

The Visible Acousmètre

Voice, body and space across the two versions of *Donnie Darko*

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This article draws on contemporary theories of voice and body in cinema to examine the changes made across the two versions of *Donnie Darko*. I focus on how the character Frank illustrates Michel Chion's concept of the *acousmètre*, a figure he defined in the early 1980s as a disembodied voice imbued with supernatural powers. More recently, Chion has discussed the increasing visibility of the *acousmètre* in the face of new modes of film sound exhibition. To flesh out the significance of Chion's evolving line of thought, I situate his work within the discourse of feminist psychoanalytic film sound theory, with a particular emphasis on Britta Sjogren's recent challenge to the dominant position in the field. In her book *Into the Vortex*, Sjogren argues for a critical approach to film sound that recognises the autonomy of sound and image and the potential for the body to be understood as an acoustic spatial entity rather than being defined by a voice's attachment to something visible. I suggest that Chion's discussion of the visible *acousmètre* points towards a similar conclusion: that all voices in the cinema are markers of spatial entities that exist independently of the image, even when attached to visible bodies. I conclude that the director's cut of *Donnie Darko*, with its alterations to the figure of Frank, offers an example of the kind of corporeal space that Chion and Sjogren theorise, space that I suggest can extend beyond the sound-track into the realm of the image.

¹ Both versions of the film were released theatrically in the USA and have subsequently been made available on DVD. For the purposes of my analysis I am referring to the 20th Century Fox Video R1 DVD releases of each. Original Theatrical Cut: ASIN: B000QXDCCW. Director's Cut: ASIN: B0006GAOBI.

When the director's cut of Richard Kelly's cult favourite *Donnie Darko* hit the screens in 2004, fans were presented with a film that does more than simply re-integrate scenes that had been deleted from the original theatrical release three years earlier; the film features new image and sound material created specifically for this version, along with some significant changes to the audiovisual montage.¹ Kelly's stated purpose for many of these changes was to help explain the source of the bizarre

events that the film depicts, offering some balance to the ambiguity inherent to the original version.² Key to the increased clarity offered by the director's cut is further development of the relationship between high school student Donnie Darko (Jake Gyllenhaal) and the mysterious man known as Frank (James Duval). In the midst of events that resemble a rather typical high-school romantic comedy, Donnie is regularly visited by Frank, sometimes as a disembodied voice, other times as a man dressed in a rabbit suit. Frank guides Donnie on a journey through various temporal disturbances that ultimately ends with Donnie traveling backwards through time. The original film positions Frank as a possible hallucination; the director's cut, on the other hand, develops a substantial relationship between Frank and a cosmic intelligence capable of creating the anomalies that Donnie experiences. In this article I will discuss the changes across the two versions of the film in order to flesh out the triangular relationship between Donnie, Frank, and the cosmic intelligence posited by the director's cut. In examining the intersections between Donnie's world and that of the cosmic intelligence as mediated by the figure of Frank, I will illustrate how the *Donnie Darko* films make an excellent case study of issues pertaining to the relationship between voice, body and space in cinematic representation.

Central to this article is how Frank can be understood as a model for working through the development of a cinematic figure that Michel Chion has dubbed the *acousmètre*. In *The Voice in Cinema*, Chion initially postulates the *acousmètre* as a character within the film's diegesis that possesses powers of spatial transcendence because it is heard without being seen. In later writings he has observed an increasing visibility for the *acousmètre* as a result of the coming of multi-channel sound and advancements in voice synchronisation techniques. Finally he concludes that this figure has always pointed towards the fundamental fact that all speaking characters in the cinema, whether visible or not, are markers of the medium's inherently dual nature.

The idea of the cinema as a divided medium is a crucial point for psychoanalytic film theory interested in assessing how films develop strategies of suture to hide the split between sound and image. Feminist work on suture theory has explored how the conventions of sound/image synchronisation have been essential for establishing gender hegemony within classical Hollywood films. Yet such work has tended to view Chion's writings on the voice in cinema as emblematic of the problems associated with this hegemony, and key authors like Kaja Silverman have tended to make an example of the French theorist rather than attempting to recoup certain of his ideas for their cause. More recently, Britta Sjogren has challenged her predecessors in feminist psychoana-

² You can hear Kelly discuss this in some detail in the commentary track on the R1 DVD release of the director's cut.

lytic film sound theory by suggesting that their approaches to the voice in cinema have been too dependent upon reference to the visual. Sjogren calls for an understanding of the speaking body as something distinct from any specific relationship to the image. However, like her predecessors, Sjogren finds Chion's work to be part of the problem rather than pointing towards any solution. I suggest, on the contrary, that the evolution of the *acousmètre* traced by Chion provides a way of aligning his thinking about the voice in cinema with that of Sjogren. Ultimately I will suggest that the *Donnie Darko* films push the figure of the *acousmètre* to the logical limits of Chion's theorisation. It is at this limit that a fundamental point of connection between Chion and Sjogren can be articulated: that all voices in the cinema reflect the medium's inherent duality, and that the concept of the speaking body needs to be thought of as independent of the conventions of lip-synchronisation that have come to dominate narrative cinema. By situating Chion's ideas within the context of work by Silverman and Sjogren, I will suggest ways in which the changes to the director's cut of *Donnie Darko* reflect the next phase of evolution for the figure of the *acousmètre*.

The basis for the *acousmètre*'s relationship to psychoanalytic film theory is how it reflects the anxieties surrounding cinema's absent sites of production. Importantly, Chion situates the powers of the *acousmètre* within Western culture's monistic resistance to the idea of humankind as inherently dual in nature, a dual nature that reflects the seam between sound and image that the *acousmètre* threatens to expose. The theme of human duality is played out in the narrative of both films through Donnie's diagnosed schizophrenia. This fact of Donnie's character prompts us to question the nature of his relationship to Frank. Therefore, a key issue in the original film is whether or not Frank is a figment of Donnie's imagination, a schizophrenic hallucination. Kelly uses the director's cut to clarify the answer to this question by suggesting Frank's connection to a larger cosmic intelligence that exists in a space distinct from Donnie's world. In so doing, the director's cut offers the possibility that Donnie's experience of Frank stems from the space outside of his consciousness rather than originating from within. By exploring the formal qualities of Frank as an *acousmètre* in both versions of the film I will demonstrate how these qualities reflect an altered approach to the representation of space in the director's cut. I will begin with a detailed discussion of the changes that Kelly has made to the new version of the film, and illustrate the questions that these changes pose about the figure of Frank as an *acousmètre*. I will then examine the evolution of Chion's thought about the figure of the *acousmètre*, followed by a discussion of the relevance of this changing figure to new ways of

thinking about the relationship between the voice, body and space in cinema as put forth by Sjogren. Finally, I will end with a close analysis of how Frank exemplifies the evolution of the *acousmètre*, and how Kelly's development of the theme of a cosmic intelligence ultimately points towards the idea of the body as a spatial entity rather than one defined by conventions of audiovisual synchronisation.

