



## LISTENING TO THE RESONANCE:

### Representation of Traumatic Experience in the Film *Enduring Love*

*Enduring Love* (dir. Roger Michell, UK, 2004), a film based on an original novel of the same title by Ian McEwan (1997), treats the theme of trauma in two violent events: a hot air balloon accident and stalking. Both the accident and the stalking portray trauma as a trial whereby a subject loses control of his own life. In the film, the main character, Joe Rose (Daniel Craig), and his partner, Claire (Samantha Morton), witness the hot air balloon accident, which leads to a man's death. From here, the story unravels through Joe's trauma process. The trauma is deepened by another distressing factor that escalates after the accident: the obsessive stalking of Joe by Jed Parry (Rhys Ifans).

In the film Joe's traumatic experience is represented by two leitmotifs: "Balloon Music" and the sound of wind. These leitmotifs represent trauma as associated with falling, distressing flashbacks, a state of knowing and not-knowing, unspeakable experience and "felt truth", that is, tactile epistemology. Furthermore, they depict trauma in relation to "obsession": in Joe's case obsession is represented, on the one hand, as a result of trauma whereby Joe is "obsessed" with his trials. On the other hand, the trauma is a result of Jed's obsessive behaviour, stalking.

Through the rich use of music and sound, Joe is portrayed as a listening subject who listens to his experience in order to work through his traumas. The lis-

tening subjectivity is about searching for new signification, whereby the subject tries to make sense of a seemingly senseless experience. Notably, in the film, music and sound have an important role as “nonconceptual language”, depicting the unspeakable experience of a trauma. Indeed, to understand a person’s trauma means to *listen* to his or her wound (as in Caruth 2016: 8–9).

In this article<sup>1</sup> I will discuss the *trauma process* of the protagonist Joe and how it is represented in the film through *music, sound* and *listening*. More specifically, by drawing on phenomenological philosophy (Nancy 2008), trauma studies (Caruth 1995, 2016), the psychoanalytic study of music (Välämäki 2005) and adaptation studies (Childs 2007), I will focus on how Joe’s very being and identity are affected by listening to his experience. My study has a philosophical undertone: the reading of the film raises the phenomenological question of something that is not immediately apparent, yet is powerfully felt.

While the novel *Enduring Love* sparked critical interpretations of various kinds (e.g. Clark & Gordon 2003; Childs 2007; Edwards 2007), its cinematic adaptation has less often been discussed. The novel has been interpreted, for example, from the points of view of unreliability (Matthews 2007), manipulation (Wood 2009), homoerotic tendencies (Davies 2007) and identity (Ramin & Marandi 2012). Literary scholar Peter Childs (2007) addresses the film adaptation briefly, but does not put any weight on the sound and music. Likewise, readings of the novel have not included attention to the unspeakable nature of the trauma as related to listening subjectivity and the auditory sense. Yet the listening subjectivity is crucial to Joe’s story. Even the original novel portrays Joe as listening to his experiences. Along with focusing on the film’s music and sound,<sup>2</sup> I will also discuss briefly the sound sensitivity of the novel, in particular one excerpt in which Joe is depicted contemplating his traumas as being associated with listening.

Methodologically, I will draw from audiovisual close reading and close listening as well as cultural music analysis, particularly in the studies of film music and sound (Chion 1994, 2009; Gorbman 1987). In critical close reading and close listening, the audiovisual representation is not understood as a closed system,

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1 This article is part of my doctoral dissertation project in musicology, a study of the sonic representations of the experience of being stalked in stalker films. The writing of the article has been funded by the Emil Aaltonen Foundation and the Kone Foundation.

2 I would like to thank Ian Gardiner for his suggestions and comments on the analysis of the film.

but rather as an expansive framework of cultural-historical contexts (Richardson 2016a, 2016b). In the film a western socio-cultural context in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries provides a backdrop to Joe's life as a stalking victim and to the intrusive behaviour of the stalker, Jed. Conceptual framing is central to the audiovisual close reading and close listening, as it will guide the interpretation of the analysed artwork. In this article trauma is the main conceptual frame guiding the analysis. My interpretation of the representation of the trauma is supported by Julia Kristeva's (1974) psychoanalytic conceptualization of the signification process and Jean-Luc Nancy's (2008) phenomenological concept of resonance. Furthermore, the conceptual frame of trauma is also discussed in relation to stalking studies (Mullen and others 2000; Nadkarni & Grubin 2000; Pathé & Mullen 2002; Nicol 2006).

Firstly, I will discuss the theme of stalking as a traumatic obsession in the context of *Enduring Love*. Thereafter, I will examine the sonic representation of trauma in the film as related to the hot air balloon accident and stalking in the two leitmotifs, the "Balloon Music" and the sound of the wind. I will proceed to discussion of how listening subjectivity is constructed in the sound-sensitive literary narration of the original novel in relation to the state of knowing and not knowing, as well as to the search for new signification, and I conclude by discussing the film as it relates to stalking as a traumatising experience characteristic of our age.

## On Trauma: Stalking as (Love) Obsession

Trauma defies the experience of life as cohesive and meaningful (Caruth 1995, 2016). It is caused by an overwhelming occurrence, such as a violent or life-threatening experience, or witnessing such, which a subject may relive in flashbacks and nightmares. (Freud 1961 [1920]; Caruth 1995; Antokoletz 2003; O'Brien 2007; Välimäki 2015.) Thus, trauma "possesses" its victim (Caruth 1995: 5). Trauma outstrips our ability to understand or make sense of the world and ourselves. Trauma can be both individual and collective. Collective trauma damages the social structure and collective identity. (Välimäki 2015.) Trauma is a profound

crisis in communication. It is an experience that cannot be translated to others, yet it nevertheless needs to be told.

*Enduring Love* has two traumas: the hot air balloon accident and the stalking. The former is a collective trauma, affecting everyone who witnessed the accident. The latter is Joe's individual trauma, yet it also affects Joe and Claire's<sup>3</sup> relationship and breaks the bond between them. Indeed, to experience trauma one does not have to experience it firsthand. It is enough to witness the traumatic experience of someone close to you or to live in a traumatised culture or atmosphere (Välimäki 2015).

