Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, *Sound Design is the New Score: Theory, aesthetics, and erotics of the integrated soundtrack* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), ISBN 978-0-190-85531-4 (hb), 978-0-190-85532-1 (pb).

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The relationship between "sound" and "music" in contemporary multimedia remains highly topical as evidenced by the recent awards recognition of Hildur Guðnadóttir's work for HBO's *Chernobyl,* with its haunting use of sound recorded from the power plant where the mini-series was filmed. Consequently, the pertinence of Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's new monograph could not be more apparent. However, her interest extends beyond soundtracks that just inhabit and blur the boundaries between what might traditionally be regarded as music and sound design. Instead, *Sound Design is the New Score* considers a '*musical* approach to the film soundtrack, which is conceived as an integrated whole' (3). This 'conceptual framework' (4), comprising the ideas and approaches outlined throughout the book, facilitates exploration of audiovisual texts that: demonstrate the interconnectedness and potential interchangeability of music, sound, and dialogue; correspondingly challenge traditional hierarchies or expectations associated with the soundtrack; and that thus invite a more engaged audience. For Kulezic-Wilson, 'the most striking, adventurous, and influential examples appear in the type of cinema that defies the ideology of the mainstream' (6-7). Accordingly, she incorporates a stimulating range of exemplar films, theoretical ideas, and practitioner insights to convey persuasively a recent 'profound shift' towards such soundtrack practices (3), which nonetheless betray some traces that date back to the inception of sound cinema. Aspects of the history, production processes, and technology associated with film sound are duly considered alongside matters of reception, inviting the reader to muse on probing wider questions about long-standing boundaries and labels from film music theory and practice, and about the ontology of music itself. The result is a crucial contribution to the understanding of soundtracks for contemporary audiovisual media and a text that will likely also be engaging for a wider readership interested in various music practices and debates of the twentieth century.

The introductory chapter clearly sets out these concerns and the parameters of study. Whilst the soundtracks that Kulezic-Wilson is interested in are often influenced by musically-minded practitioners, developments in sound editing and postproduction technologies, and electroacoustic or popular music styles that make prevalent use of recorded sounds and samples, they also represent much more than the sum of these potential parts. As such, she

adeptly weaves these ideas throughout whilst individual sections emphasize particular historical, practical or theoretical issues, and specific facets of the integrated soundtrack. The ordering of the chapters is logical and effectively conveys the increasing challenges that the practices under consideration present to traditional conceptualizations of the soundtrack: Chapter 2 proceeds with a discussion of historical and technological developments that have influenced working practices and facilitated the development of soundtracks that explore the boundaries between score and sound design; Chapter 5 culminates with an analysis of the musicalized use of speech, which, by de-centralizing dialogue, arguably represents the most significant challenge to conventional attitudes towards the soundtrack. In addition to the clear introductory overview, Chapter 1 contextualizes central terms and approaches. Particularly helpful is the discussion of the term 'sound design', which supports navigation of the inconsistencies and differing emphases associated with a label that Kulezic-Wilson later describes as often being 'unacknowledged, overlooked, or misunderstood, obscured by disagreements about its purpose, its methods of production, and even its very existence' (151). Understanding of the idea of the score is less contentious and treated more tacitly. However, relevant nuances are still acknowledged throughout, including the score's potential to be influenced by various individuals given changing production and composition processes and technologies. An emphasis on production is also clearly infused throughout the introductory chapter, articulating that this is a book that is just as concerned with practice as it is with textual analysis.

Chapter 2 develops these ideas by providing a concise portrait of how early film sound practices resulted in a compartmentalized conception of the soundtrack and the labour divisions behind its production. Kulezic-Wilson continues to explore how technological developments and influences from contemporary art and popular musics facilitated the dissolution of some of these boundaries. In addition to providing helpful context for the following chapters, this approach serves to reiterate the multifaceted nature of the discussion. A careful synthesis of historical overview and theoretical and practitioner perspectives ensures the discussion is focused, retaining both wider contextual awareness and nuance, not overstating the importance of individual influences or over-implying causality. The tone also remains applied via the representation of the voices of practitioners who emphasize the benefits of collaborative approaches and of considering the role of sound early in a film's lifespan rather than simply in postproduction. An impressively broad range of examples effectively captures the plethora of ways in which the relationship between score and sound design has been explored, beginning with instances where the score can be incorporated

within the sound design then moving to the musicalization of sound effects. Indicative examples include: more extended discussions of Eduard Artemiev's work on *Solaris* (Tarkovsky, 1972), Jonny Greenwood's score for Lynne Ramsey's *You Were Never Really Here* (2017), and the pioneering soundtracks for Darren Aronofsky's films; and many briefer allusions spanning noteworthy early examples like the Barrons' use of electronic instruments in *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox, 1956) through to more recent works like Edgar Wright's integration of pre-existing popular music in *Baby Driver* (2017). This range in terms of filmic genre, timespan, and differing musical and/or sonic influences is persuasive in conveying the pervasiveness and relevance of the book's core issues.