Tracking the Changes

Key to my analysis of the changes across the two versions of *Donnie Darko* is the figure of Frank, a man in a full-body rabbit costume whose relationship to Donnie Darko is rather ambiguous. On one level, Frank is indirectly positioned as boyfriend to Donnie's sister Elizabeth (Maggie Gyllenhaal). On another level, Frank is presented as a less material being who visits Donnie at regular intervals and guides him on a very special journey. This journey begins with Frank's disembodied voice luring Donnie out of bed to a local golf course on the evening of October 2nd, 1988, just before a jet engine mysteriously falls from the sky and crashes through the Darko residence by way of the teenager's bedroom. Frank then appears before Donnie in the rabbit suit, and Donnie listens carefully as Frank foretells the end of the world in 'twenty-eight days, six hours, forty-two minutes, and twenty-five seconds', the morning of October 30th, the last day of the Middlesex Halloween Carnival. Upon returning home and realising that Frank saved his life, Donnie follows the mysterious rabbit's instructions upon later visitations. These include first flooding his high school by axing through a water main, and then setting fire to a house owned by local celebrity Jim Cunningham (Patrick Swayze), an act that reveals Cunningham's ties to a child pornography ring. Donnie thus becomes something of a vigilante, and this transpires amidst an increasing ability to foretell the future and, finally, to travel back in time. On the evening of October 29th, his girlfriend Gretchen Ross (Jena Malone) dies in a gruesome car accident with Frank behind the wheel, and Donnie finishes the evening by shooting Frank dead. The next morning, as the prophesied end of the world approaches, Donnie waits knowingly on the edge of a cliff as mysterious forces converge to turn the clock back to the point of the plane crash that starts the film. This time around Donnie accepts his fate, knowing that it will mean his girlfriend gets to live. Ultimately he trades his own life for the one he loves by travelling back to a point before they meet, and there ends the world as he knows it. So goes the outline of Donnie's trajectory in both versions of the film.

The director's cut features a host of alterations, including the re-integration of deleted scenes, enhancements to visual effects, changes in the order and selection of musical cues, and tweaks to the sound design. For present purposes, however, I will concentrate on the most dramatic changes: the addition of brand new sound and image materials created specifically for this version of the film. The most obvious new material is a series of image themes involving extreme close-ups of an eye that are eventually superimposed with key imagery from across the film. The complexity of these new images grows along with the narrative. The recurring eye motif begins as a close-up of an eyelid opening as Frank's voice is heard for the first time saying, 'Wake up'. Here we see a flash of Frank's mask for a split second, suggesting the connection of visibility between Donnie and him. At other points in the film the eye motif includes thematic additions such as the superimposition of water and fire, each emerging in conjunction with Donnie's acts of flooding and arson. Eventually, scrolling computer text becomes a fixed part of the recurring image of the eye, suggesting the possibility of a panoptic technology overseeing these events. Finally, smaller screens begin to emerge within shots of the eye, showing bits of the movies and television programming that Donnie has watched earlier in the film, finally ending with a reverse montage of key events from the narrative that illustrates Donnie's travel backwards through time. Each instance of the eye motif is also accompanied by sound, usually an abstract treatment that suggests a spatial environment separate from that of the diegesis proper.

The development of the eye motif thus moves from the initial suggestion that the eye belongs to Donnie, to the final suggestion that it is the point-of-view of a cosmic intelligence capable of enacting the temporal distortion at the film's climax. I suggest that the most useful way to think about these images is, in fact, that they represent a connection between the space of Donnie's internal consciousness and that of the cosmic intelligence – two spaces distinct from the external reality of Donnie's world. The images associated with the eye motif thereby thread two spaces that are distinct from the diegetic space in which the characters live, and yet are integral to helping define and extend the boundaries of the diegesis. Significantly, the nature of the eye-motif imagery, with its emphasis on seeing through visual media, suggests that the connection between Donnie and the cosmic intelligence is mediated by a technological apparatus. The theme of technologically mediated experience is essential to recognise when addressing the importance of the changes made to the director's cut of the film. As I will discuss, the director's cut seeks to elucidate the causes of Donnie's experiences by expanding upon the references to the concept of a *deus ex machina* that were kept rather ambiguous in the original version.

The presence of a divine machinery is more firmly established in the director's cut through the addition of this new imagery that posits a cosmic intelligence intervening in Donnie's world through media technologies. In the director's cut, Frank becomes an extension of this technology, acting as mediator between Donnie and the cosmic intelligence.

The connection between Frank and the cosmic intelligence is suggested by another new element in the director's cut: a related but independent sound motif that also supports the idea of a divine force communicating with Donnie via audiovisual media. This new sound motif is based on the theme of electrical disturbances, sometimes an electrical humming, other times electronically garbled voices associated with distorted media emissions. Each instance of this new sound motif occurs in conjunction with either the appearance of the masked Frank, or the presence of the cosmic intelligence, thereby suggesting the technological connection between each of these figures and Donnie. The first suggestion of these new sound elements comes just after we hear Frank lure Donnie out of bed. As Donnie passes through the living room of the house on his way outside, we hear the sounds of a children's choir singing *The Star Spangled Banner*, garbled by imperfect analogue reception and its attendant audiovisual distortions. After Frank has made himself visible to Donnie and has foretold the end of the world, there is a cut back to the television, and this time the electrical hum is heard for the first time. Every instance of Frank's masked appearance throughout the rest of the film is accompanied by either the electrical hum or electronically distorted voices. Finally, these sounds break free of their attachment to the visualised body. Towards the end of the film, Donnie looks skyward at a rising storm just before getting into his car to drive to the cliff where he awaits the end of the world with Gretchen's dead body at his side. As he gazes skyward, the electrical hum is heard in a lengthy sustain. As I will explain, this final instance invites a connection between Frank and the idea of a cosmic technological presence. Like the eye motif, the sound of these electrical disturbances follows a pattern that moves from the inside out, first emanating from a single television, then becoming more directly associated with Frank's masked presence, and finally being thrown upwards to the space occupied by the cosmic intelligence. Thus the sounds of these electrical disturbances can be understood as helping to define a more direct connection between Frank and this technology, and help to explain how these agents might be communicating with Donnie's internal consciousness from a position outside the established boundaries of diegetic space.