Trauma is presented in both the novel and the film *Enduring Love* in the violent experiences of stalking and a hot air balloon accident. In both cases it is manifested powerfully as loss of signification and loss of communication. The losses are closely related to the loss of love, which in its turn represents continuity and meaning of life. While the hot air balloon accident is a strong symbol of the fragility of life and trauma, Jed's stalking connects with the loss of meaning and the "dark side" of love. Furthermore, stalking powerfully symbolises trauma: it is repetitive, unwelcome and a threatening intrusion that is experienced in traumatic images/sounds (of a stalker).

The novel *Enduring Love* and its cinematic adaptation represent different forms of love. There is the monogamous hetero-relationship of Joe and Claire, a couple who intend to get married. This kind of love, based on the institution of marriage and the family as a unit for reproduction, is tested many times during the story. Joe and Claire separate as the story proceeds. Opposed to Joe and Claire's relationship is Jed's (homoerotic) love for Joe: an obsessive, one-sided, pathological and violent attraction. The nature of Jed's obsession and Joe's obsessive urge to make sense of his two traumas are represented in repetitive and haunting aesthetics. The recurring images, music and sounds form a pattern that haunts, stalks and obsesses Joe. Love, which in the film's narration serves as an essential force for the continuity of life, motivates Jed's stalking behaviour. Thus, *Enduring Love* can be considered as a narration of opposing and competing forces: the flow of love and life (Joe/Claire) interrupted by the traumatising force of pathological love which takes the form of stalking (Joe/Jed). In the light of psychoanalysis Joe and Claire's love can be interpreted as representing Freud-

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<sup>3</sup> In the novel, Joe's partner is called Clarissa Mellon, but in the cinematic adaptation she is Claire. I will refer to her as Claire in this article, since my focus is on the film.

ian Eros (sexuality and fertility), while Joe and Jed's relationship represents its opposite, a death drive.

Jed is a stalker who appears in his victim's life unexpectedly, following Joe and harassing him for no apparent reason; Jed demonstrates threatening and even violent behaviour. Along with the main opposing poles of Joe/Claire and Joe/Jed, there are several other forms of love: the doubting love of a widow for the man who died in the accident, John Logan, as well as the love between Claire's brother and a young *au pair*. While John Logan's widow has lost her faith in her late husband and their love, Claire's brother and his young Polish lover seem to have an unshakeable trust in their relationship, despite not having a common language. John Logan's widow mistakes a picnic bag found in her husband's car as a sign of adultery and another woman, when in fact the bag belonged to a couple whom John Logan picked up when their car broke down. This couple is keeping their love a secret: the man is a professor and the woman a student with whom the professor is "madly in love". The story also includes love of children and love between friends. Jed even wants to introduce Joe to the love of God, the ultimate, transcendent love, which is also tested and which Joe, an atheist, doubts.

In the cinematic adaptation of the novel Jed's obsessive behaviour (stalking) is in the foreground. Indeed, *Enduring Love* can be regarded as a stalker film, as stalking is a prominent narrative theme. In the context of this film, stalking can be interpreted as a contemporary form of obsession and pathological love. By definition, stalking is behaviour that understandably inflicts fear (Mullen and others 2000: 9–10; Pathé 2002: 7–8; Häkkänen 2008). It is also associated with following and maintaining surveillance, communicating with the victim by different means and threatening the victim with violence (Nadkarni & Grubin 2000). That said, stalking is a "victim-defined crime", meaning that the definition of stalking relies more on the experience of the victim than on the intentions and means of the stalker (Mullen and others 1999; Pathé & Mullen 2002; Björklund 2010). While stalking is an old behaviour, it was recognised and understood as being socially unacceptable only in the latter half of the twentieth century (Nicol 2006; Mullen and others 2000). Social condemnation of stalking reflects the evolution of social behaviour and the culturally changed notions of love and sexuality. Stalking is an example of a behaviour that demonstrates how something previously con-

sidered socially acceptable can come to be regarded as violent and criminal (and thus understood as traumatising). Furthermore, stalking can be understood as a pathological kind of love, a borderline area in which the person in love substitutes a fantasy for unreturned love (Mullen and others 2000: 135). In the film *Enduring Love* stalking is motivated by just such a borderline: De Clérambault's syndrome, a form of erotomania, where a sufferer believes his or her victim is in love with them. Jed's love for Joe can thus be understood as clinically labelled madness (which in the film is represented as schizophrenia) and even criminal behaviour. In fact, stalking was criminalised in the UK in the year Ian McEwan's novel was released, 1997 (Mullen and others 2000: 277).

While stalking was recognised and named in the late twentieth century, it is not unique to our time. Malice, obsessive behaviour and ill-treatment in relation to love have been common throughout human history. Forensic psychologists Paul E. Mullen, Michel Pathé and Rosemary Purcell (2000: 15) mention Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) longing for Beatrice – with whom the poet had no contact, yet saw as a symbol of true love – as being an example of stalking and obsessive behaviour. These authors argue that, for Dante, Beatrice was a symbol of love, someone he could admire from afar without confronting her. T.S. Eliot also characterised Dante's affection for Beatrice as obsessive (Mullen and others 2000: 15). Dante's obsession recalls Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774), a loosely autobiographical story of Werther, who falls in love with Charlotte, a woman engaged to another man. Charlotte's attraction for Werther leads to his death (he commits suicide). In the novel *Enduring Love* the story makes reference to the cultural history of obsessive and even deadly love. In the novel the obsessive theme appears, for instance, in the character of Claire, who is a Keats scholar. The poet John Keats (1795–1821) was famous for his letters to his fiancée, Fanny Brawne. The letters were scandalous at the time (Scott 2002: xxxix; Childs 2007: 7) because they revealed Keats's abusive behaviour and misogyny and his mistreatment of Brawne (Scott 2002: xxix–xxxi). Love letters also play a crucial role in the novel *Enduring Love*, where Jed manifests his obsessive behaviour by sending numerous letters to Joe. While the letters figure in the "relationships" of both "couples", Joe/Claire and Joe/Jed, their nature is quite different. Particularly in the original novel, the letters may be read as a sign of obsessive communication. In the film Jed's obsession for communicating with Joe is adapted to relentless telephoning. In fact,

stalker films often represent stalkers as compulsive and obsessive characters who try to be in touch with their victims through every means possible. In contrast, in his relationship with Claire, Joe seems to believe that true love is based on communication. As the story proceeds, he experiences a loss of meaning due to his traumas and is unable either to articulate his experience to others or to find meaning in communication.

