proposing that such a barrier rarely holds up to close scrutiny. Using the example of the violins during the shower scene in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), Cecchi argues that the music—while clearly extra-diegetic in the sense that the violins are not there in the bathroom with Janet Leigh and Tony Perkins—cannot be so easily divorced from the diegesis. Rather, the violins are a necessary component of the subjective experience of the on-screen action even as, objectively, they are not present on-screen during that action. Of such a relationship, Cecchi argues, "it is perfectly evident that in terms of narrative the diegetic/nondiegetic distinction has a function which is quite marginal with respect to the sequence in question" (8–9). While Cecchi here is more properly discussing the meta-diegetic and not the trans-diegetic,[13] his interrogation of the difficulty in strictly delineating the diegetic and the extra-diegetic—of the subjective nature of such delineation—will, like Stilwell's "uncertainty", prove useful in discussing Ashby's use of trans-diegetic music.

The trans-diegetic technique is one that occurs in all of Ashby's feature films, although his practice varies greatly from film to film and his understanding of its narrative potential seems to have evolved over time. Sometimes it occurs only minimally, as when, near the beginning of *The Landlord*, Elgar (Beau Bridges) is running towards his car and a non-specified early 1960s rock song begins playing. Elgar sits behind the wheel and the song turns out to be a jingle for an advertisement playing on his car's radio. A series of jump cuts follows as Elgar drives home from the Bronx to Long Island, but the advertisement continues playing uninterrupted. In this case, the music is extra-diegetic to begin with (Elgar has not yet reached his car to turn on the radio), briefly becomes diegetic as Elgar starts his car, then becomes at once seemingly both diegetic and extra-diegetic, continuing in an atemporal relationship with the elliptical depiction of Elgar's drive home. This instance exemplifies Stilwell's characterisation of such moments as uncertain or liminal.

A shorter, subtler instance occurs at the very beginning of *Shampoo*. Immediately following the Columbia logo comes a dark screen and a dramatically quick fade-in of the Beach Boys' song "Wouldn't it Be Nice". For a few seconds, the viewer might expect the opening credits to roll, and consider the song as being part of the film's extra-fictional apparatus—in other words, an utterance that is outside the diegesis of the film's world as well as being completely outside the film's fiction, but inside the film itself. This perception, however, lasts only briefly as, instead of being greeted by an opening credit sequence, we are first treated to the sounds of the vigorous lovemaking of two characters who will turn out to be George (Warren Beatty) and Felicia (Lee Grant). The screen remains black and the song continues uninterrupted. Then the credits begin and a dim light from a shaded window appears in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. At this point the music is part of the extra-fictional credits as well as being, in some fashion, part of the film's fictional world. Roughly a minute into the film, a telephone rings and George makes a frustrated grunt before turning off the music and answering it. With George's action, the music has become an obvious part of the film's diegesis and while the viewer never sees the music's source, he/she is made aware of it by the clicking sound of the radio being turned off. This song excerpt takes only a brief moment in the overall film, one that can be quickly and easily forgotten in the wake of the narrative's many twists and turns. It does, however, exemplify Branigan's comment about how the same music can play more than one role at the same time in a film. And, in this case, it could be argued that the trans-diegetic nature of the music here acts as a subtle foreshadowing of the film's theme of mistaken identity and the subjective nature of performativity.