Chapter 3 focuses on 'scoring with sound' and presents extended case studies of British director Peter Strickland's *Katalin Varga* (2009) and *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012). These analyses follow a discussion of the aesthetics of reticence, which refers to qualities of ambiguity or restraint that 'allow[…] individuated responses to film and encourag[e…] more active involvement with the text' (61-62). Convincingly supported by ideas of interrogative texts from literary theory, this helpful label astutely characterizes many of the book's central examples given their eschewal of the traditional use of score to guide and clarify interpretation. Thorough and balanced contextualization is provided via allusions to various 'nonconventional scoring practices' that might also promote such engaged responses (65). These practices range from: a lack of scoring; the distinctive use of music and sound by French New Wave directors like Jean-Luc Godard; the compiled scores of Quentin Tarantino; to the focus of the chapter, a blurring of the boundaries between diegetic sound and pre-existing *musique concrète* or electroacoustic music, which can confuse the source of the sound and avoid providing a clear emotional steer for the audience. A brief yet insightful exploration of the ways in which soundtracks may facilitate immersion, distanciation, or active engagement that does not easily align with either label nuances this discussion further, pointing to wider debates that the aesthetics of reticence can productively inform. As well as exploring specific facets of the integrated soundtrack, Strickland's films provide apt examples to illustrate this conceptual discussion given their complex characters and challenging topics, which defy straightforward interpretations. Kulezic-Wilson's nuanced analyses do justice to these issues, providing multi-layered readings that are well supported by specific audiovisual detail and holistic perspectives on the sequences and films in question, in addition to relevant counter-examples from Strickland's other work to retain context. Moreover, the analyses are enriched by extracts from the author's correspondence with Strickland himself, which provide insight into his influences and working practices. In

themselves these primary accounts (and those of sound designers Sam Petty and Gábor Erdélyi in other chapters) represent another valuable contribution of the book.

The argument undergoes sophisticated development in Chapter 4. Retaining focus on filmic use of pre-existing electroacoustic music and *musique concrète,* Kulezic-Wilson emphasizes ideas of sensuousness and erotics. She argues the importance of considering the sensuous - 'a "consensual" engagement with film' rather than a solely physical reaction (9). This 'engagement' derives pleasure from 'the sensuousness of the form itself – its sonic and visual textures, composition, rhythm, movement, and flow' (ibid). Situating this conceptualization alongside work on embodied spectatorship, the chapter explores '*the sensuousness of the aesthetic experience*' itself (91). Consequently, this theoretically rich section engages with probing questions surrounding the pleasure that can be associated with aesthetic reflection and appreciation of form, and how this has been posited against the political and ideological implications of engaging with art. Kulezic-Wilson makes a strong case that such matters are not simply products of a film's subject and encourages adoption of a wider perspective on what it means to politically engage with art. Here some of the most far-reaching significance of the book is foregrounded as feminist ideas of an erotics of art are applied to film sound to advocate for acknowledgement of 'a sensual and intimate engagement […] that rejects the "trivial" version of sensuousness where sensory overload is mistaken for sensuality' (94). Maintaining the sense of contextual awareness that permeates the text, precursory influences from French New Wave cinema of the 60s are recognized, alongside qualities of more recent postclassical cinema. As such, the often cyclical rather than linear evolution of cinematic trends is emphasized, reiterating the nuances of the argument. Equally, a clear case is made that sensuousness is just as relevant within the context of an aesthetics of reticence as it is within the emphasis on form and sensory excess in the intensified continuity devices of postclassical cinema, reflecting the wider applicability of the book's core ideas. Extended examples from the work of Gus van Sant and Béla Tarr explore these issues in an applied context, as do evocatively worded and carefully evidenced interpretations of two contrasting films connected by a focus on the human body: *Beau Travail* (Denis, 1998) and *The Fits* (Holmer, 2015). As Kulezic-Wilson acknowledges, the content of these examples often involves the corporeal and the sensuousness of rhythmic actions like walking, even when not explicitly foregrounding the human body. Whilst this may contribute to their efficacy in supporting her argument, the closing case study, *The Assassin* (Hsiao-Hsien, 2015), presents contrast, applying the discussion to very different content. This example is particularly memorable as the author complements the audiovisual

analysis with an account of her own experiences of the film at the cinema, in an anecdotal turn that duly foregrounds a personal and subjective flavour. However, this tone conveys an immediacy that resonates with themes of sensuousness and active engagement. The first-person perspective, alongside an evocative metaphor in the chapter's conclusion using 'erotic liaisons' and evolving relationships to illustrate how a perceiver's engagement with a film may change over multiple viewings, suggests the significance of these ideas to the author, contributing to the compelling nature of the argument.