The film describes how the stalking, Jed's obsessive behaviour and Joe's obsession with making sense of his trials gradually emerge. In the scene with the hot air balloon accident Jed wants to share an intimate moment with Joe; he asks Joe to pray with him beside John Logan's body. Shortly afterwards, Jed begins his intrusions, first by calling Joe and then by following him. He leaves dozens of messages on Joe and Claire's voicemail and causes scenes in public. Jed believes Joe is sending secret signals by opening and closing the curtains of his apartment.<sup>4</sup> He writes Joe numerous letters and lingers outside Joe and Claire's home. When events start to escalate, Jed threatens Joe with physical violence. After one phone call Joe and Jed meet in a park where Jed suggests a romantic relationship between the two of them and says that Claire is an obstacle that stands in their way. Finally, after Joe and Claire's separation Jed visits Claire and threatens her life.

## The Sounds of *Enduring Love*

The music and sound world of *Enduring Love* is built extensively on thematic braiding, a concept used to describe connections among images, music and sounds (Chion 2009: 471). In *Enduring Love* the music reflects the traumatic experiences of obsessive stalking and the hot air balloon accident, and is braided with a screen image that gives visual cues to the trauma and the obsessions.

The film is accompanied by music one-third of the time (approximately 30 minutes out of 100). The music is mainly constructed around two leitmotifs: the

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<sup>4</sup> De Clérambault's syndrome was named after the French psychiatrist Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault (1872–1934), who treated a woman who believed that the King of England, George V, was in love with her and was signalling her with secret signs using the curtains of Buckingham Palace (e.g. Childs 2007: 27).

“Balloon Music” and the sound of the wind (see Table 1).<sup>5</sup> The leitmotifs function as structural devices (Flinn 1992: 15) and depict the experience of the main character, Joe. In addition to music the film’s soundtrack includes prominent ambient sounds (diegetic and non-diegetic), speech, sounds of nature, traffic and other sonic events in ordinary, everyday life.

Sound/Music	Scene	Time
Wind, birds	Opening	00:00:17–00:03:51
Balloon Music	The balloon rises	00:03:51–00:05:19
Wind, Balloon Music (The Nightmare Begins)	Leaving the dinner party/ Nightmare/Lecture	00:11:11–00:12:16
Balloon Music (Obsession)	Remembering the ballooning accident	00:12:36–00:14:06
Balloon Music (The Nightmare Begins)	Gallery/Lecture/Swimming	00:18:08–00:19:09
John Coltrane: Naima	Dinner with Claire’s brother/ Joe & Claire at home/Bookstore	00:19:17–00:20:48
Balloon Music (The Nightmare Continues)	Encounter in the bookstore/Claire sculpting	00:23:47–00:24:37
Moments of Hope	Claire and Joe discussing/Wandering around the city/At the university	00:27:59–00:28:48
Moments of Hope	Walking and driving/Reading about the accident	00:33:28–00:35:00
Balloon Music (Pastorale)	Back at the field/Home/Jed follows Joe to a meeting/ Joe’s birthday	00:39:02–00:42:00
Balloon Music (Swimming Music)	Swimming/ Discussing with Jed	00:44:43–00:45:37
The Beach Boys: God Only Knows/ Balloon Music (The Nightmare Continues)	Jed at Joe’s class	00:57:51–00:58:23
Balloon Music (A Drunken Conversation With Myself)	Sleeples Joe/Naming stalking	00:59:27–01:01:44
Passacaglia	Jed in the rain/Raiding Claire’s studio/Morning	01:01:45–01:03:54
Passacaglia 2	A separation/Raging in the rain/At Jed’s apartment	01:05:10–01:07:33
Balloon Music (A Drunken Conversation With Myself)	At the bar	01:11:49–01:12:46
Wind/Lonely Piano Into Car Chase	Rushing back home	01:16:52–01:17:52
Balloon Music (Pastorale)	Saving Claire/Back to the field	01:22:38–01:24:34
Finale	Closing credits	01:30:33–01:36:04

Table 1

<sup>5</sup> In Table 1, I have listed the leitmotifs and other musical numbers heard in *Enduring Love*, as well as the scenes they accompany. The table also includes the titles given on the film’s soundtrack (2006). However, in this study, I will refer to the different variations on the leitmotif “Balloon Music” simply as “Balloon Music”.



The film has an orchestral non-diegetic score composed by Jeremy Sams. The orchestral music varies from expressive and dark-toned large ensemble sequences to pieces played by solo instruments, such as a violin and a piano. The juxtaposition of expressive orchestral sequences and contemplative solo instruments emphasizes Joe's traumatic distress on the one hand and his emotional loneliness on the other. The melodies have a large ambitus, drifting high one moment and falling into the depths the next. In addition to the non-diegetic<sup>6</sup> original score, two pieces of compiled music are heard: the jazz standard "Naima" by John Coltrane and "God Only Knows" by the Beach Boys. The latter is sung diegetically by the stalker, Jed. "Naima" (1959), a piece named for Coltrane's wife at the time, Juanita Naima Grubbs, refers to marital love. It is heard diegetically in the scene in which Joe and Claire are dining with Claire's brother. The music follows the couple non-diegetically to their home, where they make love. "God Only Knows", on the other hand, is used to present Jed's obsession, as Jed believes he has a sacred mission to bring Joe to God's love.

Some of the sounds in the film seem directly drawn from the original novel and its sound-sensitive narration. One of these is the sound of children. Joe and Claire's childlessness is a prominent theme in the novel (although they are a childless couple, Claire keeps a room for visiting children). In the film this theme is often portrayed solely through sound, both on- and off-screen.