This technique can generally be regarded as a violation of classical Hollywood principles by which the diegetic and extra-diegetic should remain discreet and distinct.[14] Both Branigan and Chion point to instances of its use in classical Hollywood films, but nearly all of those occurrences constitute a transition between the pre-film, extra-fictional music of a credit sequence and the diegetic world of a film's fiction. There are other instances, too: for example, both Gorbman and Stilwell analyse Max Steiner's frequent elision of diegetic and extra-diegetic. It remains, however, a rare occurrence in classical Hollywood films, especially in comparison with the films of the 1970s, whose New Hollywood directors would feel little compunction about violating principles of classical-era continuity. The opening sequence of Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) makes use of the technique much like the films of the classical era: the song playing over the opening-credit shots of the city is revealed actually to be the music of a car radio. A more audacious, and perhaps better-known, example comes part way through Mel Brooks's *Blazing Saddles* (1974) when Cleavon Little's Sherriff Bart is riding across the plains accompanied by a soundtrack that turns out to be Count Basie's band, actually playing as he rides past. Martin Scorsese employs the technique frequently, if less comedically, using it to great effect in *Raging Bull* (1980). However, Ashby's regular deployment of the technique suggests that he put particular stock in its potential. Taylor describes the trans-diegetic as sound that "remains unspecific" (3), and Stilwell discusses its sense of "unreality", but in Ashby's hands it is something more than that. It becomes a way of challenging spatial and temporal specificity and of bridging the gap between film and audience, something closely akin to Branigan's description of the effect as endowing one utterance of music with simultaneously different functions. In a sense, trans-diegesis creates a liminal space—music that is both of and not of the filmic world. Some instances of trans-diegetic music in early Ashby films can come across as coy, a deliberately postmodern affectation in keeping with the spirit of early New Hollywood. As he develops the technique, however, it becomes a more ambiguous strategy, its relationship to the viewer being more elusive. In the later films, trans-diegetic music pulls us into the world of the film (for instance, via what Beach calls "historical placement"), while also serving to distance us from that world by reminding us that this is only a film that we are watching.

Trans-diegetic Music in *Coming Home*

Coming Home is a film about the Vietnam War. Set throughout much of 1968, it revolves around the lives of four main characters: Luke (Jon Voight) is a veteran of the war, now a paraplegic, who begins the film as a patient in an understaffed Veterans Administration (VA) hospital; Bob (Bruce Dern) is a gung-ho marine officer who is deployed to Vietnam soon after the film starts; Sally (Jane Fonda) is Bob's wife, who begins the film typically dutiful and conservative; Vi (Penelope Milford) also has a partner away in the war while she stays at home and volunteers at the VA hospital, where her brother is a patient. In addition to making frequent use of music for narrative commentary, *Coming Home* is also the film in which Ashby makes his deftest use of trans-diegetic music. Music permeates the film—and Ashby wanted more, saying in a 1978 interview, "if we had the money it would have been wall to wall music. I would have started it right over the UA logo and maybe even put in a good disc-jockey … like it was one big radio station playing" (Appelbaum 70). Often there are discreet fluctuations in volume for particular songs, so that it can be unclear whether a given song is meant to be diegetic or not. One example comes early in the film, on Bob's last night before leaving for Vietnam. He is at home fixing a toaster for Sally. The Beatles' "Hey Jude" can only just be heard playing in the background, as if coming from a transistor

radio somewhere in the kitchen. There is a cut to Sally and Bob in their car at the base parking lot moments before he is to ship out, and the song is still playing quietly, with no temporal displacement. It is unclear whether the song is meant simply to be extra-diegetic (which does not explain why the volume is so low) or whether it was diegetic in the kitchen, but not in the car, or (least likely) if Bob and Sally just happened upon the same song in their car radio as had been playing hours before in the kitchen. In any case, they get out of the car and say goodbye. Then as Bob joins the other officers walking towards the bus, the song swells to a very high volume during the long, famous coda of "nah nah nah nah"s. In this moment of heightened irony, the joyful and triumphant singing during the coda is enhanced by the rapid increase in volume. However, the increase in volume coincides with a very serious moment in the narrative: a scene of men heading off to war, a war that most of the film's 1978 viewers would very likely not have described as joyful or triumphant. A song that is generally regarded as hopeful and upbeat is thus rendered uncomfortable, even slightly naïve.

