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Speaking, Singing, Screaming: Controlling the Female Voice in American Cinema

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Abstract

Feminist film scholars have long argued that there is a visual bias as to how the female body is represented on screen. This article explores the extension of this bias to include sound: how sound is used to represent women in American cinema. It explores sonic representation in several key films including Singin' in the Rain, Mulholland Drive, Blue Velvet *and* Citizen Kane.

Keywords

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Introduction

In 1988, Kaja Silverman argued that the soundtrack is also constructed along gendered lines:

> It is curious ... that the feminist critique of classic cinema has focussed primarily upon the image track and the construction of woman as object of the male gaze ... It has somehow escaped theoretical attention that sexual difference is the effect of dominant cinema's *sound* regime as well as its visual regime, and the female *voice* is as relentlessly held to normative representations and functions as the female body.
>
> (Silverman 1988: viii)

Considering the soundtrack alongside the visuals, this article will discuss how the female voice is recorded, manipulated and represented, thus confirming Silverman's claims that there is indeed a sound bias that restricts the female voice in cinema.

In addition, the study of the screaming, speaking and singing voice in film raises wider issues about the recording of the voice in the cinema and suggests that if the regime of looks on the visual track positions the woman in a particular objective role, so too does the sonic regime of sound design. This is especially true of the traditional way in which women's singing voices have been recorded. This article investigates how the speaking, singing and screaming female voice is usually recorded in American cinema, through an examination of microphone practices and the use of reverberation. What follows will also explore how the female voice is controlled, either being allowed or denied the ability to embody a space, both in terms of technical reproduction and narrative.

Michael McCallion has observed particularities to the female and male voice and notes that there are two registers for the human speaking voice, labelled the first and second registers (McCallion 1988: 100–102). Generally, the female voice is contained mainly within the second register

or head voice, whereas the male voice is situated in the first register or chest voice. There is an overlap between these voices and the lowest parts of the female voice are situated in the first register. However, he stresses that the female voice generally begins in the chest voice and moves into the head voice as that is where its main vocal range is situated. Shifting from the chest voice to head voice occurs more frequently in female than in male voices. The singing female voice, when untrained, tends to situate itself in the chest voice and attempts to reach notes beyond the chest's capabilities. The transition between the 'chest' and 'head voice' is usually smooth and unnoticeable, however, if there are problems with the larynx this pitch shift will be heard.

Roland Barthes describes the thrill of hearing a singer when the voice contains 'the grain of the voice'. By the 'grain' he is referring to 'the body in the voice' (Barthes 1977: 188). This voice is resonant with the sounds of 'the tongue, the glottis, the teeth, the mucus membranes, the nose' (Shingler 2006). The untrained female voice rarely contains 'the grain' and as a means of compensation the voice is either dubbed by a trained voice, or recorded in a close up manner without a sense of the reverberant space in which it is situated. This allows a very close aural perspective that invites intimacy with the audience. This lack of reverberation is how women's voices are more generally recorded in the pop music industry allowing listeners to feel unrealistically close to the singer, as if the performer is whispering to them. Men's voices are not usually recorded in such an intimate manner. Rather, they are usually recorded with a spatial distance from the microphone allowing their voices to embody a space containing reverberation. The male voice is generally more powerful in terms of depth and volume than the female voice and is allowed more fully to embody the space. For this reason, the microphone is often placed further away from a man's mouth and a greater sense of the voice in a space (with reverberation) is recorded.

Singin' in the Rain (1952) provides this article with its central narrative on the coming of sound and the introduction of the dubbing process; *Citizen Kane* (1941) offers us an innovative approach to sound. These films were made or are set between the late 1920s and mid-1940s. Feminist film scholars have identified this as a period in which female characters were allowed to transgress their traditional roles on screen (see Kaplan [1987] 1998, Harvey [1978] 2000). Singing performances in the aforementioned films occur predominantly in nightclubs, the opera, and on a film sound stage. This article considers whether or not an interpretation of the sound regime offers new readings of these films or if female characters faired any differently during this period; it also considers, in particular, the ways in which their voices might be considered transgressive. The performance of the showgirl is central to both these films and to this investigation.

Finally, one can relate these classical Hollywood films to David Lynch's films *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Lynch is arguably the most significant sound-conscious director working in cinema today, taking credit for the sound design for all his films since *Lost Highway* (1996). *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive* draw from earlier portrayals of Hollywood femme fatales and both films showcase female

singing performances that echo earlier cinematic narratives from the 1920s to 1940s.