In his reading of the novel *Enduring Love* Peter Childs (2007: 23) associates the theme of children with Ian McEwan's interest in biologist E. O. Wilson's (1978) theory of "gene-culture co-evolution". The theory interprets culture as an evolutionary process with biological roots in human genetics. While the novel develops the question of gene-culture co-evolution in detail (moral/ethics/love vs biology/continuity of life), the film concentrates only on some aspects of the theory, with stalking being central. Interpreting the sounds of children through the lens of Wilson's theory affirms the interpretation of stalking as a representation of the dark evolution of love. Through the sounds of the children, obsessive "love" is represented as the opposite of marital love, a symbol of family, affection and continuity of life. Obsessive music and the sounds of children are juxtaposed,

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6 Here I follow Claudia Gorbman's (1987) definition of diegetic and non-diegetic music. Diegetic music is heard in the diegesis of the story, music that the characters can hear as well as the audience. Non-diegetic music is played outside the diegesis and thus heard only by the audience, not by the characters.

for instance, in a scene in which Joe and Claire visit their friends. Joe's narration of the hot air balloon accident is interrupted by the sound of a crying child (00:10:30). This sound is directly followed by traumatic music, which carries the narration to the next scene. The music demonstrates the nature of trauma as a force that repeatedly disrupts the flow of Joe's life.

### a. The Balloon Music Leitmotif

A prominent sonic sign of trauma in the film *Enduring Love* is the light and clear melody that I call "Balloon Music", which is transformed into dark variations as the story proceeds. "Balloon Music" can be described as a traumatic leitmotif, following Joe around like a stalker. It also resembles traumatic flashbacks by reminding Joe of his trials. In the context of film music and sound, a leitmotif is a musical or sonic motif that signifies main characters, as well as the themes and ideas of the film (Chion 1994: 51); the musical motif must appear regularly and be attached in a concrete way (in the visuals or otherwise in the story) to a character, place or thematic idea in order to work as a leitmotif. It is common for a single leitmotif to have multiple associations, such as the psyche of the characters or a thematic motif in the film. The leitmotifs are not static, but may change character and style – although remaining recognisable – and thus represent, for instance, the change in a character's psyche (Välämäki 2008: 164). This can be heard in the film *Enduring Love*, where the transformations of the "Balloon Music" leitmotif signify Joe's changing experience and psyche as well as the film's main theme: the accident and stalking in connection to trauma.



Picture 1: The Balloon Music is first heard when the hot air balloon rises into the sky. © Paramount Classics & Pathé Pictures

Musically, the “Balloon Music” is an allusion to Ralph Vaughan Williams’s (1872–1958) orchestral work *The Lark Ascending* (1914), inspired by a poem of the same title by George Meredith. The allusion is also thematically interesting. In *The Lark Ascending*, the solo violin depicts the lark, a symbol of the human spirit, soaring up into the heavens. In the “Balloon Music”, the solo violin also depicts the human spirit rising to the heights, only this time to be thrown back into the depths, which will be heard later in the film in dark variations on the leitmotif (see Table 1). The allusion to the pastoral character of *The Lark Ascending* may also suggest the experience of the sublime, an overwhelming experience of something beyond our understanding.

In the film’s opening scene, the ethereal “Balloon Music” contrasts with the horrifying image of men hanging on for their lives from the ropes of a rising balloon (00:03:51–00:05:19). The calm solo violin melody drifts as if indifferent to the men’s efforts to save the boy or themselves. In this scene “Balloon Music” can be considered as an “anempathetic” (Chion 1994: 8) leitmotif, which continues its movement as if indifferent to the emotions and experiences of the characters. Here the music represents trauma as an unspeakable and unexpected experi-

ence, something out of reach and inexplicable, a kind of a violent occurrence that catches its victim completely off guard, “like a bolt out of the blue”. Together the music and the image of a drifting hot air balloon symbolise the essence of trauma as a fleeting signification: the balloon escapes into the sky as the ability to make sense of one’s traumatic experience drifts out of the subject’s reach.

The origin of the word trauma is in Ancient Greek, where the word *τραῦμα* (traûma) means wound; in psychoanalytic theory, trauma is understood as a wound upon the mind (Caruth 2016: 3–4; Leydesdorf and others 1999: 1). The red hot air balloon is a visual sign of trauma. For a brief moment, the trauma is visible as a physical wound in the film *Enduring Love*: the day after the accident Joe wakes up from his nightmare and looks at his wounded hands (00:11:47). However, the traumatic wound of the mind is neither static nor fixed. Traumatic experience is characterised by a dynamic, fluctuating relationship between the traumatised individual and society. Rather than being static, a traumatic experience unfolds over time. (Antokoletz 2003; O’Brien 2007.) As in music, where each moment segues into the next before vanishing into the past, the traumatised moment resonates in each lived moment – time revolves around the trauma. (O’Brien 2007: 213.) Thus, trauma affects one’s perception of the world and how the subject rebuilds and structures the lived world and the self (O’Brien 2007: 209).

After the opening scene, the “Balloon Music” reappears numerous times as a traumatic and obsessive leitmotif. The leitmotif is heard in different variations, altered to depict various moods and atmospheres, and it follows Joe throughout the film. Historically, the Wagnerian leitmotif was preceded by the *idée fixe*, a recurring and obsessive theme in Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) (Macdonald 2016b). It refers to the object of the composer’s desire, the actress Harriet Smithson, who would later become Berlioz’s wife (Macdonald 2016a). In a sense in *Enduring Love* the affectionate (and obsessed) sign of marital love (*idée fixe*) has been transformed into a monstrous and obsessive sign of trauma and pathological love, stalking.

Perhaps the most recognisable gesture in the leitmotif of the “Balloon Music” is a slowly ascending major second and descending fourth (see Figure 1)<sup>7</sup>. The variation of this gesture is heard shortly after the accident, in the scene where

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<sup>7</sup> Both the notations are by the author.

