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Article Title: The Voice As a Narrative Element in Documentary Films

Article Abstract: Modern documentary filmmakers use fiction-influenced narrative styles that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, stretching the limits and rules of the genre set by what is referred to as classic or expository documentary. Another major change in the documentary form and narrative style is the inclusion of the filmmaker in the film. As a result of filmmakers starring in their own films, interacting with the subjects, and narrating the story themselves, documentaries have become more personality-driven. In these modern methods, the voices of the narrators and/or the filmmakers carry a significant importance as narrative elements. Taking five music-related documentary films into account—Lot 63, Grave C (Sam Green), Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul (Fatih Akin), Metal: A Headbanger's Journey (Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen, and Jessica Joywise), Decline of Western Civilization Part II: Metal Years (Penelope Spheeris), and Searching for Sugar Man (Malik Bendjelloul)—this paper analyzes how the voices of the narrators and/or the filmmakers are used as narrative elements, and what effects these voices have on the narrative styles and the modes of these documentaries.

Keywords: documentary, voice, narrative style, sound

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I hereby declare that this article is not under review elsewhere - Ufuk Onen
Expository mode is the 'classic' documentary form that features a narrator—usually in the form of an authoritative male voice-over—headshots of experts talking, interviews with people on the street, and stock footage and images which illustrate and reinforce the narrator's point. These conventions in documentary arise from the need to convince viewers of the authenticity of what they are being told. Classic documentary form claims that the film that the audience is watching is objective and it presents only the truth. To further reinforce this, in classic documentaries, long shots and scenes are used so that the audience feels as if they are watching untouched reality, and, also, classic music is used to underline the seriousness of the film.

In time, documentaries have changed. McCreadie traces the changes in documentary form and genre, from past till present. She suggests that documentaries were "fact-filled, earnest and well-meaning movies that preaced a main feature, or nature shows on television with embarrassing or comic sex scenes" but now they have become "so exciting that [they have] spun off all kinds of new and interesting subgenres" which incorporate "personal filmmaking, documentaries and rockumentaries, socially conscious docs (nothing new there), old-fashioned talking heads information docs, and docs with an inserted narrator starring him-or herself". This excitement resulted in increased interest in the documentaries in the mainstream. The reason behind this change is the change in the documentary form.

Modern documentary filmmakers use fiction-influenced narrative styles, blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, utilize fiction film camera and editing techniques, and, as Errol Morris states, "work in the area between fiction and film".

Another major change in the documentary form is the inclusion of the filmmaker in the film: Filmmakers have started "starring" in their own films. As a result of this, documentaries have become more personality-driven. The storyteller (the documentary filmmaker) thus becomes as important as the story itself. McCreadie acknowledges that the
filmmaker as a persona in his or her own film was actually seen as early as 1912, this tendency is only recently accepted as an established and provocative form.

Documentaries with a point of view, and a creative mix of fact and fiction, have become the place to be. And if that means starring yourself in your own film, so be it. In fact, be it better.  

In these modern forms and methods, not only the sight but also the voices of the narrators and/or the filmmakers carry a significant importance as narrative elements. To support this claim, this article analyzes five music-related documentaries — Lot 63, Grave C (Sam Green), Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul (Fatih Akin), Metal: A Headbanger's Journey (Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen and Jessica Joywise), Decline of Western Civilization Part II: Metal Years (Penelope Spheeris), and Searching for Sugar Man (Malik Bendjelloul) — in terms of how the voices of the narrators and/or the filmmakers are used as narrative elements, and what effects these voices have on the narrative styles and the modes of these documentaries.

Lot 63, Grave C

The well-known documentary Gimme Shelter (directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, and Charlotte Zwerin, 1970) follows the last weeks of The Rolling Stones' 1969 US tour and focuses mainly on the infamous Altamont Speedway Free Concert, at which an 18-year old man with a pistol in his hand, Meredith Hunter, was stabbed to death by Hells Angels, who were in charge of security around the stage. While Monterey "marked the apotheosis of the San Francisco-based flower culture" and Woodstock was "three days of Love, Peace and Music", Altamont represented "the death of flower-power, the death of Love".  