Singin' in the Rain

The coming of sound and the impact this had on the stars of the day is central to the narrative of *Singin' in the Rain*. This MGM musical was made in 1952 but is set in 1927 after the release and success of Warner's *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Within the context of a traditional love story set amidst the advent of the talkies, the story hinges on the conceit of dubbing, or re-voicing. In the film, following the success of a sound film, the fictional Monumental Pictures studio bosses feel that they too must make a talkie. But the female lead, Lina Lamont (Jean Hagen), does not have a voice that would transfer well to sound film. Her nasal-sounding voice and working class accent, although the latter is not explicitly referred to, is deemed unacceptable. Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor) and Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) decide that in order to save their poorly received film, *The Duelling Cavalier*, they must dub Lina's voice by an unknown actress, Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds), in turn making *The Duelling Cavalier* into a musical, *The Dancing Cavalier*.

> Steve Cohan notes of the dubbing of Lina's voice by Kathy in the film: at the point when Kathy dubs Lina's singing and speaking, Debbie Reynolds' voice is dubbed by others, Betty Noyes for the song and even more self reflectively, Jean Hagen – who plays Lina – for the dialogue.
>
> (Cohan 2000: 59)

This dubbing of Kathy by the woman who, in fact, she is supposed to be dubbing is a bizarre twist, which reveals the truly constructed nature of film and, in particular, of the soundtrack. Perhaps Jean Baudrillard is right when he suggests, 'The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true' (Baudrillard 1994: 1). It would be a futile exercise to seek out an 'authentic' voice in the cinema as soundtracks are often made up of numerous takes, re-voiced or dubbed.

Peter Wollen refers to this replacement of the voice by highlighting the fairytale origins of the film from Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid* (Wollen 1992: 54). *Singin' in the Rain* has a different spin to this fairytale in so far as Lina does not seek to take Kathy's voice. It is Cosmo who convinces Don and Kathy to encourage the studio boss, and finally Lina, that this is the only way to save the picture. It is a product of a patriarchal ear that ultimately seeks to control both Lina and Kathy's voice. As Chion comments, 'The voice carries the day in this strange contest where men, those who decide whether to raise or lower the Mabusian curtain, play at being masters of the voice' (Chion 1999: 133). It is not only Kathy's voice that is stolen, but also Lina's. Lina constantly attempts to speak for herself and is denied the opportunity by the male characters around her. Wollen notes:

> Thematically, it is important that the site of deception is the image of the woman, rather than the man. In ideological terms, in our culture, it is

> woman who is primarily taken to represent 'nature', and therefore unnatural deception by a woman such as Lina, can be construed as all the more reprehensible.
>
> (Wollen 1992: 56)

Wollen goes on to note how the film has its cake (perhaps the one that Kathy jumps out of) and eats it. Later, we see Don showing Kathy the artifice of beauty in the cinema, the use of lights, wind machines, etc. Wollen concludes, 'Here woman is placed on the side of the fantasy rather than nature, and fantasy requires artifice' (Wollen 1992: 56). What is important to note is that Kathy must be convinced of the importance of cinema's fantasy and construction in order for the audience to find her compliance in the dubbing process acceptable.

This practice of dubbing in film has been carried out since 1929 and has relied on the actors' own voices or the voices of others (voice actors) to create the characters' voices. With the coming of sound to the cinema, many actresses were anxious about how their voices would transfer to film. A neutral 'English' accent was considered most suitable (Gledhill 2007: 205–206). Lina's voice was deemed unacceptable. This nasal, working class and regional accent has been a feature of female characters' voices in a number of films for comic purposes and to denote the lack of respectability of a female character such as Susan Alexander (Dorothy Comingore) in *Citizen Kane*.

Citizen Kane

The sound of the operatic voice is renowned for its strength and reverberant qualities; a powerful presence in the voice is expected to fill an auditorium. In cinematic representations of the opera, the recording needs to adhere to these sonic qualities in order for the voice to be reproduced faithfully. In *Citizen Kane*, however, the narrative requires that the operatic performance by a female singer falls short of this standard. The control of this voice is central to the narrative of the film and, as it progresses, we see that it is the inability of Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles) finally to control Alexander's voice that precipitates the ending of his second marriage and his personal downfall.