Joe is seen distracted from his work, thinking about the hot air balloon accident (12:35–14:08). This gesture is transformed into a tritone variation, where the tritones revolve symmetrically around the notes of the original motif (see Figure 2). The tritone has historic symbolism: it is the so-called *diabolus in musica* – a strong dissonance associated with evil, hell, angst, suffering, fear, horror and approaching threat, to name but a few of its conventional connotations in the history of Western classical music. And the *Balloon Music* is now coloured with this sound. From the 9<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the Renaissance the tritone, which can be treated either as an augmented fourth or as a diminished fifth, was considered an extreme dissonance. In Baroque music it was used as the symbol of extreme affects, such as the suffering of Christ. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic opera, the tritone may depict great evil or *Tristan*-like desire, sexuality and *Liebestod*, among other meanings (e.g., Drabkin 2016).

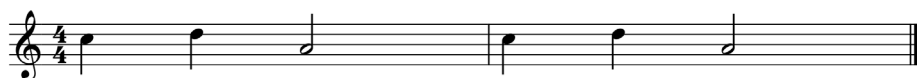


Figure 1



Figure 2

Along with the evolving leitmotif, the transformation of the trauma is also represented in visual references to the hot air balloon, such as a pear, a pomegranate, a lamp and a lonely balloon drifting in the sky. In psychoanalysis, trauma means to be possessed by images of the traumatising event (Caruth 1995: 5). In this sense, the hot air balloon becomes both a traumatising sign and a stalking object in Joe's mind. The stalking nature of the hot air balloon is even suggested in the artwork on the cover of the first edition of *Enduring Love*, which shows a hot air balloon by the Symbolist painter Odilon Redon (1840–1916). The oil on canvas, entitled *L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'infini* (*The Eye*

*Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Towards Infinity*, 1882), portrays an all-seeing and stalking eye gliding over an empty field. A floating object in the sky “sees everything” from above.



Picture 2: Joe is obsessed with the traumatic image of the hot air balloon. © Paramount Classics & Pathé Pictures

The “Balloon Music” returns several times after the opening scene: it changes in colour, rhythm, instrumentation, mood and ambitus, but each time it is recognisable as the original leitmotif (see Table 1). For instance, in the scene in which Joe has driven back to the field after visiting Mrs Logan (he is haunted by the question of what “really” happened at the scene of the accident and who let go of the rising balloon’s rope first), the “Balloon Music” plays in the background in the form first heard in the opening scene (00:39:02–00:40:40). However, when Joe tries to recall the memories, they drift away and are reshaped in a subtle variation of the “Balloon Music”.

As the film proceeds, there are times when a new melody tries to take over the obsessive and traumatic leitmotif. In the latter half of the film, Joe is searching the internet for information on erotomania and De Clérembault’s syndrome (00:59:27–01:01:44). An expressive, forward-rushing and feverish piece, entitled

“A Drunken Conversation with Myself” on the soundtrack release, accompanies this frantic search. The piece is interrupted when Joe realises that Jed is outside their apartment, staring through their window in the pouring rain. The music stops suddenly and is followed by “Passacaglias 1 and 2”. These pieces are dark in tone, their music spiralling slowly downwards, emphasising the feelings of sinking and falling. Both versions of “Passacaglia” (from Spanish, *pasar* > to walk and *calle* > street) can be interpreted as signifying Joe’s emotional loneliness and sense of being lost, wandering around in an empty space. The musical form of the passacaglia is traditionally based on a continually repeating bass line, which may be understood as a referring to trauma, obsession and being followed. In the Passacaglias heard in the film, the dissonant harmonies seem to circle around obsessively before dissolving into emptiness. The feelings of loss, including that of a sense of direction, are resonating in Joe’s life; shortly afterwards, during “Passacaglia 2”, Claire decides to leave Joe, and the couple separate.

## b. The Wind Leitmotif

Trauma is often experienced as a kind of fall, a sudden decline from above to below, an existential collapse that leads to a crisis of communication and signification (Caruth 1995: 6–7). The loss of control and meaning – losing the ground under one’s feet, sliding from the end of the rope of an uncontrolled hot air balloon and falling to the ground and almost certain death – is emphasised in the film *Enduring Love* by another leitmotif, namely the sound of the wind,<sup>8</sup> this one constructed from sound rather than from composed or compiled music. Along with the loss of control, the whoosh of the wind leitmotif signifies a sense of anxious drifting, a state of being airborne without any ability to influence one’s course or direction. The wind leitmotif is also a sign of embodied knowledge – or tactile epistemology – from which the subject has gained the knowledge of something through physical sensations (Marks 2000: 138). Trauma is indeed often

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<sup>8</sup> The wind is also described in detail in the novel, at the point when Joe thinks back to a time before the accident and the stalking as follows: “I remember thinking, but not saying, that it was a precarious form of transport when the wind rather than the pilot set the course” (McEwan 1999: 5).

“felt” rather than conceptually recognised. It is at the heart of knowing and not-knowing (Caruth 2016: 117). Caruth (2016: 122) has noted that it is exactly this experience of knowing and not-knowing that is characteristic of trauma and links the traumatic experience with past and future. Trauma “speaks out” of repetitive traumatic memories (Caruth 2016: 118), which can be experienced as powerful tactile sensations. In Joe’s case the traumatic tactile epistemology is represented through the wind leitmotif, which creates the sensation of being subjected to traumatic drifting or experiencing a sense of dizziness or vertigo, as well as a sense of sublime wind throwing the subject around at its mercy.

The victims of stalkers may experience a loss of control over their own lives in the course of being stalked. Stalking itself is characterised as an ongoing, repetitive trauma. As in Joe’s case, the experience of being stalked may persist, even after the stalking events themselves have passed. The traumatic experience is further deepened in a society that does not recognise stalking as a crime. (Mullen and others 2000: 59.) This is true of Joe’s story. He is depicted as doubting his own experience and sanity, and searches for an explanation and conceptual affirmation of what he believes and feels has happened to him. The music and the sound of the wind also powerfully convey how the feeling of being stalked and harassed follows Joe around, even when Jed is nowhere in sight. Joe’s experience is made more difficult by Claire’s accusations that he is obsessed and by interpreting Jed’s behaviour in the wrong way.