The book's penultimate chapter represents the most direct challenge to traditional conceptions of the soundtrack and considers the musicalized use of dialogue, often emancipated from its visual source and therefore inviting attention towards its purely sonic properties. A range of briefer examples emphasize the rhythmic and sonic properties of language, which can be used to structural and tonal effect beyond providing semantic information. A closing trio of case studies then provide extended examples of the application and integration of such approaches. As a set, these examples contrast in terms of style and content, in addition to their varied approaches to the soundtrack, and are ordered carefully to maximise these differences and support the progression of the argument. The first, Drake Doremus's *Breathe In* (2013), explores ideas of "verbal *chiaroscuro*", demonstrating score and dialogue fluidly moving from the foreground to the background to complement the cinematography and reflect key themes surrounding communication. The second, Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (2012), is included partly to highlight a growing presence of hierarchy and convention challenging soundtracks in more mainstream films, again demonstrating the wider applicability of the approaches explored throughout the book. However, it also reflects that popular music-influenced scores are just as relevant to the debate as the electroacoustic and *musique concrète* influences that dominated the previous two chapters. To this end, vivid examples are included of how repeated and asynchronous use of dialogue and sound effects at various structural levels works alongside frequent montage sequences, colourful cinematography, and Cliff Martinez's techno score to convey a stylistic quality that itself invites reflection on the themes of the film. The final example, Shane Carruth's *Upstream Color* (2013), displays a 'breakdown of storytelling and editing conventions' to complement a dismantled soundtrack hierarchy that draws on all of the techniques outlined in the chapter, and thus provides an effective *crescendo* for the argument (143). Indeed, acknowledging Carruth's recognizable and musically-infused approach, Kulezic-Wilson's emphasis on the director's aspiration that his films may be enjoyed multiple times like a favourite album, foregrounds the sensuous, musicalized qualities of his

work to provide a strong applied conclusion for the entire book. Interestingly, each of the case studies in this chapter, and a number of others cited elsewhere, feature music, musicians or sonic practice within the filmic narrative and diegesis, which no doubt facilitates and helps to foreground the integration of different soundtrack elements. However, there is also a number of examples featured that do not, deflecting any accusations that the broader argument relies on such narrative motivation.

A pithy concluding chapter reiterates the central themes, complementing the lucid summaries provided at the end of each chapter, and is particularly successful in emphasizing the book's relevance. Synthesizing new ideas and examples with those introduced in the author's earlier monograph on the musicality of film and work on aspects of the integrated soundtrack, *Sound Design is the New Score* provides a theoretically significant, expanded account of a pervasive yet multi-faceted aspect of contemporary film soundtracks.[1] The holistic range of passing examples and careful integration of the various strands of the argument, adeptly balancing contextual awareness with lucid focus, ensures a clear yet nuanced discussion. The integration of practitioner perspective and interpretative analysis also emphasizes that the understanding that the integrated soundtrack can facilitate is much more than just a theoretically useful conceptualization. The book illuminates aspects of a range of soundtracks, some of which may not share the convention-challenging qualities of many of the extended case studies but that nonetheless still provide interesting presentations of aspects of the relationship between score and sound design. However, the central boundary-dissolving agenda of the book is particularly significant and tantalizing, providing material to inform various ongoing debates about labels used to understand facets of the film soundtrack, from the central focus on music/sound to concepts such as diegetic/non-diegetic. The elements of broader debates that the book speaks to also reflect its relevance beyond film music and sound studies, with the discussions about political aspects of aesthetic reflection and sensuousness being especially important. The active consideration that this book

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[1] Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, *The Musicality of Narrative Film.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, 'Musically conceived sound design, musicalization of speech and the breakdown of film soundtrack hierarchy', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sound Design and Music in Screen Media: Integrated soundtracks*, ed. Liz Greene and Danijela Kulezic-Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 429-444; Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, 'Sound design and its interactions with music: Changing historical perspectives', in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, ed. Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, and Ben Winters (New York: Routledge, 2017), 127-138.

encourages of representation in, and response to, films that often do not provide easy or clear-cut answers is highly engaging. However, Kulezic-Wilson takes this further, modelling this approach through a meticulously balanced set of thought-provoking examples and an at times reverential tone that identifies, for example, 'haunting audiovisual beauty' (70) or 'perfection of the sound design […] and […] the film's evanescent glory' (123). Whilst all readers may not necessarily share these strong views, the evocative, personal language nonetheless resonates with ideas of the sensuous and is compelling in conveying why this work is important: *Sound Design is the New Score* not only encourages us to appreciate the work of the creatives behind the films represented but also our own rich experiences as we navigate what these, and films and art more broadly, can sound and feel like.

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