When we hear Kane tell the press, 'We are going to be a great opera star', it becomes clear that Kane is doomed from this point on in the film. As Chion argues:

> This 'we' bears witness to his amorous appropriation of the other's voice. But since one cannot be the master of another's voice, nor make it an instrument of one's own power, when the voice's owner refuses to comply, Kane gets what he was looking for. His reputation is ridiculed, his influence reduced almost to zero.
>
> (Chion 1994: 91)

Alexander is a 'singer' whom Kane attempts to make into a star; he enrols her in a course of singing lessons. However, the quality of her singing voice is very weak and during the music lessons scenes a certain amount of comedy stems from the instructor's frustration with her poor progress.

Her voice moves between the head and chest voice and the strain of attempting notes beyond her range is clearly evident. However, the humour in the scene dissipates as it becomes evident that it is Kane's stubbornness and control that is keeping Alexander, unhappily and against her will, in the singing class. Eventually, she is forced to make her operatic debut in the theatre Kane has built especially for her and her shortcomings as a diva are cruelly exposed.

This humiliation is visualized in an impressive shot as the camera cranes up to the stage riggers in the rafters of the theatre while Alexander's voice can be heard performing an aria on the stage below. In response to Alexander's performance, one of the riggers holds his nose. This reaction is significant in that it is assumed that the rigger would be experienced in hearing many opera singers and his assessment of Alexander's ability would therefore carry conviction. His honest assessment cuts through the political or personal loyalties which Kane musters and the sycophants with whom he surrounds himself.

The sound in the crane shot at the opera house had to be created in post-production, as the set was a composite of miniature sets and separate shots. Alexander's voice becomes more distant as the camera moves away from her. This not only affects the volume of the voice; the reverberation from the theatre acoustics also become more present in the soundtrack as the shot proceeds upwards. Bernard Herrmann, the film's composer, employed a young opera singer, Jean Forward of the San Francisco Opera, to dub Alexander's vocals. Herrmann notes:

> Our problem was to create something that would give the audience the feeling of quicksand into which this simple little girl, having a charming but small voice, is suddenly thrown. And we had to do it in cinema terms, not musical ones. It had to be done quickly. We had to have the sound of an enormous orchestra pounding at her while everyone is fussing over her, and then – 'Now get going, go!' – they throw her into the quicksand. There is no opera in existence that opens that way. We had to create one. I didn't particularly care to write an opera sequence like this, but KANE demanded it. Not Welles but KANE. It was the only way, from a cinematic point of view, that we could convey the terror that this girl was in. We got a very charming singer to dub Susan's voice, explaining to her the purpose of the effect. Notice: the reason Susan is struggling so hard is <u>not</u> that she cannot sing but rather that the demands of the part are purposely greater than she can ever meet.
>
> (Herrmann 1980: 127–128, original emphasis)

The opera singer Herrmann hired had a good voice but it strained at the higher notes. Jean Forward was an important choice for Herrmann and Welles as the operatic voice needed to sound like it could almost succeed. Alexander almost sounds good enough to be an opera singer and Kane almost pulls it off. The attention to detail in the soundtrack enables Welles, Herrmann and the sound department (headed by James G. Stewart and Bailey Fesler) to succeed in creating an ambitious film that sonically represents various real spaces.

Another example of Kane's control over Alexander's voice occurs when they go for a picnic. Inside their tent they argue: outside music and singing

can be heard. Kane tries to get Alexander to quieten down, attempting (not for the first time) to control her voice. When she refuses, he slaps her, and he does not apologise. What is heard on the soundtrack is a scream from another woman outside. This scream metaphorically denotes Alexander's voice, which becomes silenced by his actions. Kane has controlled her to such an extent that her natural reactions are thwarted by his oppressive behaviour.

Whilst arguing with Kane at home, Alexander's voice changes, her accent alters and the pitch shifts up. Her dialect becomes regional and working class: she no longer puts on a show for him. At the picnic, and in a later scene where Alexander argues with Kane over Leland's review, Alexander relaxes into her own accent, regaining a measure of control over her own voice.