Gimme Shelter, which helped shape both the "Direct Cinema" movement and the "rockumentary"
genre, features the footage of the stabbing of Hunter and shows The Rolling Stones later as they watch the incident and reflect on it but it does not say much about Hunter himself. Neither did the media. The press focus was on Altamont only because, as Christgau suggests, it provided such a complex metaphor for the way an era ended. Hunter was lost to history.

*Lot 63, Grave C* (directed by Sam Green, 2006) is a short documentary about Meredith Hunter. The film's title refers to Hunter's grave location. The film does not chronicle Hunter's life, instead, it depicts a person's state of being lost to history. Green writes that "although Meredith Hunter lives on as a symbol, as an individual, he's been pretty much completely forgotten" and even in death "he's never had the dignity of his own identity" as his grave was unmarked, without a headstone.

The strength of *Lot 63, Grave C* comes not from the choice of plot or the story, but from the way Green presents it. Apart from a few newspaper articles on microfilm and the stabbing footage, Green had no visual material on Hunter. Although this is a major problem when producing a documentary, Green overcame this by using a narration style different from those in conventional documentaries. Green follows Edward Wilkes, the general manager of Skyview Memorial Lawn, the cemetery where Hunter's grave is located, and tells about Hunter through Wilkes' mouth. Instead of interviewing Wilkes in front of the camera, Green constructs his way of storytelling by following Wilkes as he walks from the entrance gate of the cemetery to Hunter's grave. During this walk, Green uses Wilkes' voice mostly off-screen, but in some instances he also shows Wilkes talking. The film is almost 10 minutes in length and nearly five minutes of it are shots of Wilkes walking and standing, and other cemetery scenes on Wilkes' way from the gate to Hunter's grave. Green also uses intertitles to give brief information about Altamont Speedway Free Concert and the incident that happened that day. The film includes footage of Hunter's stabbing from *Gimme Shelter*, and shots of newspaper clippings on microfilm.
Green had very little visual material and if he interviewed Wilkes sitting in front of a camera, the film could have easily turned out to be a 'talking head' documentary, or, with the addition of a voice-of-God commentary, an expository one, which relies "heavily on informing logic carried by the spoken word". Many documentaries lean heavily on this mode in which a ubiquitous, omniscient and objective professionally trained male voice, that speaks directly to the audience, organizes images and make sense of them. This commentary is therefore places itself in a higher order than the accompanying images. Instead of employing expository mode, Green chose to follow Wilkes walking from the cemetery gate to Hunter's grave and this gives a sense of motion, turns Green's search for Hunter almost into a journey, a journey which finally Green finds Hunter and his unmarked grave, reaches his destination and concludes the film.

Up until Wilkes reaches Hunter's grave, Green uses Wilkes' voice off-screen, as a voice-over commentary. Although we see Wilkes on the screen, still, this gives the feeling as if Wilkes' voice is an acousmatic presence, a disembodied voice as in Chion's concept acousmêtre, because, since Wilkes is not shown talking to the camera, the voice has not been connected to its bearer yet. Chion suggests that "the sight of the speaking face attests through the synchrony of audition/vision that the voice really belongs to that character, and thus is able to capture, domesticate, and 'embody' her". When Wilkes reaches his destination and points Hunter's grave, Green shows him talking on screen, the first time in the film, and by doing so he supports and reinforces the moment of revelation of Hunter's grave by using the effect of embodying Wilkes' voice. Unless the coincidence of the voice with the mouth is verified, the voice retains an aura of magical power. Green uses this throughout Wilkes' journey, then he also uses the power of the moment of the embodiment of the voice to reinforce the effect of the revelation of Hunter's unmarked grave. It should also be noted that, in practical terms, using Wilkes' voice as an off-screen commentary, i.e., using it as an
unsynchronized sound, gives Green much more freedom in the film editing process by making Wilkes' monologue an autonomous element, allowing him to assemble it freely, without worrying about the synchronized picture.

*Lot 63, Grave C* incorporates footage from *Gimme Shelter*, intertitles for brief information about the concert and the incident, as well as newspaper clippings on microfilm, and Green creatively uses shots of the microfilm archives as if visual effects for transitions between intertitles, footage, and Wilkes' walk. Green's *Lot 63, Grave C*, with its rather unusual structure, is a very good and a solid example of a documentary based on a plot which the filmmaker does not have enough visual material about.

