When we think about what Brexit sounds like, we tend to think of this:

Yet Brexit discussions are not strictly held in political arenas. We often tend to forget the everyday impacts of Brexit and how it threatens to re-shape social stratifications.

Using contemporary social realist films as a corpus, my research investigates how sounds begin to become symbolic of increasing division between the social classes. Specifically, my research asks:

- How does sound (dialogue, diegetic music, sound effects, mixing, soundtracks, noise, etc.) indicate the increasing social stratification in Britain?
- How do these divisions shift in the period between Tony Blair's resignation and the Brexit referendum?
- Is it possible to track changes in class divisions in the United Kingdom in a politically uncertain period?

Three Case Studies Of Increasing Social Division

Silence and the Upper Class
- In the early years, silence was representative of how upper class communities did not know how to talk about increasing difference in wealth.
- But this silence becomes violent as the upper classes strengthen their strongholds over their property rights and their familial claims to wealth. This clip from Archipelago (dir. Joanna Hogg, 2010) frames how communication has broken down between the upper classes over wealth differences.

Music and the Middle Class
- Music has been used by the middle classes to assist in re-imagining of space and class status. Using a desired soundtrack can assist a working-class character feel as if they can achieve upward mobility into the upper classes, such as Javed does in this clip from Blinded By The Light (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2019).
- As time goes on, the ability to re-imagine one’s class status disappears, and the ability to assert one’s middle class status becomes more fraught.

Noise and the Working Class
- While noise can be found in many recent social realist films about the working class, the noise is starting to become deafening, as noises of post-industrial urbanity (e.g. traffic, construction, sirens) the working class from speaking to each other, making their feelings of isolation stronger.
- For an example, listen to the following clip from I, Daniel Blake (dir. Ken Loach, 2017).

Key findings:
- Cinematic sound can be used to assess how ongoing political events are affecting people on an everyday basis.
- In each of the case studies in this project, the soundscapes of films made during the development of the Brexit movement become more harmful to the character’s well-being (either because it encourages a lack of connection and community, prevents them from imagining futurity, or physically silencing them from speaking about issues that threaten them).
- Tracing the soundscapes in British social realist films from the resignation of PM Tony Blair up to the Brexit moment, the social classes are becoming more divided and thus more isolated from the political and social institutions designed to assist them.

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