While the “Balloon Music” is repeated several times in the film, the wind leitmotif is heard only three times. The first time is during the accident the moment before the balloon rises into the sky (00:03:37–00:40:40). The second time the wind leitmotif is heard non-diegetically, passing from the dinner scene into Joe’s traumatic nightmare (00:11:10–00:11:31). Here, it depicts the approaching stalking events as well as the trauma of the accident and joins the “Balloon Music” leitmotif (entitled “The Nightmare Begins” on the soundtrack). The third and last time the wind is heard (non-diegetically) in a scene towards the end of the film in which Claire telephones Jed, who is at the couple’s friends’ place, where Joe is staying after the break-up. Joe hears that Jed is with Claire at their apartment. Joe anticipates a violent scene – Jed will soon stab Claire – and rushes to save her. The wind is accompanied by music: violin lines, thin as air, high-pitched, suggest anxiety and fear (1:16:55–1:17:25).



The importance of the sound of the wind is apparent from the very beginning of the film. The film starts with a black screen and the wind sounds. Gradually, an image of treetops moving against a clear sky comes into focus (00:00:13–00:00:29). The wind is about to set events in motion; for example, in the midst of the hot air balloon accident the wind grows stronger, and then suddenly drops, only to renew its rage. When the balloon rises for the last time, the events are triggered by the wind.

The sound of the wind rushes powerfully into the foreground of the soundtrack just before the balloon rises to the heights for the last fateful time. The audience can hear the flapping of the balloon fabric and how it bashes, wails and bangs (00:03:37–00:40:40). Indeed, after the film's opening scene, the wind takes the role of an almost magical, supernatural and divine force, reflected in many sounds, images and dialogue. For example, in a dinner party scene in which Claire and Joe meet their friends to discuss the accident, Joe blames himself for letting go of the rope. His friend Robin (Bill Nighy) comforts him by referring to the sublime power of nature: "Listen, you flew through the air. You were actually airborne. It was an airborne rescue attempt. You wrestled with the Gods and you lived." (00:10:40) Joe's experience of the accident, however, is quite different. "It wasn't the fucking wind," he shouts, tormented by the idea of losing control.

The scene ends with the camera settling above the table (00:11:10). We hear the wind rising and "lifting" the camera higher, like a balloon. The sound of the wind joins the "Balloon Music". Now the image moves to night time, with Joe and Claire asleep in their bed, the camera hovering (again like a balloon) above them. The image starts spinning, moving anti-clockwise, drifting 45 degrees and jumping back again, suggesting fragmented, traumatic memories and nightmares (on traumatic nightmares see e.g. Freud 1961 [1920]: 7). The music and the wind continue their strong movements. When Joe wakes up in agony and Claire sits up to comfort him, the camera stops its circling, and the sound of the wind suddenly stops. However, the same music follows Joe into the morning and all the way to the university. The music tells us that the trauma does not ease for Joe. On the contrary, the sonic (musical) continuity between the two scenes (the nightmare and the day after) suggests the stale anxiety that lingers in Joe: the trauma, the guilt, the sense of being lost, the obsession, the loss of control. In the indoor setting the wind has ceased to be a natural phenomenon or a sign of the sublime

force of nature. Rather, it is presented as an *acousmêtre*: an omnipotent, all-seeing and all-hearing being (Chion 1994, 2009). The horrifying, unnatural sound reminds of how sounds are used in horror films, where danger is unfamiliar, approaching, yet out of sight – present only as an audible sign. In the scene in which Joe rushes to save Claire from Jed’s attack, the wind’s attribute as an *acousmêtre* is particularly powerful; as an acoustic being, it has no visual form and carries connotations of otherworldliness and godly omnipotence (Chion 2009: 466). In the context of film music and sound, an acousmatic being is often interpreted as an evil force that evokes primitive fears. Thus, the sound of the wind refers not only to the nature of the acousmatic being, but also to the experience of its presence. In this sense the sound of wind is a sign of unstable subjectivity (see Välimäki 2008: 211–212). It signifies both Joe’s horrifying experience and Jed’s psyche as something unpredictable and transgressive. As an acousmatic sign of a stalker and his omnipotence, the wind represents transgression on social norms where privacy and intimacy are viciously invaded.

The feeling of drifting and losing control grows stronger and stronger during the film, as simultaneously the stalking becomes more and more intense and threatening. The sense of drifting merges with traumatic memories of the accident and of being stalked, compulsively followed, observed and approached. Again, as in the case of the “Balloon Music” and its variations, the wind refers not only to the original hot air balloon accident, but also to its aftermath, including the trauma haunting Joe’s mind and Jed’s threatening stalking activity.

## Listening Subjectivity

Stalking and the hot air balloon accident affect Joe’s subjectivity and force him to look for new significations and meanings for his experiences, and thereby build a new kind of relationship between himself and the world (the environment). The rupture between language and non-linguistic signification is represented in Joe’s inability to express his trauma and in the relentless need to try to identify and name Jed’s behaviour, which towards the end of the film Joe succeeds in recognising as stalking.

In the film *Enduring Love*, music and sound have an important role as signifiers of Joe’s trauma and loss of control. These are closely connected with the

loss of meaning; Joe's efforts to name and make sense of Jed's stalking behaviour reflect the feeling of not being able to make sense of one's traumatic experiences. Together with the traumatic images, music and sound depict how trauma changes the way Joe perceives the world. His experience is represented, both in the original novel and in its adaptation, as shifting from the "solid ground" of scientific knowledge to the uncertainty of intuition, unconscious and non-verbal knowledge, a tactile epistemology. To some extent, the shift is represented as a shift from one signifying system to another: when words fail Joe, his perception turns towards traumatic signs and the auditory realm. On this uncertain ground, Joe is in search of meaning and a new way of making sense. The process of making sense is highlighted in the original novel with a sequence that depicts Joe listening to his experience and to his relationship with the environment. This listening subjectivity is furthermore adapted to cinematic language, particularly in the scenes in which Joe is depicted wandering around and contemplating his traumas while traumatic music continues to be heard in the background. In fact, Joe is presented as literally listening to his experience.