When Alexander does eventually leave Kane we see and hear a bird's cry. This sound symbolizes that Alexander, no longer the trapped bird, has finally escaped Kane's cage. Kane has been obsessed with controlling the world around him. He initially attempted this through the written word of the newspapers, then through politics, and finally through Alexander's voice. Silverman notes Alexander's entrapment:

> Kane not only accumulates the riches of the world in a vain attempt to compensate for the divisions and separations upon which subjectivity is based, but he builds an opera house to enclose a voice within whose enveloping sonorousness he hopes to be enclosed in turn, and thereby reunited with his lost mother.
>
> (Silverman 1988: 86)

Alexander, by managing finally to escape Kane's control, creates a less prominent career for herself as a singer, in a similar manner to Gilda (Rita Hayward) in the Latin America club in *Gilda* (for more on the female singing voice in *Gilda* see Greene 2007).

Citizen Kane is a radical departure, both in terms of technique and narrative, from dominant cinematic practices. The female singing voice is allowed to embody a space, but through this embodiment the voice fails to fill the theatre. Kane attempts to control Alexander's voice by keeping her in lessons, building an opera house, slapping her and trapping her in his mansion. However, Welles, as director, is exposing how flawed Kane is as a character. Although Kane attempts to control Alexander, ultimately he is doomed and the film ends in tragedy. Alexander has been trapped and had her voice pushed to the limit by Kane, and this is also a central narrative and technical concern in *Blue Velvet*.

Blue Velvet

In *Blue Velvet*, Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini) screams when she discovers Jeffrey (Kyle McLaughlin) in her closet. Towards the end of the film she screams again and then breaks down in front of Jeffrey and Sandy (Laura Dern). Ann Kroeber, the production sound recordist, employed an interesting technique to enhance the emotional impact of these scenes. She recorded Dorothy's voice in a highly manipulative manner. On a Nagra (quarter-inch analogue tape recorder) she subtly rode the gain through

the scene as Dorothy's voice went from whispers to screams. When Dorothy began shrieking at Jeffrey, Kroeber increased the gain to where Dorothy's voice was ever so slightly distorted, which made her voice seem even more intense. What is heard on the soundtrack is Dorothy's voice breaking up, literally, as it reaches the upper register and this psychologically represents her mental fracture (Kroeber interview, 2006).

Kroeber recorded all of Dorothy's hysterical scenes in this way. The technique, however, is only possible with analogue recording, which is more forgiving of distortion than is digital. Location recording is about capturing the dialogue as cleanly as possible; there is little scope for experimentation on set. What Kroeber risked was considerable in terms of the potential costs of post-production ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement) had she failed. But her techniques worked brilliantly. The manipulation of the voice added an emotional layer to the scene that, while perhaps not consciously perceived by the audience, nonetheless was registered and understood subconsciously. Kroeber's sound design impacted on the recording and representation of the voice.

There is further sound design manipulation in the scenes where Dorothy sings. In fact, all of Dorothy's singing in *Blue Velvet* is a mime; the voice was assembled from different takes. Rossellini herself has admitted that she was not a singer and, in fact, had a very poor voice (Rossellini 2002). Having such an untrained voice she struggled with the material she was expected to sing. Angelo Badalamenti, the composer, constructed the song from the several takes of Rossellini's singing and the end product was then played back on set during filming.

The miking of Dorothy's singing voice is close and intimate, without the reverberance that one would expect from a live performance. In the Slow Club scenes, Frank (Dennis Hopper) can be seen listening to Dorothy singing as he strokes a piece of blue velvet fabric. His eyes are closed during some of these performances and Dorothy's closely-miked voice, like the fabric he strokes, has become a fetishistic item for him. In writing about King Vidor's film *Stella Dallas* (1937), Linda Williams draws attention to what she terms the, 'Stacks of style – the layers of make-up, clothes, and jewellery – these are, of course, the typical accoutrements of the fetishised woman' (Williams 1987: 311). The same level of fetishisation is obvious in the 'stacks of style' that adorn Dorothy in *Blue Velvet*. Her onstage costume consists of a blue velvet dress, an enormous curly wig and abundant make-up, particularly the blue eyeshadow and bright red lipstick. For Barbara Creed, Dorothy's striking, overly made up red lips, become a representation of 'vagina dentate', the castrating woman (see Creed 1993: 106–107). Such is the level of her stylized accoutrements that Dorothy, however, could also be considered the 'candy coloured clown' of Roy Orbison's, 'In Dreams', mimed later by Ben (Dean Stockwell). The lyrics of this song include the line 'I close my eyes and I drift away' and this echoes the way in which Frank listens to Dorothy's performance in the Slow Club. His eyes are closed; he is not looking at the visually fetishised woman before him but instead listens to her voice.