Finally, the director's cut also includes a new series of images detailing the contents of a book on time travel that is given to Donnie mid-way

through the film by his science professor, Dr. Monnitoff (Noah Wyle). The book was written by elderly Middlesex resident Roberta Sparrow (Patience Cleveland), and figures prominently in Donnie's experiences. The original film keeps the contents of the book generally vague. In the director's cut, the visualisation of key passages from the book help the audience understand what Donnie is reading about as his experiences with spatio-temporal distortions increase, providing a cryptic theoretical framework for the physical machinations of these distortions within Donnie's world. It suggests that he has entered a 'tangent universe' through a rare dimensional anomaly and that he has been chosen as a 'living vessel' to try and put things back the way they once were. The book goes on to provide descriptions of the kinds of bizarre effects that Donnie experiences, but it avoids specific reference to who or what is responsible for guiding him through the process of dimensional restructuring. Nevertheless, the book's vague details help to further establish the idea that Donnie's experiences are the result of cosmic forces beyond his control. The pages of the book visualised in the film thus bind the new audiovisual motifs together, all these new elements working to evoke the idea of a cosmic intelligence responsible for Donnie's time travel.

With these changes to the director's cut in mind, I will now discuss an important alteration to the audiovisual montage of what I consider to be the film's key scene: Donnie awaiting the end of the world at the edge of the cliff. In the original film, the final occurrence of Frank's voice appears as Donnie drives into the woods, Gretchen's dead body in the passenger seat, narrowly escaping the police who are converging on his house once news of the accident and murder is out. We hear Frank's voice counting down: 'Twenty-eight days, six hours, forty-two minutes, twenty-five seconds...' while we watch point-of-view shots out of the front of the car as it moves down the wooded roads. The voice is a composite of several vocal layers, and is presented equally from all points in the multi-channel mix. These aesthetic strategies for Frank's voice have worked throughout the film to suggest his status as a supernatural entity. The countdown continues over a visual cut to Donnie sitting on his car at the edge of a cliff as he awaits his journey back in time. Here we find Donnie counting down in concert with Frank's voice. As he does so, the sound of Donnie's voice becomes increasingly audible while Frank's fades out, the multi-channel composite presentation giving way to Donnie's own singular centralised voice, anchored to the screen and without the multi-layered effect.

This cross-fade between the voices of Frank and Donnie is a technical move from outside in: the presentation of the sound moves from all

channels to those positioned in the centre. It is also a metaphorical move from the outside in: from Frank as external and discrete entity to Frank as a function of Donnie's own internal consciousness. Further, the brief simultaneity of the two voices in the middle of the cross-fade offers a chance for us to consider if Donnie's voice may, in fact, be one part of the composite whole.

However, in the director's cut, this moment has been significantly altered. As we follow Donnie driving through the wooded streets, Frank's voice is absent. Instead, we get a flash of the eye motif with scrolling text and multiple screens depicting images of a weather disturbance. Along with these images we hear a voice resembling that of a NASA officer counting down a shuttle launch through his radio: 'Five, four, three, two...'. This is followed by the shot of Donnie sitting on the edge of the cliff where he is heard simply to say, 'Going home'. When compared with the original film, this moment from the director's cut stands out as a clear attempt to reposition Donnie as an entity separate from Frank. The replacement of Frank's voice with the images and sounds of the cosmic technological apparatus, combined with the last occurrence of the electrical sound motif heard just prior to Donnie's drive into the woods, emphasises the connection between Frank and the divine intelligence as entities distinct from Donnie. I will argue that this scene from the director's cut also offers a way of understanding the evolution of Frank's corporeality from ghostly vision to embodied human being, an evolution that stems from his increasing connection to the cosmic intelligence by way of the latter's media technologies.

All of these changes in the director's cut help explicate the idea of the *deus ex machina*, a concept that Donnie latches onto in order to help him come to terms with the experiences he has been having. The original film does not posit any literal interpretation of a divine machinery to explain the unexplainable; references to the *deus ex machina* are kept on the conceptual level, operating as Donnie's way of making sense of his cosmic experiences without the film providing any evidence for the audience. In the director's cut, the new audiovisual material discussed above suggests a more concrete manifestation of a god machine, a literal technological apparatus that acts as an explanation for the audience. The machine is a power distinct from Donnie's fabrication, yet one that increasingly involves Donnie through his relationship to Frank as the narrative progresses. I suggest that the space of the *deus ex machina* in the director's cut acts as a metaphor for the cinematic apparatus itself, a strategy that allows the film a measure of self-reflexivity without breaking its illusionist premise.

The development of a more tangible space for the *deus ex machina* can be read as a metaphor for the gap opened up by the separation between

sound and image inherent to the cinematic apparatus. To understand how this metaphor works we need to consider how Frank figures into Michel Chion's conceptualisation of the *acousmètre*. Here we must situate Chion's concept within the discourse of the cinematic voice that has arisen since the term was invented. I will begin with an examination of how Chion himself has posited the *acousmètre* as a figure intricately connected to the machinations of the cinematic apparatus, and how his original conceptualisation has evolved along with changes in cinematic technologies.

The Evolution of Chion's Acousmètre

The concept of the *acousmètre* has been most substantially theorised in Chion's book *The Voice in Cinema*, originally published in French in 1982. The *acousmètre* has become increasingly popular as a tool for examining the relationships between voice and body in the cinema and beyond: for example, Stephen J. Connor evokes the term in his discussion of ventriloquist practices (2000: 267); and Ryan Trimm uses the term to help describe the central figure in Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (2007: 33). The idea of the *acousmètre* evokes figures that spark the imagination and help explain the unexplainable: how a character can be both within the scene and outside of it at the same time. In the most general sense, an *acousmètre* is a character consisting of a voice that is not attached to a visible body. Chion's concept of the *acousmètre* is quite open and not necessarily specific to the cinema. He speaks of the 'radio *acousmètre*' and 'theatre *acousmètre*', along with situations like the average telephone conversation, as examples of acousmatic voices that abound outside the walls of the movie theatre (Chion 1999: 21–2). Yet what interests him most is how the *acousmètre* behaves in the medium-specific context of the cinema, and he is explicit about the differences between the cinematic *acousmètre* and its extra-medial cousins.

Central to his discussion is the idea that this figure emanates from within the *mise-en-scène* while remaining invisible. This combination results in the constant potential for the *acousmètre* to become visualised, thus creating a significant amount of tension surrounding the relationship between this figure and the space represented on screen. For Chion, this simultaneous presence and absence is a function of two key aspects of the cinema that are medium-specific. The first is the central position of the loudspeaker(s) behind the screen; this ensures that the voice always seems to be coming from the space shown on that screen, whether or not the source of this voice is visible. The second is the cinema's

employment of shifting visual perspectives through montage and the moving camera. The longer the *acousmètre* remains invisible under changing perspectival conditions, the more power it accrues as a figure who seems able to remain anchored within the diegesis while eluding visual revelation.