The way Green structures *Lot 63, Grave C*—how he creatively incorporates Wilkes' voice to present the story—is very effective and it serves the film very well. At the beginning of the documentary, right before Wilkes starts to walk, Green shows himself on camera very briefly, wearing headphones and holding a microphone, but he is not seen engaging with his subject. Showing himself briefly and not being actively involved in the events happening on camera is an indication that the filmmaker is present in the scene, it keeps the film in the documentary genre as his presence detaches the film from fictional qualities, yet helps him keep a transparent profile as a filmmaker in which he does not, at least directly, influence and affect the events that are being filmed.

**Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul**

*Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (directed by Fatih Akin, 2005) is a documentary that follows Alexander Hacke, a German musician, and his journey through the music scene in Istanbul. Akin's aim is not to put together a compilation of Turkish folk music or to chronicle milestones in Turkish music, but to portray the contemporary music scene and cultural life in İstanbul, with all its diversity, and he succeeds at that. The place and role of
Hacke are not strictly set in the documentary genre, in fact in the film the boundary between documentary and fiction genres tends to be blurred at times. Hacke serves as an off-screen narrator but at the same time, he is in the film, staying at the same hotel that the leading character in *Head-On*, Akin's fiction film, stays at, traveling around Istanbul, interacting with musicians and interviewing them—though Akin never shows him speaking on screen—and, equipped with a mobile recording studio and microphones, making recordings of the bands and artist. These all give Hacke a fictional quality. That Hacke is set partly in documentary and partly in fiction, it creates a contrast and distinguishes *Crossing the Bridge* from conventional documentaries.

Just as Wilkes' voice in *Lot 63, Grave C*, Hacke's voice also has the attribute of acousmatic presence. Although Hacke is seen and heard in the film, his voice is not truly embodied because Akin does not show him talking on screen. So, in Chion's term, Hacke's voice is never de-acousmatized:

As long as the face and mouth have not been completely revealed, and as long as the spectator's eye has not "verified" the co-incidence of the voice with the mouth (a verification which needs only to be approximate), de-acousmatization is incomplete, and the voice retains an aura of invulnerability and magical power.\(^{15}\)

In practical terms this gives Akin the freedom to assemble the narration of Hacke independently from the picture and to change, manipulate and re-record it, even with different text, during the post-production phase of the film.

Akin follows a certain structure in introducing the artists and the bands. He starts with pop, rock, hip-hop and electronic music, all Western genres but played with Turkish and Middle-Eastern influences by Istanbul artists and bands, and gradually moves deeper to the roots, to the progenitors who influenced younger musicians. *Crossing the Bridge* successfully
builds a balance between music and interviews and Hacke's journey. Music is very much present all through the film yet it never overshadows the interviews or, in general, the depiction of Akin's portrayal of Istanbul's diverse cultural life.

The narrative structure that Akin has built works perfectly for the film. The structures of Green's Lot 63, Grave C and Akin's Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul are similar as they both employ the same technique of narrating the story through a person in the film. On the other hand, they are different because in Lot 63, Grave C Wilkes is very much real and this, along with the involvement of the filmmaker, keeps the film in the documentary genre whereas in Crossing the Bridge Hacke has a fictional quality and this, at times, blurs the line between the genres of documentary and fiction. Akin keeps the film within the boundaries of the documentary genre at times, then crosses the border to the fictional side, and then goes back again to the documentary genre. This complex but highly effective narrative structure, works perfectly for Crossing the Bridge.

**Metal: A Headbanger's Journey**

*Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (directed by Sam Dunn, Scot McFadyen and Jessica Joywise, 2005) follows Sam Dunn, an anthropologist and a filmmaker, who sets out on a journey in Europe and North America to discover why heavy metal music has been consistently stereotyped, dismissed and loathed and yet is loved so passionately by its millions of fans. Along the way, he conducts interviews, explores and questions the different views about origins and culture of heavy metal music, and the controversy that surrounds it. Among Dunn's subjects, there are not only musicians but also journalists, writers, record company professionals and academics as well.