### a. Searching for a New Signification: Between Kristeva and Nancy

Julia Kristeva (1984) explains the signification process as a fluctuation between the symbolic (e.g. language as nomination, sign and syntax) and the semiotic (the non-linguistic materials, bodily affects and drives). In this fluctuation the subject is constantly formed – and threatens to be dissolved – as a result of the signification process, i.e., the meaning work (cf. the concept of trauma work and Freud's concept of dream work; see Roudiez 1984: 8; Sivenius 1993: 10; Välimäki 2005: 138). Thus, the subject is constantly in process. (Kristeva 1984; see also Välimäki 2005: 138–139.) This process is particularly central to trauma, where meaning work and subject formation are damaged by an event that at first does not itself pertain to signification and only slowly, piece by piece, may enter the symbolic realm. The traumatised subject is looking for a way to work out his trauma and transform it from an unnameable affect into a symbolic form – for instance, by telling a story of the trauma or by expressing it in some other way. For Joe, the

process is powerfully affected by the need to conceptualise his experience and be heard.

In Kristeva's thinking the symbolic refers to consciousness and judgement. Language is a manifestation of a symbolic order. Language itself is a result of recognition and a way of arranging one's experiences in relation to the world. The semiotic, for its part, has its roots in drives and the archaic side of being a human. (Kristeva 1984: 27; Välimäki 2005: 169–170.) A drive-based and pre-linguistic semiotic is located in chora and the unconscious (Kristeva 1984: 25–30; Välimäki 2005: 139). Välimäki (2005: 166) sees music as an example of signification practice that is dominated by the semiotic rather than the symbolic. Like music, the semiotic produces multiple meanings and shifting significations with condensations, displacements and transpositions (Välimäki 2005: 166). This makes the articulation of the semiotic even more difficult, as it is connected with multiple significations that are irreducible to clear conceptualizations. Whereas the symbolic structures and shapes the semiotic, the semiotic makes the symbolic possible – but also disrupts and twists it (Välimäki 2005: 170).

In Joe's story listening signifies a shift from fixed meanings (such as conceptual knowledge) to uncertain and transforming significations (the non-conceptual traumatic experience). The nature of Joe's listening subjectivity can be understood in an excerpt from the original novel, which will also help to interpret the representation of the listening subjectivity in the cinematic adaptation. In a critical passage Joe goes to the library the day after the accident. There he hears (but does not really see) Jed, a presence almost outside his awareness: a stirring, a creaking of floorboards, pacing (McEwan 1999: 45). He catches a glimpse of Jed's shoe, not Jed himself, and is convinced that Jed has been following him all day. Although it is unclear whether Jed really is in the library, Joe experiences Jed's presence powerfully, and specifically through hearing. The anticipation of Jed moving behind a magazine rack is triggered by a heightened and anxious audible perception.

Ian McEwan seems to portray a highly symbolic scene in the library, one which suggests the role of listening in the trauma process, as in the following passage, written from Joe's point of view. Joe is waking up to the idea of listening to his environment, while the three men of science are asleep in the background. In the extract Joe's knowledge relies on immediate audible phenomena (the semiotic).

I myself was comfortable within a large, smooth-armed leather chair. In my line of vision were three other members, each with a book or magazine on his lap, and all three asleep... Indoors, the murmur of water along unseen ancient pipes and, nearer, a creaking of floorboards as someone, invisible behind the magazine rack, moved a couple of paces, paused for a moment or two, and then moved again. This sound, I realized in retrospect, had been perched on the outer edges of my awareness for almost half an hour... The last words I had written before losing control of my thoughts had been "intentionality, intention, tries to assert control over the future." These words referred to a dog when I wrote them, but rereading them now, I began to fret. I couldn't find the word for what I felt. Unclean, contaminated, crazy, physical but somehow moral. It is clearly not true that without language there is no thought. (McEwan 1999: 45–46.)

The words "intentionality, intention, tries to assert control over the future" serve as points of departure for Joe to process his trauma by trying to relocate himself in the world based on his experience. Unlike the Husserlian philosophy of a transcendental (intentional) subject relying on the analogy of sight, Julia Kristeva (1984) stresses the socio-historical subject-in-process – a subjective experience – and relies on the analogy of music and sound. Similar criticism of the "sight-orientated" tradition of philosophy can be interpreted as an undertone in the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Nancy (2008), who writes about the listening subject, an individual listening to previously unrecognised knowledge and the truth of personal experience, according to how the subject situates himself in the world. In his reading of Jean-Luc Nancy's theory of the listening subject, the musicologist Brian Kane (2012: 442) characterises the struggle between sense and truth as a struggle between different modes of audible perceptions.

For Nancy (2008), there are two modes of listening: (1) intentional hearing<sup>9</sup> (Fr. *entendre*) and (2) non-intentional listening (Fr. *écouter*). The former is intentional audible perception, guided by previous beliefs, knowledge and experiences. The latter, non-intentional listening, is apprehending through archaic, non-linguistic and semiotic listening. It is about audible observation, which takes into account possible, not-yet-recognised meanings and listening *past* the voice (Wahlfors 2013: 163). Fleeing from intentional listening is about reaching away from the

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9 Charlotte Mandell translates *entendre* as "to hear and to understand" (Mandell 2008: xi).

usual frames of recognition: it is relocating the self in the world according to the way the world resonates in the subject.

The Finnish philosopher Tere Vadén and the musicologist Juha Torvinen argue that Nancy's non-intentional listening could be understood as existential listening in which a person resonates with the world and builds an identity in relation to that resonance (Vadén & Torvinen 2014: 212). Existential listening is connected with pre-conceptual modes of knowing, which differ from linguistic and symbolic signification. For Kristeva, the epistemological uncertainty has its roots in the primary mode of being a human; in Kristeva's thinking separation from the symbolic order and sliding towards the semiotic connects with the process of abjection. Abject (Latin *abjectus* > rejected) is something that is profoundly loathing and thus rejected as "non-me". (Kristeva 1982 [1980].) It is about encountering objects that are disgusting, such as vomit, blood, feces or corpses (Link 2010: 42). The abjection is caused by something that disturbs the order and the identity. Kristeva notes that abjection does not respect the borders, positions or rules. (Kristeva 1982 [1980]: 4.) This seems also to be what Joe confronts when he slides further away from the symbolic order into something that is "Unclean, contaminated, crazy...". In the face of traumatic chaos Joe confronts the abjective in the form of disgust, shame and repulsion.