The cinematic *acousmètre* is thus distinct from those found in other media.³ Both Connor and Trimm latch onto this specifically cinematic *acousmètre* who is presented as being ‘invisibly there’ rather than as a ‘voice-off’ (Connor 2000: 267). This quality of being ‘invisibly there’ allows for a much more narrow definition of the concept of the *acousmètre*, affording the *acousmètre* distinct powers of panoptical perspective, omniscience, omnipotence, and ubiquity (Chion 1994: 129–30). In Chion’s original delineation of the *acousmètre*, these powers disappear once the voice is attached to a visible body through the convention of lip-synchronisation. Therefore, this delineation of the *acousmètre* is dependent upon the particularities of its relationship to the dual nature of the cinematic apparatus: a medium founded upon two technologically distinct channels of transmission.

Speaking with clear reference to the psychoanalytic film theory of the early 1980s, Chion describes the convention of lip-synchronisation as providing suture in order to ‘restitch’ the breach between sound and image opened up by the physical apparatus of the cinema (Chion 1999: 125). Here Chion engages with theories of suture that are interested in how conventions of mainstream cinema seek to erase the absent site of production. The *acousmètre* draws its power, in part, from threatening to expose this absence. In something of a grand philosophical gesture, Chion suggests that this suture is a necessary convention in Western narrative cinema because ‘contemporary Western culture resolutely claims to be monistic, fiercely rejecting the dualistic idea of man split down the middle’ (125). Through the convention of lip-synchronisation, ‘cinema seeks to reunify the body and voice that have been dissociated by their inscription onto separate surfaces (the celluloid image and the soundtrack)’, and in so doing it presents the illusion of a stable body that fits the monistic ideal (126). For Chion, however, this convention is arbitrary in its attempt ‘to present as a unity something that from the outset *doesn’t stick together*’ (126). So his ultimate conclusion is that ‘it is an inherent consequence of the material organisation of cinema that the voice and body are at odds’, a fact that cannot be resolved by technical advances such as ‘higher-fidelity recordings or a more scrupulous localisation of sound’ (127). Importantly, the idea of the ‘body’ that Chion says is at odds with the voice is necessarily a visible body. The tension he describes here is not so much about the idea of a body in all its corporeal

³ This fact is a reflection of the way in which Chion has adapted the more general term *acousmatic* from its earlier musical context developed by composer Pierre Schaeffer. Borrowed from ancient origins, Schaeffer used it to describe the presentation of sound abstracted from the idea of source, whether this source is visual or traceable within the sound itself. Chion’s use of the term in the context of audiovisual media necessitates that it becomes defined by its relationship to the image track, a transformation that requires a measure of theoretical manoeuvring. For a detailed discussion of Chion’s adaptation of the term, see my essay: ‘Case Study: Film Sound, Acoustic Ecology, and Performance in Electroacoustic Music’ (2007).

dimensions, but rather the convention of lip-synchronisation that depends upon joining the sound of a voice to the image of a speaking body.

It is this tension that results in the *acousmètre* being so often presented as a supernatural figure in order to cover over the fact that, in reality, it is the mechanism of the cinematic apparatus that is responsible for its existence. If the *acousmètre* did not suggest the supernatural then its distinct qualities would have to be explained by the technology of the cinema itself. Thus the *acousmètre* has the potential to be a reflexive figure but is used instead to deflect attention away from reflexivity into other realms of narrative possibility.

Chion has extended his theorisation of the *acousmètre* since the days of the original publication of *The Voice in Cinema*. In an updated epilogue to the English translation of the book published in 1999, Chion suggests that the changing nature of cinema's audiovisual apparatus in the age of multi-channel sound alters the role of the visualised body in relation to the *acousmètre*. Chion postulates that increases in auditory spatialisation now make it possible for visible bodies to hold the powers associated with the *acousmètre* in a way that was not possible when monophonic and stereophonic soundtracks forced all voices to come from the space of the screen. The voice can now be separated from the screen and pumped through the side and rear channels, so the body can remain visible while maintaining the power to break the confines of ordinary space. Yet Chion is careful to note that the new visibility of the *acousmètre* is not a total visibility: it has been limited to the likes of masked figures that retain a measure of invisibility through the concealment of the mouth. Chion posits the mouth as providing the cinema with its most powerful suggestion of presence in the midst of its absent sites of production.

The age of discrete digital surround sound formats has the potential to push the *acousmètre* even further outside of the boundaries of the screen, and to situate this figure within a heightened diegetic realism that might free it from its threat to the boundary between sound and image. We could therefore imagine that with enhancements to surround technology might come an even more visible *acousmètre*, able to maintain its powers by extending its voice into an array of discrete channels. Yet as Mark Kerins concludes in his extensive analysis of the effects of these digital formats on the figure of the *acousmètre*, the enhanced spatialisation made possible by discrete channels cannot ultimately solve the problem of the fundamental separation of voice and body that Chion suggests is inherent to the sound cinema (Kerins 2005: 375). Kerins argues that this increasing localisability allows these figures to be pinned down and killed, thereby resulting in a reduction of their power rather than an enhancement of it. He charts these developments in films like *Fight Club*

(Fincher, 1999) in order to ask whether or not the digital sound film, with its discrete surround sound formats, alters the way we need to think about Chion's irresolvable split. His conclusion is that we at least have to add the category of spatial-synchronisation to that of temporal synch, offering more potential for the seam between sound and image to become exposed (376). So along with providing a more three-dimensional model for the cinematic representation of space, multi-channel sound also brings with it even greater potential for the seams holding this space together to come undone. It would seem that the figure of the *acousmètre*, whether presented as monophonic or in digital surround sound, is fundamentally doomed to threaten the exposure of the cinematic apparatus.

Here we need to question whether or not the partial visibility of the *acousmètre* need really be a function of its multi-channel presentation. In fact, Chion's own discussion of the titular character in *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) as a quintessential *acousmètre* proves otherwise: this figure is not merely a disembodied voice, but also a disembodied head floating in space. Chion refers to this head as a mask (1999: 28), but does not make this connection in his later theorisation that multi-channel sound allows partial visibility of the *acousmètre* through the use of such masks. Clearly, under his rubric it is possible for these partially visible figures to exist in the monophonic environment just as the Wizard does. The thrust of this revelation is as follows: what is so important about the Wizard is not simply that his powers disappear when his visibly speaking body is revealed; rather, it is essential that along with the revelation of his body comes the revelation of the technological apparatus that allowed for his acousmetric status. This points to the crux of the *acousmètre* as a cinematic figure: its existence offers plausibility to a situation that should expose the cinematic apparatus, but does not.