There are some points that set Headbanger's Journey different from Lot 63, Grave C and Crossing the Bridge. In Lot 63, Grave C the filmmaker, Sam Green, is on camera very
briefly but he is not seen engaging with his subject. In *Crossing the Bridge* the filmmaker, Fatih Akin, is not on camera at all. Unlike in these two films, in *Headbanger's Journey*, the filmmaker is on camera. The film follows him and he is actively engaged with the interviewees. This places *Headbanger's Journey* in participatory mode, which is a documentary mode put forward by Nichols. In participatory mode the filmmaker interacts with the subjects and this interaction is documented on camera. Nichols suggests that the "filmmaker steps out from behind the cloak of voice-over commentary . . . and becomes a social actor" but "retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of potential power and control over events". In participatory mode, the fact that the filmmaker's presence and interaction with the subjects might intentionally or unintentionally affect the subject is not hidden. "If there is a truth here it is the truth of a form of interaction that would not exist were it not for the camera".

The technique of conducting and/or editing of the interviews is also different in *Headbanger's Journey*. Neither the filmmaker Green in *Lot 63, Grave C* nor Hacke in *Crossing the Bridge*, who has a fictional quality, directly engage with their subjects. The questions they ask are not heard on film and there is never an exchange of words between them and the interviewees. In *Headbanger's Journey*, however, Dunn shows himself interviewing his subjects, even talking and socializing with them. At the beginning of the film, Dunn states that he has been a part of heavy metal culture since he was 12 years old. His involvement with his subjects in the film, especially the musicians that he has been a fan of since his childhood years, gives the documentary a more sincere touch.

Dunn's association with the subject matter at hand brings out another difference: In *Lot 63, Grave C* Green and Wilkes are not directly connected to Hunter or the incident which leads to Hunter's death. Similarly, in *Crossing the Bridge* Akin and Hacke are not a part of Istanbul music scene. Dunn, on the other hand, is a part of the heavy metal culture that he
investigates. This explains why Dunn puts himself in the center of his documentary or why the documentary follows him. The structure of narration of *Headbanger's Journey* is similar to Green's *Lot 63, Grave C* and Akin's *Crossing the Bridge*: they all employ the same technique of narrating the story through a person in the film, but, unlike the other two films, in *Headbanger's Journey* the person narrating the story is the filmmaker himself. Again, as discussed above, this gives the documentary a more sincere touch.

Dunn uses voice-over technique for some of his commentaries but as he is frequently seen on camera talking which means that the voice and the sight of the person are married, or the voice is embodied as Chion puts it. Dunn's voice is not presented as the voice of a narrator who speaks objectively, without being involved in the story. He does not talk from a balcony, which Chion suggests is the place of voice-overs.¹⁸ He does not sound like an authoritarian commenter as in documentaries which use expository mode. Nichols suggests that expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity as the voice-over commentary has the capacity to judge the actions from a distance without being caught in them.¹⁹ Rascaroli argues that it is the extra-diegetic positioning that gives the voice-over its supposed judgmental and authoritarian quality.²⁰ This is not the case in *Headbanger's Journey* because Dunn's voice is embodied, he is always present in the diegetic space of the film since he is positioned in the story actively.

**Decline of Western Civilization Part II: Metal Years**

In *Decline of Western Civilization Part II: Metal Years* (directed by Penelope Spheeris, 1988), filmmaker Spheeris focuses on the Los Angeles hard rock and heavy metal scene from 1986 to 1988 with an emphasis on glam rock. The filmmaker's involvement with her subjects, and her interaction with them, place this documentary in participatory mode, similar to *Headbanger's Journey*, but in *Decline of Western Civilization*, however, Spheeris exists only
as a voice. She is never on camera. All through the film, Spheeris' disembodied voice interacts with interviewees and leads them. In that sense, Spheeris can be thought of as an acousmêtre.