In the light of Nancy's theory, the process of searching for new significations can be either constructive or anxious, depending on the resonance. If the surrounding society does not resonate with the self and thus does not affirm the subject's experiences and sense of place in the world, listening (i.e. the auditory mode of perceiving and reflecting the world) does not support the subject. In the case of trauma this may result in deepening the trauma and a failure to work through it, a process that is needed for recovery; healing would thus become more difficult. The paradox is that as the old schemas and ways of interpreting and perceiving life have failed, in order to heal from traumatic events the subject has to turn towards listening, towards a more open way of building signification.

Apprehending through listening places Joe on unfamiliar ground, in a new world. Although listening is open to new possibilities and thus to a progressive way of making sense of the world, it also indicates a mode of making sense that does not offer any definite answers or explanations. Thus, one takes the risk of not knowing and not making sense; listening lacks the control and the certainty that previously learned (intentional) knowledge and structures of life had before

the trauma. Shortly after Joe starts to listen, he realises that abandoning intentional knowledge and his attitude to the future will leave him on unfamiliar ground.

As guilt was to the past, so, what was it that stood in the same relation to the future? Intention? No, not influence over the future. Foreboding. Anxiety about, distaste for the future... It wasn't fear, exactly. Fear was too focused, it had an object. Dread was too strong. Fear of the future. Apprehension, then. Yes, there it was, approximately. It was apprehension. (McEwan 1999: 46.) [punctuation as in the original]

Joe's experience of listening is coloured with guilt, fear and abjection. Shortly after the shift from recognition to apprehension Joe states, "My fear had held a mask to its face. Pollution, confusion, gabbling. I was afraid of my fear, because I did not yet know the cause. I was scared of what it would do to me and what it would make me do" (McEwan 1999: 47).

## b. A State of Knowing and Not Knowing

Joe's story poses a classic existential question: how do we make sense of what sometimes seems to be a senseless world? This question is also central to the trauma process, for experiencing trauma means that the normal ability to make sense of the world is damaged (Caruth 2016).

Sliding down the rope of the drifting hot air balloon along with the wayward music can be seen as examples of the many symbols in the film for asubjectivity and anobjectivity with transmitting and ambivalent content (cf. Vadén & Torvinen 2014: 220). Together with the image and dialogue they highlight Joe's trauma work as profound meaning work. The difficulty of communicating one's experience to others is reflected in a scene in which Joe and Claire are visiting an art gallery (00:17:50–00:18:27).

The couple are discussing Jed ("He sounds nice", she says) when a sculpture of pomegranates on a bare tree, stripped of its leaves, distracts Joe. In their round red shapes (reminiscent of the red hot air balloon) the fruit reminds Joe of the trauma; they are also powerful symbols of love and violence, life and death.



Picture 3: The sculpture of a pomegranate tree captures Joe's attention. © Paramount Classics & Pathé Pictures

Some scholars believe that the tree of life in the Garden of Eden was in fact a pomegranate tree. The pomegranate fruit is full of contradictions: some are sweet, while others are bitter. The pomegranate is used to symbolise birth and fertility as well as death and resurrection. In ancient Greece, the pomegranate was considered the fruit of the goddess of marriage, Hera. The pomegranate also referred to death (Grigson 1978: 202). The Christian tradition has used the pomegranate as a symbol of resurrection, and artists have pictured the baby Jesus with pomegranate fruit in his hands. (Schneider 1945.) In the film's art gallery scene, a dark and dissonant variation of the "Balloon Music" (also called "The Nightmare Begins" on the film's soundtrack) plays in the background, the music contrasting with the seemingly calm screen image. As a reminder of the "Balloon Music", the piece brings the trauma back to life, to be lived all over again. The pomegranate, the music and the sounds have multiple significations; they are kaleidoscopic, condensate signs in their ability to make reference to numerous directions simultaneously. Joe is seen staring at the sculpture, puzzled by it, as if he cannot figure it out. He seems to be caught in the traumatic chaos of shifting significations and the effort to relocate himself in the world. Ultimately, the pomegranates refer to the nature of trauma as a liminal space between life and death; this exposes



the logic of trauma, its innermost knowledge: trauma is about being constantly threatened by death, yet surviving it again and again (Caruth 2016: 7).

## Conclusion: Stalking and Accident as Symbols of Trauma

The film *Enduring Love* uses classic symbols of trauma by representing it in connection with falling, surprise, accident, fright and traumatic repetitions (see Freud 1961 [1920]: 11; Caruth 2016: 6–7). These factors are represented by two leitmotifs, the “Balloon Music” and the sound of the wind. While the “Balloon Music” depicts the evolving nature of the trauma work and Joe’s psyche, the wind leitmotif captures the tactile epistemology of trauma and its “felt truth” as well as trauma as a state of losing control over one’s life. Through the film’s music and sound, Joe’s trauma work is adapted to listening subjectivity, as originally depicted in the novel. The listening subjectivity addresses the trauma work as being in close connection with the search for a new signification whereby the subject tries to make sense of his experiences through the act of (existential) listening.

Caruth (2016: 4) has pointed out that trauma cannot be located as a single, clearly understandable event, but is a haunting, felt experience, one that the traumatized subject lives over and over again. The film *Enduring Love* portrays stalking and the balloon accident as symbols of trauma. Joe’s story renders how trauma, in its essence, is about losing one’s connection with the world, the self and others. In this story love is a symbol for connection and signification, which are lost in the midst of the trauma. Stalking is treated as an inversion of love, an obsessive behavioural pattern that seeks to perform acts that resemble the sensation of being in love. In this way stalking penetrates the most intimate area of Joe’s life: it breaks the bond between Joe and Claire and throws Joe into an existential crisis. In this sense, even if the hot air balloon is a one-time accident which Joe relives in his nightmares, Jed’s stalking behaviour is an ongoing trauma that never seems to leave Joe alone.

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