In the end, Chion is forced to move beyond the idea that multi-channel sound allows for increased visibility of the *acousmètre*, and to push his concept to its logical extreme. Building on his expanded view of the *acousmètre* developed in the 1999 epilogue to *The Voice in Cinema*, he suggests that along with the potential for increased visibility of the *acousmètre* there has also been the increasing sense that 'the voice is radically other than the body that adopts it' (1999: 174). He provides examples of this radical otherness in the advanced lip-synchronisation techniques used to create forced marriages between voices and bodies that would not ordinarily go together. He suggests that this situation is 'one of the most significant phenomena in the recent development of the cinema, television, and audiovisual media in general' (174). The idea of radical otherness emerging from the convention of lip-synchronisation is an

important step that will finally bring him to the limits of how the *acousmètre* can be defined.

In his most recent book, *Un art sonore, le cinéma*, he continues this line of thinking about recent advances in synchronisation techniques that allow voices to be stuck onto other bodies (2003: 300). He suggests that in such cases there is the sense that the *acousmètre* is still present, resting behind these new visible figures rather than just outside of the frame, or concealed somewhere within it. Ultimately, he says, this quality of the *acousmètre* hiding behind the speaking body is the case with ALL speaking figures in the cinema 'because the human voice has no organ' (Chion 2003: 300, my translation). Drawing on the fact that human speech derives from a multitude of transferable body parts, he concludes that these parts are not the true source of the voice, a source that is ultimately not subject to visualisation. Like puppets, many of the forced synchronisations have repackaged the *acousmètre* to a state of visibility that ultimately suggests one thing: any visible body in the cinema is but a mask concealing the true nature of the speaking body, one without visible organs – a space unto its own. He concludes by stating that: 'The body that speaks is not the physical body, and our visible physical body is also, inversely, the mask of our invisible speaking body' (301, my translation). So the mask that has been able partially to visualise the *acousmètre* in the age of multi-channel sound is now, in Chion's current thinking, the state of all speaking figures in audiovisual media. Although the *acousmètre* hiding behind the image of the average film character does not share the powers associated with its earlier cousin, it does point the way towards a new way of thinking about the speaking body in the cinema.

The Acousmètre in Feminist Psychoanalytic Film Sound Theory

Reformulating the concept of the body in cinema is the project of Britta Sjogren's recent book *Into the Vortex* (2006). Here Sjogren challenges established positions in the field with a special emphasis on those laid out by Kaja Silverman in *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988). Sjogren takes particular issue with Silverman's position that the body is negatively coded in classical Hollywood cinema, and calls for a way of understanding positive elements of corporeality by divorcing the body from questions of audiovisual synchronisation. Silverman uses Chion's work to substantiate her theory about the negative coding of the female body in favour of the authority associated with the asynchronous voice. Sjogren disagrees with the very premise of Silverman's argument, and so the latter's use of

Chion is a major point of contention. I will argue, however, that Chion's more recent thinking about the limits of the *acousmètre* points to the kind of unvisualisable speaking body that Sjogren seeks out in the classical Hollywood cinema. As such I believe that some of Chion's work can be reclaimed from its negative implications within feminist theory and help provide an argument about the relationship between the body and space in cinema that extends beyond gender-specific considerations. To illustrate my point, I will now discuss Silverman's use of Chion, and Sjogren's challenge to both.

Silverman's chief interest in *The Acoustic Mirror* is in the representation of sexual difference through approaches to the relationship between voice and body in a specific range of classical Hollywood films. Although she draws examples from the section in *The Voice in Cinema* in which Chion delineates the particularities of the *acousmètre*, Silverman is not specifically interested in how an *acousmètre* is defined differently from other kinds of asynchronous voices. Rather, she is interested in the basic idea that the asynchronous voice in general holds a certain power that voices attached to a visible body do not (Silverman 1988: 50). She thus avoids the nuances of Chion's argumentation with respect to the *acousmètre*, and instead focuses on the major tenet of his entire book: that attachment of voice to body is most complete in the context of lip-synchronisation, and ultimately that 'to embody a voice is to feminize it' (50). Although she never uses the term *acousmètre*, her argument indirectly suggests that this figure in classical Hollywood cinema would be coded male until the point of visual revelation. She thus develops a methodology that uses Chion's writings as an example of the negative fantasy of female corporealisation, and suggests that this is the same fantasy used by classical Hollywood to contain women's voices within the inferior position of the body.

Almost two decades later Britta Sjogren's *Into the Vortex* suggests that a position of disembodiment is not necessarily a position of privilege, and that the corporeal body is not necessarily an inferior place from which to enunciate. Speaking of Silverman's map of the classical Hollywood approach to difference, she says, 'the body can be nothing else in this system – always codified as the weighted signifier of lack' (Sjogren 2006: 45). Her way out? 'Space, I shall argue, constitutes a way to figure, relative to the voice-off, a place of subjectivity not contingent on the body and its visual restrictions' (36). This idea of the body as a space that exists independent of visualisation is the critical point at which she departs from her predecessors, whose approach to film sound, she argues, has been too dependent upon reference to the visual. By shifting the idea of the body from the visual to the spatial, Sjogren wants to reclaim certain

aspects of classical Hollywood for positive female subjectivity. She critiques Silverman for mapping Chion's postulations about negative feminine corporeality onto classical Hollywood cinema, and in so doing ends up leaving Chion by the wayside (44). For Sjogren, Chion's work does not share with classical Hollywood cinema an inherent positivity towards feminine subjectivity worth trying to excavate.

The crux of Sjogren's argument lies in her engagement with the work of Mary Anne Doane. In addressing what she finds most valuable in Doane's work on the voice, Sjogren focuses on the notion of how 'voice-off' can work to 'deepen' the diegesis beyond the visual realm (Sjogren 2006: 38). Sjogren draws this idea of a deepened diegesis from a seemingly innocuous observation by Doane: that a potentially embodied voice, heard from a position within diegetic space but not pictured on the screen, serves to help demarcate space beyond the borders of the *mise-en-scène*. Sjogren acknowledges the original function of Doane's claim as an observation about one of the most common functions of offscreen sound, yet finds in it the potential for something more radical: the recovering of a space that is heterogeneous to the image, a 'lost dimension' that, in fact, cannot be visualised (38–9). This is a 'deepening' of the diegesis to create a space beyond the visual realm rather than simply extending the possibly visible through offscreen sound.