When the acousmatic presence is a voice, and especially when this voice has not yet been visualized—that is, when we cannot yet connect it to a face—we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name acousmêtre.\(^\text{21}\)

According to Abbate, the word 'acousmêtre', coined by Chion and derived from the combination of the words 'acousmatic' and 'être' (which means "to be" in French), has entered Anglo-American film theory terminology directly, without translation.\(^\text{22}\)

Wilkes in *Lot 63, Grave C*, Hacke in *Crossing the Bridge* and Spheeris in *Decline of Western Civilization* can all be regarded as acousmêtres. However, there are some differences between them. According to Chion's concept of disembodied voice, Spheeris can be thought of as a "complete acousmêtre", "the one who is not-yet-seen, but who remains liable to appear in the visual field at any moment".\(^\text{23}\) Spheeris' presence is so strong in the film that the audience expects her to appear on camera at any second, although that never happens.

Unlike Spheeris, Wilkes is not simply a complete acousmêtre. Wilkes' case is more complicated than Spheeris'. As described above, Green uses Wilkes' voice off-screen and although Wilkes is on camera, since he is not shown talking, i.e., since there is no synchrony of audition and vision, this produces a problematic case of acousmêtre, similar to the one in *Psycho* (directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). In the final scene of the film, Norman is shown sitting in the holding cell and the mother's voice, which is believed or expected to be produced by Norman, is heard over his face, but his mouth is closed and his lips are not moving. This "final encounter with Norman", as Morfoot suggests, "is one of the most moving and disturbing of the film".\(^\text{24}\) The mother's monologue is heard over Norman's face
but his mouth is closed, "as if to suggest possession by spirits, or ventriloquism". The voice cannot find a place to be embodied in so it pastes itself, artificially, on Norman's face.

The mother's voice in *Psycho* is more problematic than Wilkes' voice because it never could be truly visualized or embodied. The same can be said for Hacke in *Crossing the Bridge* as well, though it is not as intense as Norman's voice in *Psycho*. Wilkes' voice, on the other, is embodied when Green shows him talking on camera the moment he reaches his destination and points Hunter's grave.

While Spheeris' and Dunn's interaction with their subjects place both *Decline of Western Civilization* and *Headbanger's Journey* in participatory mode, there is an obvious difference between them over how they approach their subject matter. Dunn's involvement with his subjects in the film, especially the musicians that he has been a fan of since his childhood years, as discussed above, gives the documentary a more sincere touch. Dunn's Journey is more like a celebration of heavy metal and its culture whereas Spheeris' *Decline* is almost a harsh interrogation. She asks questions such as "What if you don't make it as a rock-and-roll star?", "Did you go to school?", "What was the last job you had?", "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?", "Are you in it for the money?" In addition to that, Dunn's enthusiasm and adoration for his subject matter, heavy metal and its culture, is obvious on camera while Spheeris' voice always keeps distance from the interviewees and the music genre in general and at times shows signs of contempt.

**Searching for Sugar Man**

*Searching for Sugar Man* (directed by Malik Bendjelloul, 2012) is a documentary about the search for mysterious American singer and songwriter Sixto Rodriguez. The Detroit based folk musician had two albums released in the United States, neither of them sold well so the record company dropped him. Then, unknown to Rodriguez, in the early 1970s, his albums
somehow reached Cape Town, South Africa, where through the exchange of bootleg copies from hand to hand, his songs became an anti-establishment inspiration, and Rodriguez, although an unseen figure, turned into a star comparable to Bob Dylan or The Beatles. In 1990s two South African fans, Segerman and Strydom, set out a search for Rodriguez to find out who he really was and what happened to him. Although *Searching for Sugar Man* tells the story of the search for Rodriguez by Segerman and Strydom, and even though the plot of the film and the backbone information is conveyed by them, the film does follow them. As a matter of fact, the film does not follow any person. Not even Rodriguez himself, who appears on camera in the second half of the film. Bendjelloul builds a narrative structure on interviews, not only with Segerman, Strydom and Rodriguez, but also with other people connected to Rodriguez as well, and supports the interviews with new and archival footage, and animations.