Similar moments occur frequently in the film so that the viewer is kept entirely off guard as to what any particular song's source is. This strategy comes to fruition during a three-song, cross-cut sequence that takes place soon after Sally returns from a visit with Bob in Hong Kong while he is on leave. Soon after her arrival home, Sally discovers that Vi's brother Bill has taken his own life at the VA hospital, and the sequence in question begins. The three songs proceed back to back with no cuts, even while the visual edits oscillate back and forth between two scenes and suggest a fragmentation of the narrative.[15] Sally and Vi decide to go out dancing to try to forget about their troubles. There is a cut to Luke in his wheelchair rolling towards his car with a box on his lap. It is late afternoon. Precisely timed with this cut to Luke is the opening snare drum beat of Steppenwolf's "Born To Be Wild", which begins playing quietly. The song, extra-diegetic at this point, continues as Luke reaches his car and loads the box into the passenger side. As he slams the door, there is a cut to a nightclub and a noticeable increase in volume. The song is now diegetic, playing in the club that Sally and Vi are visiting, and the dancers in the club are clearly dancing in time to the music.[16] We see Sally and Vi talking at the bar; then there is another cut back to Luke. The music has become extra-diegetic again (as it will remain throughout the parts of the sequence that focus on Luke), and now it is night. Luke has parked his car and is unloading the box, which we can see is full of heavy chains. There is another cut back to the club and, as the song fades out, Sally and Vi make eye contact with two men whom they call over to their spot at the bar.

There is a brief interlude and, after a few seconds, Jimi Hendrix's "Manic Depression" begins playing on the club stereo (which could also be considered an example of Beach's "narrative commentary" category, as both Vi and Luke are obviously distraught at Bill's suicide). As soon as the song begins, Vi and the two men walking towards them begin moving in rhythm with it. There is another cut to Luke, who is rolling his wheelchair up to a Marine Recruiting office. He has decided to chain himself to the fence gate, forcing it shut as a kind of protest in response to Bill's suicide. The music is very quiet at this point, almost indiscernible, and then there is another cut back to Sally and Vi, except that they are no longer in the club. They are entering a hotel room with the two men from the club (Vi obviously drunk and being carried by one of them). Diegetic time has clearly elapsed, but the music continues uninterrupted, albeit still very quiet. However, it now seems as if it has shifted in the women's case from diegetic to extra-diegetic: the music that is playing when they enter the hotel room would seem to have no source, and much like in the earlier

mentioned scene with "Hey Jude", the music has continued over from one location to another uninterrupted. The instability of the music's source at this point results in the viewer not being at all sure of where the music is meant to be located in relation to the film's diegesis. This instability mirrors the instability—both mental and situational—of the main protagonists at this point in the narrative.

The sequence returns to Luke, now being harassed by Marines who are indignant at his action. The music can hardly be heard at this point, but is still playing quietly in the background. As the film cuts back to the hotel room, Vi says, "we need some entertainment". She dances over to the radio, in time with "Manic Depression", which is still playing (although still seemingly as extra-diegetic sound), and clearly changes the station on the hotel radio. She does not turn the radio on; instead, she changes the station, implying that "Manic Depression", the same song that was playing in the club, has been playing on the radio in their hotel room. She briefly rolls through the stations until she settles on Aretha Franklin singing "Save Me", (in another example of narrative commentary, Vi even looks at Sally and asks: "appropriate music?"). Vi then volunteers to show the men a "real" go-go dance. She gets up on a chair, starts dancing provocatively, and then removes her top (she is not wearing a bra). While one of the men is visibly excited by this—exhibiting his approval with smiles and shout-outs—the other man and Sally are both clearly uncomfortable. The atmosphere in the room becomes more tense and unsettling when Vi begins stomping up and down fiercely, with a pained expression on her face. Sally goes to her, and Vi seems suddenly to realise where she is and what she is doing. She covers herself up and storms out of the room. Sally goes to her and hugs her, and Vi breaks down crying, over and over, "Sally, my brother, my brother". The two men, in another part of the room, wonder what is happening and one of them says, "maybe we should have turned on the TV". The joke, rather than undercutting the tension, only serves to heighten the scene's overriding sense of disequilibrium—the two men are just out for a good time, and Vi's emotional breakdown (in the wake, unbeknownst to them, of her brother's suicide) comes out of nowhere. Yet, for the viewers, the breakdown is less perplexing than the striptease that precedes it, knowing as we do what she is trying to forget. So the joke, which is intended to alleviate tension, actually comes across as crass and unfeeling, which serves to deepen the sense that Vi cannot be helped, cannot at this point be "saved".