Sjogren suggests that the lost dimension is that of the body as space rather than as a visually corporeal object. Sjogren's reading of Doane actually points to an agreement with Chion on one essential point: that the heterogeneity of sound and image on film necessitates that the presentation of the two channels together always consists of a forced marriage. She calls attention to Doane's assertion that asynchronous sound, and the voice in particular, runs the risk of exposing the cinema's dual nature because of its lack of synchronisation (61). This position is fundamentally connected to Chion's view of the duality of sound and image in the cinema that informs his early work on the voice. Yet as Sjogren reminds us, the very idea of synchronised sound is somewhat arbitrary, 'for one "synchs up" "non-synch" sounds with as much diligence as "synch" sounds in film production practice' (Sjogren 2006: 6). Drawing closer to Chion's later postulation of the artificiality of every speaking body in a film, Sjogren continues: 'Thinking about synch as also "other" and "off" helps one keep in mind the multiple significations generated by any voice (or sound) during a film viewing' (6). Thus for Sjogren, any sound in a film can be understood as separate from its synchronous image. Chion's recent conclusions about the radical otherness of all voices in relation to their visible bodies suits Sjogren's position nicely.

Chion's notion that the real and invisible speaking body of any given film character lies 'behind' the visible body is tellingly close to Sjogren's interest in the voice as body that opens into a deeper diegesis, a space that she acknowledges is 'tricky' in its position 'beyond, but also behind, within, alongside, [and] intersecting the diegetic space' (38). Sjogren's call to move beyond visual considerations of cinematic space would preclude any discussion of Chion's *acousmètre* as originally defined in relation to potential visibility (along with its insistent male patterning and the problems of equating authority with non-corporealisation). Yet the power of the *acousmètre* hiding behind the speaking character, whose body is defined by audiovisual synchronisation, is to defuse the need for the synchronisation to define this body. This is the power to open narrative cinema up to spaces understood differently from the norms established by conventions of synchronisation.

The *Donnie Darko* films illustrate some key points on the path to understanding the connection between the thinking of Chion and Sjogren as articulated above. These films exemplify the issue of an emerging visibility for the figure of the *acousmètre* in the age of multi-channel sound. Further, the changes to the director's cut position the *acousmètre* in direct relationship to the development of the *deus ex machina*, an ongoing theme in the film that ties into its narrative interest in a divine power guiding Donnie's life. My argument is that the concept of the *deus ex machina* acts as a stand-in for the cinematic apparatus itself: the collection of technological tools that allows for the production and representation of any given film. Just as the *deus ex machina* can explain the machinations of the universe by way of a divine technology, so too can the machinations of a film be explained by the technology used to create it. Interestingly, the *deus ex machina* as a narrative device usually seeks to prevent self-reflexivity by offering a narrative causality for unexplainable events: at the end of a story, divine beings descend into the diegesis as explanation for things that would otherwise have to be attributed to those responsible for creating the fiction in the first place. Self-reflexivity in narrative cinema is generally viewed as a distraction from the immersive storytelling power of the medium, and so the technology of the cinematic apparatus is usually kept hidden. The increasing visibility of the *acousmètre* threatens to expose the artificiality of audiovisual synchronisation and thereby plunge narrative cinema into self-reflexivity. For Sjogren this artificiality is a given, and narrative cinema need not come undone at the seams simply because we are made to recognise the heterogeneity of sound and image on film. As noted, Chion's recent conclusions about the figure of the *acousmètre* suggest a similar point of view.

The figure of the *acousmètre* in the *Donnie Darko* films hits the limit of

its potential visibility. In hitting this limit, the director's cut opens up a new space for the body that lies beyond the conventions of lip-synchronisation.

To illustrate how this works I will go through the development of the *acousmètre* as it is presented across the two versions of *Donnie Darko*, and examine how the new image and sound motifs in the film allow the *acousmètre* to break free of the constraints of audiovisual synchronisation and move into a deeper diegetic space.

Towards a Visible Acousmètre Across the Two Versions of Donnie Darko

Early in both versions of *Donnie Darko* we are presented with a voice that, while occupying all channels on the soundtrack simultaneously, is otherwise compatible with Chion's description of the traditional invisible *acousmètre*. While in bed on the evening of October 2nd, 1988, Donnie is awakened and beckoned by a disembodied voice saying: 'Wake up. I've been watching you.' As a character, the owner of this voice remains invisible, yet is present within the scene as suggested by his ability to see Donnie and for Donnie to hear and respond to him. It is not long, however, before this voice is given a body. Donnie follows the voice's commands until he reaches a nearby golf course, where a visible body is presented as a possible source for this voice: Frank.

The visible Frank at this early stage of the film is a perfect example of Chion's multi-channel *acousmètre*. When he appears as a masked figure, his voice is presented equally through all available channels of the soundtrack. He can be locatable within the frame while still maintaining powers of ubiquity because his voice is literally everywhere at once. The multi-channel presentation is further enhanced by the composite layering of several voices presented at the same time. This layering technique extends the aesthetic presentation of the *acousmètre* along vertical lines as well as outward into the multi-channel environment; like the ability to make one's voice heard from many places at once, this composite layering is a physical impossibility for the ordinary human being.

Midway through both films, Frank appears once again during the movie house sequence, as Donnie watches *The Evil Dead* (Raimi, 1981) while his girlfriend Gretchen sleeps next to him. At Donnie's request, Frank removes his mask, revealing his face for the first time. According to Chion's logic, Frank's voice should behave as a multi-channel *acousmètre* while masked, only to have the spatio-temporal anomalies removed once Frank's mouth is revealed. And this is indeed the case.⁴ Donnie asks

⁴ In fact, the version of this scene in the original film has Frank's voice as a whisper without the composite multi-channel presentation, even with his mask on. In the director's cut, the acousmetric voice is there until he removes his mask. This is an anomaly that does not figure very well into my interpretation scheme, and for the purposes of this article it will have to remain unexplained.

him why he is wearing that ‘stupid bunny suit’. With his composite voice spread across all channels, Frank replies: ‘Why are you wearing that stupid *man* suit?’ When Donnie tells him to take the mask off, Frank complies, and his following words are heard as the whisper of a single man, the sound anchored to the centre of the screen now that his lips are visible. However, unlike the Wizard of Oz after his true identity is revealed, neither version of the film strips Frank of his power once the mask has been removed and the acousmetric voice tamed.

The scene in the cinema is thus of special importance. It is here that the film is at its most reflexive, and it is here that Frank’s status as *acousmètre* is tied to the idea of the cinematic apparatus. In both films, once Frank’s mask is removed he speaks in a low voice with no special treatment: ‘I want you to watch the movie screen’. We watch with Donnie as a hole opens up in the screen. The hole appears through a scene in *The Evil Dead* in which the pendulum of a clock stops in mid-swing, a prelude to the characters in that film crossing the line dividing the worlds of the living and the dead. At its peak, the hole becomes a circular blast of light ripping through the screen, matching the circle of the frozen clock face pictured at that moment. Here Kelly draws on the narrative importance of this scene in *The Evil Dead* to suggest a similar event taking place within Donnie’s world: the disruption of both time and space that will eventually lead to Donnie’s time travel.