The narrative which Bendjelloul constructs on interviews works very well. It moves between Cape Town and Detroit, in two different yet complementary directions. Interview by interview, Bendjelloul moves forward in the story, as if he completes a big puzzle piece by piece. He uses each piece, i.e., information from the interviews, strategically, so while he completes the puzzle on one hand, he creates a denser mystery on the other, teasing the audience and keeping their attention. While doing this, Bendjelloul manages to squeeze information and opinions about the cities and circumstances, such as the censorship of music and the political situation in Cape Town and in South Africa in the 1970s, and the effects of Detroit on people: "It's a city that tells you not to dream big, not to expect anything more" says Sandra Rodriguez-Kennedy, Rodriguez's daughter, about Detroit in the film. Edgar, Fairclough-Isaacs and Halligan, referencing Hertz—who writes about post-punk films and suggests that those films "link the music's authenticity to the fate of the cities themselves" note that "music documentary often presents the city as the essential element to
understand music". Taking this into consideration, the information and opinions that Bendjelloul gives the audience help them to better understand Rodriguez and his music and, also, the reception of Rodriguez music.

Of particular note is Bendjelloul's visual style. Like most filmmakers, he uses visual material, such as footage, animation and so forth, so that the interviewees do not end up functioning solely as talking-heads. What he uses as footage, and how he uses this, however, sets Bendjelloul's visual style apart. It is obvious that Bendjelloul had very little visual material of Rodriguez from the past—a few photos, almost no videos—so, instead, he uses a mixture of recently-shot videos and archival footage of Cape Town and Detroit. Most of the time there is no real connection, in terms of content and context, between the images and the statements of the interviewees other than that the incidents that the interviewees are talking about took place either in Cape Town or Detroit. It is almost like the statement of the interviewee goes one way while the image goes another, acting like autonomous elements, and yet this phenomenon, which Chion calls 'counterpoint', is unnoticeable for the audience.

Chion's audiovisual counterpoint, which is different from musical counterpoint, "implies an auditory voice perceived horizontally in tandem with the visual track, a voice that possesses its own formal individuality". He provides the coverage of a bicycle race in Barcelona that he encountered on television as an example in which the image shows the racers from a helicopter and yet the soundtrack consists of a dialogue between the reporter and some cyclists. He writes that it is obvious that those speaking are not watching the images, nor are they saying anything remotely about them. Apart from the only link between them, which is the topic of cycling, image and sound act independently from each other, and yet, Chion suggests, no one notices this obvious counterpoint. He also gives the reason why this counterpoint gets unnoticed:
It is not enough if the sound and image differ in nature (the content of each, their spatial characteristics, etc.). Audiovisual counterpoint will only be noticed only if it sets up an opposition between sound and image on a precise point of meaning.²⁹

It can be argued that this is the reason why the counterpoint of the images and the statements of the interviewees in Searching for Sugar Man work. Unlike in Chion's example, however, Bendjelloul's images are aesthetically sequenced stylized shots. They do no illustrate, reinforce, or conflict with what is said. They are neither in a leading nor in a supporting role. Their aesthetic contribution, which is a reflection of Bendjelloul's visual style, enhances the viewing experience.

Halfway through the film Rodriguez appears on camera and in the second part of the film, there are interviews with him in which the interviewer is an unseen male, most probably Bendjelloul himself. His voice is heard but he is never on camera. Just like Spheeris in Decline of Western Civilization, Bendjelloul is also a complete acousmêtre. Unlike Spheeris, whose voice has a very strong presence and interacts with all subjects in the film, Bendjelloul interacts only with Rodriguez, and his voice does not have a strong presence since it is not as prominent as Spheeris'. Bendjelloul sounds very neutral: he is not like a character or part of the story, and he is just asking questions, not leading the subject.

Comparison of the Documentaries' Narrative Styles

The chart below summarizes and compares the narrative styles of the five documentaries discussed above.
The film in which the filmmaker is the most prominent is *Headbanger's Journey*. It follows Dunn, he is on camera, the story is narrated by him, he interviews the subjects himself and he is heavily involved with them. Compared to Dunn, Spheeris' presence in *Decline of Western Civilization* and especially Bendjelloul's presence in *Searching for Sugar Man* are much less. Nevertheless, the directors' involvements with their subjects and their actions place all these three films in participatory mode. In *Lot 63, Grave C*, Green appears on camera momentarily, holding a microphone to interview Wilkes. Even his brief presence is enough to keep the film in the field of documentary. *Crossing the Bridge*, on the other hand, with the total absence of the filmmaker, and with its style which narrates the film through Hacke, a subject—or, almost
a fictional character—blurs the boundaries between documentary and fiction. Hacke interacts with the subjects and he even plays songs with some of them. Akin is the most transparent one among these five filmmakers.