As the sequence begins to come to its conclusion, Vi and Sally walk through the hotel lobby, presumably a few minutes after leaving the hotel room. The music has stopped, but in the background a TV news report can be heard. Sally and Vi stop momentarily. They hear the report, which is about Luke's actions earlier that evening. They run over to the TV and Sally says: "It's Luke". For nearly thirty seconds of film time, Sally and Vi watch the news report in which Luke is explaining why he chained himself to the fence gate. Thus, the two cross-cut sequences, playing out in different temporal and physical space, but linked by the three songs, begin to merge towards a temporal restoration.[17] The film then cuts to Sally outside the police station picking Luke up. After nine minutes and forty seconds, the three-song (plus news reporting) cross-cut sequence has ended. What follows is a very intimate and explicit love scene between Sally and Luke that does not shy away from Luke's physical paralysis. The preceding music sequence, then, becomes the impetus for the film's final act, which concerns Luke and Sally's deepening relationship and the discovery of that relationship by Sally's husband Bob after he returns from Vietnam. Thus the cross-cut sequence serves the purpose of exhibiting three of the film's key characters at their personal nadirs. It is resolved in a "coming together"—of two narrative strands, of two separate temporal spaces, and also

of two characters—which allows the characters to begin to overcome the sense of despair that has been plaguing them, to varying degrees, for much of the film.

As this sequence analysis exemplifies, trans-diegetic music in the films of Hal Ashby serves several purposes. First, in the form of narrative commentary, the music indicates awareness of the emotional state of at least two of the characters, as Luke and Vi are both emotionally distraught and perhaps in need of saving. Second, the music (and the news report) creates a bond between two sets of characters who are geographically separate and who, in their on-screen narratives, are temporally distant as well—Sally and Vi's evening seems to take place over a short space in time, whereas Luke's venture, which begins during the day and ends late at night, seems to be stretched out over several more hours, yet both series of events play out on screen within the same nine-and-a-half-minutes of film time. The music functions aesthetically to set the rhythm and pace of the editing, with cuts from one scene to the other taking place in rhythmic play with the music, which is mirrored in part by the frequent dancing in Vi and Sally's sequences, as if the film itself is dancing in time to the music.

The music is also somewhat cathartic, at least for the characters, including Sally. It is immediately after witnessing in person Vi's breakdown and Luke's commitment to his cause on television that Sally decides finally to pursue a romantic and sexual relationship with Luke, which becomes the central plot-point of the film's final act. Moreover, there is an intertextual element to the music here. "Born To Be Wild" is an obvious reference to the film *Easy Rider* (1969), in which it played a major part, and "Manic Depression" is a nod to that song's previous appearance in Ashby's own *Shampoo* (also during a climactic, multi-song sequence). So Ashby is clearly setting his film in a particular time (*Easy Rider* was shot in 1968, both *Shampoo* and *Coming Home* are set in 1968), and associating it with other political films. This mirrors Sally's decision to be with Luke based on his political action against the Recruiting Centre. While this example marks one of the most elaborate uses of trans-diegetic music in any Ashby film, its use in other films often serves similar purposes. It is liminal music that is both in the film and not in the film, and it creates a similar space for the viewer. We are at once ensconced in the film's world and also keenly aware of its filmic nature. The impact of trans-diegetic music and the issues it raises—in Ashby's films and in Hollywood films in general—surely demand further consideration.

