



Universiteit Antwerpen  
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# No sound but the AD

How does AD alter the filmic narrative?  
The case of the Flemish TV series *De Nachtwacht*.

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# Background

Quote by sound designer Vincent LoBrutto:

“Although the feature film is perceived as a visual medium,  
50 percent of the motion picture experience is aural”. (LoBrutto, 1994)

# Background

2 questions:

- What does the (narrative) sound profile of “a film” look like?
- What happens to the (narrative) sound profile of the film when AD is added?

# State of the Art in AD

Still very little research

- Mostly product-oriented and descriptive (e.g. Remael (2012), Reviere (2018), Vercauteren & Reviere (2021));
- Few experimental studies (e.g. Fryer (2013), Lopez & colleagues (2009, 2020, 2021))

=> Possible explanation: lack of a shared conceptual and methodological framework.

# Case Study – *De Nachtwacht S05E07 - Gwendolyn*

- Fantasy series for children/young adults
- 37 episodes with AD + audioguide
- “AD created as audiobook”



# Methodology

- Analysis of (part of) episode S05E07 *Gwendolyn*
  - 00:00:00 – 00:03:11
  - 00:03:51 – 00:06:10
  - 00:12:50 – 00:17:30
- Annotation in *Elan* on two broad levels:

## Type of Sound:

- Dialogue
- Music
- Sound Effect
- Voice Over
- Audio Description
- Silence

## Characteristics of Sound:

- Storyworld
- Source
- Position
- Narrative constituent
- Narrative function

# Methodology

The screenshot displays the ELAN 6.9 software interface. At the top, the window title is "ELAN 6.9 - De Nachtwacht S5 E7 - Gwendolyn\_2024\_07\_24\_GV.eaf". The menu bar includes "Bestand", "Bewerken", "Annotatie", "Tier", "Type", "Zoeken", "Bekijken", "Opties", "Venster", and "Help". Below the menu is a toolbar with tabs for "Tabel", "Tekst", "Ondertitels", "Lexicon", "Commentaren", "Herkenners", "Metadata", and "Controls". A dropdown menu shows "Selecteer een tier >".

The main area is split into two parts. On the left is a video player showing a woman in a green jacket sitting at a table in a cafe. The video has a watermark "SCR @ GERTIE CANTIEREN". Below the video is a playback control bar with various navigation buttons and a volume icon. On the right is a large empty text area for annotations.

Below the video and text area is a detailed timeline with a horizontal axis showing time from 00:17:32.000 to 00:17:51.000. The timeline is divided into several tracks, each with a list of annotations:

- Dialogue (107):** Ed: Bang dat ge het lekker gaat vinden, dat het naar meer gaat proeven.
- Source dialogue (107):** on-screen
- Position dialogue (107):** figure
- Sound effects 1 (194):** figure, Ed sighs, Sound of crunchy gherkin
- Story world S.Fx.1 (194):** diegetic
- Source S.Fx.1 (194):** on-screen
- Position S.Fx.1 (194):** figure
- Narration S.Fx.1 (194):** character, action
- Function S.Fx.1 (194):** expressive, denotative
- Music 1 (81):** Sad piano music
- Story world music (81):** non-diegetic
- Position music 1 (81):** figure
- Source music 1 (81):** off-screen
- Narration music 1 (81):** /
- Function music 1 (81):** expressive - extra

A red vertical line is positioned at approximately 00:17:42.000. A watermark "Activeer Windows" is visible in the bottom right corner of the interface.

# Results

## Number of sounds in the scenes

	No AD	AD
Dialogue	135 (31,3%)	135 (35,7 %)
Sound effects	261 (60,4 %)	209 (55,3 %)
Music	36 (8,3 %)	34 (9 %)
AD	0	(65)
<b>TOTAL SOUNDS</b>	432	378 (443)



# Results

## Position of the sounds in the narrative

	No AD	AD
Figure	133 (51%)	94 (45%)
Ground	128 (49%)	115 (55%)

# Results

## Sounds linked to narrative constituent

	No AD	AD
Actions	172 (66 %)	139 (67%)
Characters	13 (5 %)	11 (5%)
Objects	33 (12,6 %)	26 (12,4 %)
Space	21 (8,0 %)	14 (6,7%)
Time	9 (3,4 %)	9 (4,3 %)
No reference	13 (5%)	10 (4,8 %)

# Results

## Sounds linked to narrative constituent

		No AD	AD
Actants +/- 17,5 %	Actions	172 (66 %)	139 (67%)
	Characters	13 (5 %)	11 (5%)
	Objects	33 (12,6 %)	26 (12,4 %)
Setting +/- 11 %	Space	21 (8,0 %)	14 (6,7%)
	Time	9 (3,4 %)	9 (4,3 %)
	No reference	13 (5%)	10 (4,8 %)

# Results

## Narrative functions of sounds

	No AD	AD
Denotative	208 (79,7 %)	166 (79,4 %)
Expressive intradiegetic	39 (14,9 %)	33 (15,8 %)
Expressive extradiegetic	14 (5,4 %)	10 (4,8 %)
Symbolic	0	0
Aesthetic	0	0

# Results

## Sounds in the audio description

65 blocks of AD => 63 references to sounds in the narrative:

- 26 references to sounds that can still be heard
- 22 references to sounds that moved from a figure to a ground position
- 15 references to sounds that can no longer be heard in the AD version

# Results

## Sounds in the audio description

- 52 sounds disappeared in the AD version => 15 (28,8%) mentioned in the AD
- 39 sounds moved from figure to ground => 22 (56,4 %) mentioned in the AD

## Related to the total amount of sound effects:

- 37 of 261 sounds disappeared => 14,1%

BUT: all ground sounds still audible in the AD version.

If not: possibly up to 54 of 261 disappeared => 20,7%

# Conclusions

Question 1 => 50% of the filmic experience is aural

- In qualitative terms => definitely
- In quantitative terms => up for debate
  - Very often a supportive function for the visuals
    - (e.g. 58 footsteps)
  - Predominantly denotative
  - Only +/- 20% expressive function



**Multimodal cohesion**

# Conclusions

## Question 2 => Impact of AD on the narrative

- Between 14,2% and 20,7% of sound effects get lost
  - +/- 20 % for 3 main narrative constituents (actions, actants setting)
- Considerable change in terms of construction of the narrative
- Impact on the reconstruction of the narrative => still to be researched
- Various avenues for further research



# Questions & Contact



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