Following the image of the frozen clock, however, the two versions of *Donnie Darko* proceed differently. In the original version, as the hole rips through the screen the images from *The Evil Dead* are replaced with a view of the well-to-do suburban home belonging to Jim Cunningham. The screen housing this image thus becomes a window into the real world in which Donnie lives. At Frank’s command Donnie leaves the theatre to go and torch the house, resulting in the investigation that uncovers the owner’s illicit activities. In the director’s cut, the white-out on the movie screen is followed by a cut to the new eye motif superimposed with text, flames, and flashes of Frank’s mask. These images are not presented as material contained within the movie screen (as was the image of the house in the original version). Instead, the movie screen has exploded into a new space well beyond the confines of its frame. This is the space of the cosmic intelligence intervening in the world through technologies of audiovisual representation, equating its own cosmic apparatus with that of the cinema in which Donnie is seated. Donnie ends up committing the same act of arson in the new version of the film as he does in the original. However, Frank’s command to ‘burn it to the ground’ after showing us a glimpse of this new thematic imagery suggests that Donnie’s task is not only to expose the local

pornographer, but also the cosmic technological apparatus that seems to be responsible for Frank's powers. With the use of the new thematic imagery within the scene in the cinema, the connection between Frank and the *deus ex machina* is positioned within the context of establishing Frank's connection to the cinematic apparatus. Here Kelly's film makes a reflexive nod to the technology of its own making, avoiding overt reflexivity by creating a situation in which a connection between the apparatus of the cinema and that of the cosmic intelligence is established within the narrative.

Frank has shown Donnie a portal in space and thus demonstrates his continuing power to break spatial boundaries despite his unmasking. His words 'burn it to the ground' are treated with a similar dose of reverb in both versions of the film, suggesting powers of spatial transcendence and pointing towards the possibility of an *acousmètre* that is able to retain his powers while becoming fully visible. While Frank goes further here than Chion's multi-channel formulation should allow for, I suggest that even here Frank is not yet pictured as a fully visualised human being. Upon revealing his face he also reveals a nasty wound in his eye. We later learn that this is a gunshot wound inflicted by Donnie himself after Frank is revealed to be the driver responsible for the car accident that kills Gretchen. I suggest that his wounded eye continues to act as a kind of mask that, while not blocking a view of the lips, sets him apart from a fully visualised human being and thus continues to offer some justification for his powers. At this point midway through the *Donnie Darko* films, Frank is pointing towards the possibility of a fully visible *acousmètre*, but is not yet there.

The arc of Frank's increasing visual corporealisation continues with a key scene late in the film. On the night of October 29th the whole town is out in costume celebrating the end of the four-day Middlesex Halloween Carnival. Donnie and Gretchen are snooping around the house of Roberta Sparrow, author of the book on time travel that Donnie was given by Dr Monnitoff. Here they are attacked by a pair of bullies that have harassed each of them in the past. A car then approaches and the bully accosting Donnie gets frightened. He asks, 'Did you call the fucking cops?' Donnie responds simply by saying, '*Deus ex machina*'. The bullies flee, but the car ends up accidentally running over Gretchen as she lies on the ground recovering from the attack. Frank emerges from the vehicle with his friend, both horrified at what has just happened. Here we see Frank at his most visually embodied, just a regular guy out celebrating the Halloween season with the rest of the town. Here he speaks for the first and only time with his regular voice, no masking element obscuring his face: 'What were you guys doing in the middle of

the road, huh? What are you thinking?’ Distraught from the accident, Donnie pulls out a gun that he found in his parents’ closet and shoots Frank through the eye. Frank drops, as mortal as any human, and his friend runs off in a panic.

This scene suggests that the film has presented Frank’s evolution in reverse, for he already has this mortal wound as the *acousmètre* that visits Donnie at earlier stages in the film. Kelly refers to this presentation of Frank as a ‘reverse ghost’,⁵ a strategy that is fitting for the film’s interest in plays on narrative linearity. It is important that Frank’s entrance here as a fully visualised speaking person is announced by Donnie evoking the *deus ex machina*. It is also important that for the first time in the film, Frank’s presence is not combined with the auditory motif of electrical disturbance. Here Frank is not yet an *acousmètre*, awaiting Donnie’s gunshot to send him into another plane. However, for the first time he is literally positioned in relation to the *deus ex machina* through Donnie’s words. At his most human, then, Frank clearly points to the most fantastical element of the director’s cut: the new space of the cosmic intelligence guiding the events in the film. The film’s narrative structure is designed so that Frank’s reverse evolution makes us understand that this human being has been at the root of the *acousmètre* all along. Thus the figure of a human being, visible and speaking through the convention of lip-synchronisation, is at the heart of the dual nature of the cinematic apparatus.

Finally, at the end of both films we return to October 2nd, the night of the jet plane crash that Donnie narrowly avoided through Frank’s intervention the first time around. Now, the jet engine crashes through Donnie’s bedroom with him in it, and Donnie dies so that Gretchen may live. After the crash we are presented with a montage of the faces we have come to know over the course of the film, all now back where they started, unaffected by Donnie’s adventures. Among these faces we see that of Frank, sitting alone in his bedroom unharmed amidst sketches and a prototype of his Halloween costume. After beginning the film as a disembodied voice presented in multi-channel sound, Frank ends the film as a mute, an unobstructed face with no voice whatsoever.

In his discussion of the emergence of the mute character made possible by the coming of the sound film, Chion suggests that the mute shares a great deal with its vocally disembodied counterpart: the mute could speak but does not, just as the *acousmètre* could be seen but is not (Chion 1999: 97). Knowing he has a voice, Frank’s final muteness is the last stage in the film’s emphasis on how the figure of the *acousmètre* works to call attention away from that which the mute figure makes perfectly clear: that voices and visualised bodies in the cinema are distinct entities brought together through the cinema’s powers of illusion. By the end of

⁵ Kelly’s reference here can be heard in the commentary track during the *Evil Dead* scene on the R1 DVD release of the director’s cut.

the film, Frank crosses over the divide from *acousmètre* to mute, charting the gulf between sound and image in the process. Thus the arc is complete, finally attaching a mute face to the disembodied voice, an artificial pairing that lays at the heart of all sound/image relationships in film. In this way, Frank embodies Chion's ultimate conclusion that all visible bodies in the cinema suggest a voice that is separate.