Frank's concentrated listening suggests an unnaturally close intimacy with Dorothy's performance. In fact, it might be argued that through the close miking of Dorothy's voice, and the lack of reverberation, an aural

equivalent to Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze (Mulvey ([1975] 1986) is created; this gaze privileges the 'male ear' as the female voice becomes objectified. Elisabeth Weis, in 'Eavesdropping: An Aural Analogue of Voyeurism', outlines the role of eavesdropping in the cinema:

> Movie eavesdropping raises issues having to do with the nature of the medium itself. For one thing, it can foreground, as does voyeurism, the way in which cinema seems to invade privacy – the way all of film drama feels overheard and spied on. Like voyeurism, eavesdropping can reflexively question our prying relationship to film, our love of listening in, our complicity with the eavesdropper ... Eavesdropping is inherently cinematic; as I will argue, the situation requires both audio and visual information and therefore perhaps can be most fully exploited on film.
>
> (Weis 1999)

Eavesdropping is a key thread in Lynch's cinema and Dorothy's performance at the Slow Club is shot and framed to highlight Frank's listening position. Furthermore, Rossellini's European accent is very strong in her singing performance, increasing her exotic otherness for an American audience (here symbolized by Frank's concentrated listening). In other words, this sense of woman as male fetish is achieved through the careful sound design as well as through the visuals. Rossellini's accent also adds to 'the grain of the voice' in these performances. The exotic foreignness of a female singer recurs in the later film *Mulholland Drive*.

Mulholland Drive

In Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001), we encounter a further adventurous use of sound, which highlights the creative use of a female vocal performance. *Mulholland Drive* is a particularly interesting film in illustrating how the voice is conceptualized and then recorded. The reverberation present on the voice significantly contrasts with the norms of recording the female voice in film and music.

In conventional practice, a similar process occurs in the recording of the female singing voice in both the music and film industries. The positioning of the audience is considered central and the reception of the voice integral to the recording techniques involved. Mulvey notes, 'Voice exists on a cusp between resonance and significance. On the one hand, a voice contributes a material texture to the general soundtrack of a film; on the other hand, it conveys a specific message through language, in speech' (Mulvey 2003:15). Although writing about speech in early cinema, Mulvey's analysis pertains to contemporary cinema as well, and illustrates the resonant and significant nature of both the speaking and singing voice.

In *Mulholland Drive*, Club Silencio is established as a space where the singers mime to pre-recorded tapes; their performances play with notions of a live event occurring. The MC, Bondar (Richard Green), operates as a sound magician conjuring up the real, the recorded and the represented. Rebekah Del Rio (playing herself, she is a singer) performs an *a cappella* 'Llorando', a Spanish version of Roy Orbison's 'Crying'. This asynchronous approach differs from the regular aural and visual qualities of

Hollywood cinema. The singing voice of Del Rio is initially heard in a synchronous manner, but the continuation of the song after her collapse is presented to disrupt the linear narrative that is fundamental to Hollywood cinema.

Lynch describes the recording of Del Rio's voice:

> Rebekah Del Rio was brought to my studio one morning by my music agent, Brian Loucks, and Brian, from time to time, wants me to meet some singer, some musician, and so, Rebekah Del Rio came over just to have a coffee and then she planned to stand in front of me and sing something. At the time John Neff was the engineer in the room and I asked him to light a microphone in a little vocal booth and when Rebekah Del Rio came in, we never even had a coffee. She just went into the booth and what she sang in that booth, into that microphone, was what was in the film, five minutes off the street. And then reverb for the hall was put on but that was it. Her lip-synching is just flawless because it's her, she sings it that way.
>
> (Lynch interview 2007)

In the film there is no doubt that when the woman sings, the diegetic and non-diegetic audience knows that this is a recording but when she suddenly collapses the horror of the asynchronous playback is deeply shocking. Lynch is able to pull off this trick due to his understanding of the nature of sound. He uses the reverberant voice of Rebekah Del Rio to give the illusion that there is a live sound event happening. It is this disjuncture between what sounds live and what, in fact, has been recorded that asks questions of the conventions of sound recording in theatre and cinema.

