

Abstract submission

Name: Jacqueline WAEBER

Title: Associate professor

Institution: Duke University, Department of Music

Email: jw140@duke.edu

Technical equipment required: laptop projector (MacBook Pro)

Inception, or what are songs for?

Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) invokes Édith Piaf's 1960 recording of "Non, je ne regrette rien." If songs in films are mostly used as memory triggers and aural frames for escapism, *Inception* twists such expectations: the function of the song is to wake up the characters from the dream.

Replete with connotations pre-existing to the film that could *potentially* impact on the audience's perception, this song is reduced to one fragment, rendering *illegible* the meaning of its inter-textual potentialities. Through this aural close-up on the song's textural surface – Piaf's voice and the song's rhythm – I argue that *Inception* privileges a haptic treatment of the aural through this process of deformation/transformation, singularizing the song's pure texture in the aural foreground. Thus the paradoxical choice of a "vintage" recording (with its scratches and other marks of the past) that literally clashes with the glossy artificiality of the visual treatment (from objects to actors themselves).

Finally, I will show that this approach, not unique to *Inception*, testifies of a recent shift towards a haptic aesthetics of the aural in cinema that can be found in different filmic traditions and genres (Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, or recent films by Jacques Audiard, Wong Kar-wai, Quentin Tarantino...).