The Visible Body and the Limits of the Diegesis

The figure of Frank as *acousmètre* follows an arc of increasing visualisation until it hits a point where it can go no further without exploding the conventions of lip-synchronisation. Short of becoming fully self-reflexive, the energy harnessed by the *acousmètre* cannot simply dissipate without consequence. In the case of the classic example of the *Wizard of Oz*, the visual revelation of the Wizard's body comes with the exposure of the apparatus whence his powers emerged. In this way, the film does not have to acknowledge its own apparatus in order to justify the Wizard's power. In the original version of *Donnie Darko*, the visualisation of Frank does not come with such a clear revelation of the source of his powers. As I have suggested, the final instance of Frank's voice merging with Donnie's own voice provides some justification for thinking of Frank as part of Donnie's imagination, thereby explaining away Frank's powers as a schizophrenic hallucination. With this key moment removed from the director's cut, the source of Frank's power is displaced, and the energy must travel somewhere else. Through the new audiovisual material that I have described throughout this article, the director's cut opens up a different space to suggest what exists behind the final mask of Frank's human face. This is the space of the *deus ex machina*, and I will end by addressing how the meeting point between Chion and Sjogren can enlighten Kelly's treatment of this space.

What Frank the *acousmètre* begins by suggesting, and what Frank the mute ends by confirming, is the dual nature of cinema. The fundamental separateness of sound and image in the cinema is the key to Chion's interest in the monistic context of the contradictions embodied by the relationship between voice and visible body in film. Sjogren has turned this contradiction into a site of positive potential for understanding the voice as the marker of a spatial body that is no longer defined by its connection to the image. As such the body is free to open into a deeper diegetic space. I suggest the visualisation of the *deus ex machina* in the director's cut of *Donnie Darko* yields a similar space of deepened diegesis that subsumes the problems of the asynchronous voice opened up by the

figure of the *acousmètre*. Yet the space that Kelly develops here is obviously not restricted to the auditory dimension alone. I suggest that the film's emphasis on the visualisation of the *deus ex machina* offers the potential for the diegesis to be 'deepened' along visual lines as well as through sound. In making this suggestion I am breaking from Sjögren's logic of the body as space defined by the voice. However, my intention is to extend her arguments into new territories rather than unravelling them altogether.

I believe that Sjögren's real issue with her predecessors is not so much with their overemphasis on the visual, but rather their treatment of the visual as necessarily attached to the auditory. If Sjögren's goal is for us to recognise the heterogeneity of sound and image, whereby the sound and image tracks can work in parallel without resorting to conventions of synchronisation, then perhaps the image track can be just as effective in opening the idea of the body into a space outside of the diegesis defined by these same conventions. For present purposes, what is most important to take from Sjögren's work is her argument that the code of lip-synchronisation is artificial and contributes to the constant definition of sound by its relationship to the image. In Kaja Silverman's work, bodies are negatively coded according to their level of visualisation, a schema that lends itself well to Chion's original theorisation of the *acousmètre*. This negative coding is a trap that Sjögren seeks to disable by fostering an approach to sound and image that acknowledges their independent existence. This acknowledgment can certainly lead to the voice as marker of the spatial body without reference to the image. Yet acknowledging the independence of sound and image also points to ways in which the body can open up into a visual space that does not rely on the convention of defining the cinematic body through lip-synchronisation.

On this note, I suggest that the new sound motifs in the director's cut of *Donnie Darko* most clearly illustrate a move away from the negative connotations of Chion's original theorisation of the *acousmètre*, and towards a slippage of voice from body that opens into a new space no longer defined by the codes of synchronisation. As I have shown, the auditory motif of electrical disturbance begins with a loose association between Frank and media technology: it is initially heard just after Frank is visualised for the first time, emanating from an improperly tuned television. This sound sets up Frank's connection to technologies of audiovisual media, a connection explored at its fullest during the movie theatre scene. Here the sound of the electrical disturbance announces the point at which Donnie sees Frank sitting next to him while watching *The Evil Dead*. The connection between this sound and Frank's visual presence is even more concrete during Donnie's final session with his psychiatrist.

Here Donnie sees Frank in a series of shots that position the masked figure first against a dramatic sky, and then within the space of the doctor's office. Alternating between shots of Frank and Donnie, the sound of the electrical disturbance is timed precisely to match almost every shot depicting the man in the rabbit suit. Yet when Frank is finally revealed as a regular human being at the scene of the car accident, this sound is notably absent. Instead, it is last heard independent of Frank as Donnie looks skyward at the rising storm that will ultimately facilitate his travel back in time. With Frank's voice now absent from the film, this final sound of the electrical disturbance stands in to suggest that Frank's corporeal presence has been stripped of its attachment to the visual speaking body. Frank now moves in the direction of the space of the *deus ex machina*. His voice has been transformed, and in so doing its instance no longer evokes a human body, but rather that of a machine, perhaps the machinery of space-time itself.

The space of the *deus ex machina* – pictured as the media technologies through which the cosmic intelligence works – is not positioned concretely within the space of the diegesis, nor does it clearly stem from outside. The sound of the electrical disturbances threads the space of the *deus ex machina* with the body of the *acousmètre*, tying Donnie's world to that of the cosmic intelligence governing his journey through Frank. In the end, the space of the *deus ex machina* might best be described as the space of the body freed of the diegetic constraints imposed by degrees of synchronicity. In this way Frank's body can be understood as emptying into the space of the cosmic technological apparatus, a space beyond the limits of the diegesis proper, a space where even the enhanced vocal spatialisation offered by multi-channel sound cannot take it. Frank's corporealisation in the director's cut ends up by positioning him as a mortal being. At the same time, this film suggests his connection to the *deus ex machina*, a stand-in for the cinematic apparatus that makes the *acousmètre* possible in the first place.

In the director's cut, Frank's corporeality becomes a positive sign of the cinematic body's potential to break free of the usual constraints of the diegesis and move into a deeper realm. To do this, Frank must be distinct from Donnie's imagination, another space that the film codes as negative through connotations of his schizophrenia. I suggest that the later film posits the space of the *deus ex machina* as a deeper area of the diegesis that is defined by a positive view of corporeality rather than the negative coding that Chion's original delineation of the *acousmètre* entails. Here the visible *acousmètre* is not punished by a loss of power, but is rather rewarded by extending it into the space of the apparatus that makes it possible. Regardless of gender delineations, what is most useful about

Sjogren's work is how she defines corporeality outside of the conventions of lip-synchronisation. Despite Chion's earlier work being treated as a contribution to the problems identified by his feminist critics, his recent thinking about the *acousmètre* points in the same direction as Sjogren: the articulation of the body in terms of space that deepens the diegesis. The changes to the director's cut develop such a deepened diegetic space by connecting Frank to the *deus ex machina*. In so doing, Kelly connects the figure of the *acousmètre* to the cinematic apparatus. These connections reflect the path laid out by both Chion and Sjogren in their theories of the voice in cinema. As I have shown, the direction of these two theorists can be charted across the two versions of *Donnie Darko*, and this is ultimately what I find most interesting about Kelly's re-invention of the original film through his director's cut.



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