Notes

[1] These are: *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965); *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!* (1966); *In the Heat of the Night* (1967); *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968); *Gaily, Gaily* (1969). On the latter film, released in the UK as *Chicago, Chicago*, Ashby served as associate producer as well as doing uncredited editorial work. Ashby, who directed eleven feature films and two concert films between 1970 and 1986, is perhaps best known for four of the films he directed in the 1970s: *Harold and Maude* (1971); *Shampoo* (1975); *Coming Home* (1978); and *Being There* (1979).

[2] On the importance of Ray Charles to the development of Ashby's approach to editing based on music see Dawson (88).

[3] MOS, an acronym variously for Motor Only Sync or Motor Only Shot, refers to portions of film that have been shot without synchronous sound. During editing, such film generally remains silent until post-production sound is added.

[4] I prefer the term "extra-diegetic" for music that is specifically part of the film but not part of the film's diegesis. "Non-diegetic" is a broader term, it seems to me, that encompasses any music that is not strictly diegetic.

[5] The clear, succinct nature of Taylor's definition of "trans-diegetic" has lent itself to being cited by several writers on the topic (see Note 13 below). Ironically, Taylor's definition comes in an essay wherein he argues that, based on a strictly Platonic understanding, Film Studies has been misusing the term "diegesis" and its many variants.

[6] Recently, trans-diegetic music and sound have been subjects of increasing interest in the study of video games. Kristine Jørgensen has written extensively on the topic, including with reference to the differences between its use in film and in video games. See particularly: "On Trans-diegetic Sounds in Computer Games". *Northern Lights*, 5.1 (2007): 105–17.

[7] Invisible and even, as Claudia Gorbman has demonstrated, "inaudible", whereby, "its volume, mood, and rhythm must be subordinated to the dramatic and emotional dictates of the film narrative" (73, 76).

[8] Ashby referred to the Simon refrain as an "anti-score" (Ashby).

[9] The use of "Yuh" is Guthrie's preferred spelling and is maintained by Woody Guthrie Publications.

[10] In fact, as Dawson points out, United Artists were quite reticent about letting Ashby use so many different songs in the film, fearful of the tremendous cost. However, many of the musicians, being either friendly with Ashby or sympathetic to the film's message, let their work be used at reduced prices (*Being Hal* 196).

[11] On the other hand, Stilwell does spend part of her essay considering instances of meta-diegetic music, which should not be confused with trans-diegetic music. Meta-diegetic, as explained by Gorbman (22–3) and articulated by Stilwell, refers to an instance wherein an utterance of extra-diegetic music appears as a reaction to or a comment on an instance of diegetic action or dialogue. The music in such an instance, while apparently "aware" of the diegesis, itself remains extra-diegetic.

[12] As the title of heirs essay indicates, Stilwell prefers here the term "non-diegetic" to "extra-diegetic". Note 4 explains my preference for the latter.

[13] At one point in his essay, Cecchi does mention the potential need for "a term such as 'transdiegetic'" (6), at which point he cites the same Taylor essay (2007) as I do.

[14] It is worth noting the exception of the Hollywood musical, where the elision between diegetic and extra-diegetic music has long been a regular stylistic convention of the genre.

[15] Superficially, this sequence resembles the classic montage sequence during which one or more characters are seen in a variety of settings during the play of one, usually extra-diegetic, musical utterance. Such sequences generally served to compress time, whereas Ashby's trans-diegetic sequences tend to have a much more complex, multifaceted relationship with time, setting and character interaction.

[16] According to Jeff Wexler, a great deal of music was played on set throughout the filming of *Coming Home*, but, as is standard industry practice, all music was cut during actual filming. So it was in the editing of the film that the illusion of the dancers being in rhythm with the music was created (Wexler 2011).

[17] It is not made explicitly clear whether the news report they watch is live footage, which would indicate full temporal restoration, or filmed footage, which would indicate that the timelines that we as viewers are seeing are still temporally unaligned.

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