None of the films feature an authoritarian commenter, a God-like voice-over, which is a typical characteristic of expository documentaries. *Lot 63, Grave C* is narrated by Wilkes, a subject in the film, who walks the audience to Hunter's grave. The revelation of the grave is the moment of resolution in the film. At first, Wilkes is a problematic acousmêtre, as discussed above, but he gets embodied in the end. Hacke in *Crossing the Bridge* is also a problematic acousmêtre like Wilkes, but differently from Wilkes, he is never de-acousmatized in the film. Chion reduces the embodiment of the disembodied voice to the synchronous presentation of the voice and the face and the mouth that the voice supposedly belongs to. Akin never shows Hacke talking. The audience sees him, hears him, but never at the same time. Hacke's voice is never embodied. Just like in the final scene of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Hacke's voice cannot find a place to be embodied in so it somehow artificially pastes itself on Hacke's face.

According to Abbate, "the voice of Norman Bates' mother in *Psycho*, has become a *locus classicus* for interrogations of the uncanny in cinema".\(^30\) Not as intense as the mother's voice, but Hacke's voice has also an uncanny quality. Dolar suggests that "the voice without a body is inherently uncanny, and that the body to which it is assigned does not dissipate its haunting effect".\(^31\) Hacke's case can be compared to ventriloquism. Ventriloquists display their art by holding a dummy, puppet, etc., which is supposed to be the origin of the voice. Although the voice and the face are simultaneously presented, this does not demystify the voice; on the contrary, as Dolar suggests, "it enhances the enigma".\(^32\)
Doanne proposes that acousmêtre "deepens the diegesis, gives it an extent which exceeds that of the image" and it can be said that *Crossing the Bridge*'s narrative benefits from this deepening.

*Headbanger's Journey* and *Decline of Western Civilization* are narrated by the filmmakers, Dunn and Spheeris, respectively, and the latter is a complete acousmêtre. It should be noted that Spheeris mostly acts as a carrier who helps the film to move forward, to progress. In that sense she functions differently than Wilkes, Hacke and Dunn.

**Conclusion**

Voices are among the most personalized and most naturalized forms of subjective self-expression. Dolar even suggests that voice is much more than language, but, in some sense, what is left over before or after language. People articulate themselves through their voices and assign the voices of others deep meanings. The human voice is the most familiar sound to all people. People use their voices and listen to others' voices each and every day. As Dolar suggests, "all of our social life is mediated by the voice". Whenever people are in environments that are full of sounds, usually human voices are the first ones that capture their attention. All the other sounds are secondary.

The human voice is so significant that in music production, it is usually the singer's voice which is the main focus. The mix of a song is shaped around it. The same is true for the sound mix of a fiction film or a documentary as well. The reason for this is the fact that "the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it". The human voice has possessed a central role in the film soundtrack ever since the beginning of sound film. Modern filmmakers, who changed the form of the documentary, who blurred the lines between documentary and fiction and who placed themselves in their films, used the human
voice as a narrative element and, as discussed through the five documentaries above, this has helped them to shape the form, style and mode of their documentaries.

4 Quoted in McCreadie, *Documentary Superstars*, 98.
5 McCreadie, *Documentary Superstars*, x.
10 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 118.
18 Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 68.


30 Abbate, "Debussy's Phantom Sounds".


34 According to Freud's concept, the uncanny refers to or is related to something familiar or known, yet foreign or strange at the same time, which results in a feeling of it being unsettling and uncomfortable: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar". Freud, S. (1919). "The Uncanny", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*: 217-256. The acousmêtre in cinema, due to its uncanny quality, not only arouses curiosity and creates mystery or suspense, but it helps with audience identification, albeit in a remote way.


37 Sterne, "The Voices," 491.


40 Collin Chua, "Re-Sounding Images: Sound and Image in an Audiovisual Age" (PhD diss., Murdoch University, 2007), 42.