This effect is possible because the recording of Del Rio's voice differs greatly from the standardized norms. As Del Rio mimes along to 'Llorando', the sound of the voice and her strong vocal delivery is placed in a live space; the reverberation of the theatre is present. This is significantly different to the usual sound quality of a woman's singing voice in cinema, as is evident from the earlier films considered here. There is not only intimacy but also strength to the performance. Del Rio's image in close up has a powerful intensity when coupled with her reverberant voice.

The quality of the singing voice is crucial here, 'the grain of the voice' is present in Del Rio's performance. Her strong head voice, taken from one recording of the song, powerfully fills the auditorium. The scene at Club Silencio occurs directly after Betty/Diane (Naomi Watts), and Rita/Camilla have sex. They enter the club and listen to Del Rio singing 'Llorando'. What is interesting about the choice of this song is that, apart from Orbison's original, the most famous version was recorded by the lesbian singer k.d. lang. This Spanish rendition reminds the audience of the earlier lang version and adds another layer to the lesbian association the song has acquired. Through this subtle choice of song, Lynch is able to name what has occurred between the women as lesbian. This is interesting in terms of the diegetic audience that includes Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla. The audience is not presumed to be homogenous and male, but is shown to include women, and explicitly, lesbians. *Mulholland Drive* can be considered in aural terms to have a feminist approach to the soundtrack, both in

terms of form and content. Even though Del Rio's film performance is a mime it is a dramatically emotive act.

In many ways Del Rio's performance is liberating in terms of gendered performances within Hollywood cinema. She is similar to the character of Ben in *Blue Velvet* in that they are both ventriloquists' dummies. Lynch is the ventriloquist or puppet master who pulls the strings. However, Del Rio's collapsing on stage during the song and performance also visually resembles Dorothy's collapse towards the end of *Blue Velvet*.

Dorothy breaks down at the end of the film, only to be saved by Jeffrey. She has not managed to save her husband or to win back her son on her own merits. Dorothy's collapse is both physical and mental; it is unclear whether she will be able to pick up the pieces again. The sum of Del Rio's performance and collapse, although mirroring earlier moments in *Blue Velvet*, in fact, have a much deeper resonance in *Mulholland Drive*. The elements have evolved to a more complete whole, creating a more challenging, questioning and emotionally satisfying film. The representation of female characters has evolved here beyond the classical diva or femme fatale of *Blue Velvet*, as Chion notes:

> Never has Lynch come so close to this theme, through two women who meet and merge their adventures, as though Sandy and Dorothy of *Blue Velvet* had decided to experience a story together, setting the man or men to one side: the bridge-man has been removed; Adam is no longer the connector between two women and two worlds, as Jeffrey was in *Blue Velvet*, and the women wander from one risky identification to the next as reality disintegrates around them.
>
> (Chion 2006: 221)

We get a greater insight into the female characters in *Mulholland Drive*, and although we never get Del Rio's story, her tragic performance mirrors the complexities of love and life as an actress and performer in Hollywood for both Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla.

Blue Velvet and *Mulholland Drive* differ in the techniques and approaches to recording and positioning of the female voice. *Mulholland Drive* subverts narrative cinema by exposing the artifice of recording the voice. The performance by Del Rio draws attention to the real, represented and recorded nature of performance in music and film. Del Rio's performance also manages to be emotionally satisfying although the artifice of the situation is abundantly clear to the audience.

Conclusion

All of the films discussed here contain key vocal performances by female characters. In narrative terms, their speaking, singing, and screaming voices are critical to how they are received as characters. This has led to some innovations in technique. *Mulholland Drive* manages to weave the narrative and technique together to imbue the film with a deeper resonance, and the development of the recording practices here within this film, pushes the narrative and emotional impact of the performance further.

Film is a medium that utilizes both sound and vision but, traditionally, academic film studies have largely ignored the element of sound. As Silverman suggests, sound and sound design in cinema has not received enough serious consideration in film studies and this failing can seriously misrepresent a film's meanings and ideologies. However, sound, and particularly the recorded voice, is just as important as the visual for carrying a film's meaning and the conventions of sound recording, just like the conventions of camera and framing, construct certain subject positions. The manner in which a voice is recorded and given spatial characteristics and reverberation in the reproduction of that sound can allow a character to embody a space more fully. In general, female characters have been denied this embodiment, and it is only with a radical approach to the soundtrack from sound-conscious directors, designers, recordists, and boom operators, that this imbalance in film can be addressed.

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