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The narrative functions of props

Portable communication devices in *Die Hard* (1988) & *Die Hard 2: Die Harder* (1990)

Abstract

The current study set out to investigate the narrative functions of prop's that takes the particular form of portable communication devices (more specifically walkie-talkies and airplane phones) in *Die Hard* (1988) and *Die Hard 2: Die Harder* (1990). The methodology used was the semiotic concepts of *denotation* and *connotation* with a supporting theoretical framework that consisted of two principal forms of prop's called *Instrumental* and *Contextualized* together with Antoni Smuszkiewiez' definition of the concept.

It was found that the narrative functions of the walkie-talkies shift and change throughout each film. They entail the possibility of creating and influencing certain narrative contexts; at one moment, the walkie-talkie has the function of providing the spectator with important narrative information required in order to understand the wholeness of the narrative; in another instance, it rather functions as the main narrative instrument which enables, generates and initiates narrative contexts that are contingent on it (and the airplane phone). It was also corroborated that the level of narrative suspense, motion and pace differs depending on whether the protagonist has access to a walkie-talkie or not.

The airplane phone in *Die Harder* was determined to have a similar narrative function as the walkie-talkies do. Yet, the difference is that it isn't used by either the protagonist or the antagonist of the narrative. Instead it is used by a side character which culminates the narrative and affects it in a similar way as the walkie-talkies do but the difference is that it utilizes a specific context with humoristic inputs. The airplane phone is also an example that highlights that a prop can still have a major impact on the narrative despite the fact it isn't used by neither the protagonist or the antagonist.

Keywords: Portable, communication, devices, prop's, narrative, function, walkie-talkie, airplane phone, Bruce Willis, semiotics, Die Hard.

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1. Introduction

In film studies (the definition of) mise-en-scéne refers to everything that appears in front of the camera and its arrangement, meaning composition, sets, costumes, lightning, actors and props.[1] Compared to other dimensions of film such as editing and sound, mise-en-scéne was in place with the first films, and the early decades of film history can, in a sense, be understood as explorations in how to use the materials of mise-en-scéne. Physical objects and figures that are key ingredients in a cinematics mise-en-scéne are called "props". A prop, which is a shortening of the word "property", is an object that functions as a part of the set or as a tool used by the actors.[2] Props can be a piece of clothing, weapon, vehicles, jewellery, musical instrument, drugs, sporting equipment, flowers, trees, books, a dead body and so forth. They come in many shapes and sizes and can be more than just objects on the screen. Great props can transcend the boundaries of film and become icons of cinema and pop culture more generally, such as the lightsabre from *Star Wars* (1977). A prop can be used as an opener in a film, like the one ring is used in Peter Jacksons *Lord of the rings: The Fellowship of the Rings* (2001) initiating the beginning of the narrative, or it can be used to suggest a sequel as in the final scenes of Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) where a joker card from a deck of cards is briefly shown for the audience (a teaser for *The Dark Knight* [2008]).

A prop can also have such importance that the narrative revolves around it and wouldn't work without it. For example, Kimberly Jackson writes that in Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996) the narrative "would be impossible without the use of cell phone [props]".[3] Sometimes a prop can basically be a character itself (e.g. Wilson the volleyball from Robert Zemecki's *Cast Away* [2000]). In fact, a prop can be so important for the film's narrative that it is the title

[1] David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 2003, McGraw Hill, New York p. 169 f.
[2] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, Bedford/St Martins, Boston, p. 72.
[3] Kimberly Jackson, *Technology, monstrosity and reproduction in twenty first century horror*, 2013, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 14.

of the film itself, such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). Some props even represent a character to such an extent that one cannot think about the prop without thinking of the character, where Indiana Jones bullwhip is a good example, or Superman's red mantle.[4]

But how does a prop work when it doesn't have (at first sight) a major role in the narrative? When it doesn't have any supernatural powers? When it doesn't take the form of a rare object? When it doesn't initiate (the beginning of) a narrative? How can a prop, that takes the form of an object that is common in our culture and society, acquire narrative meaning? More clearly, a prop that takes the form of an object that is so common in films, such as weapons and vehicles, or in our society, such as a cell phone or a laptop, the audience might not see the prop as a bearer of narrative meanings in the first place because of its commonness in our daily lives.

One such highly common prop, this study argues, is the portable communication device. In film, a portable communication device might not be perceived as a bearer of narrative meaning by spectator since portable communication devices are objects that takes many forms and have become an integrated part of our daily lifestyle and in our culture. Therefore, portable communication devices and their obvious function (communication), together with its commonness in today's culture and society, might make it difficult to perceive that particular prop as something more than just a communication device.

1.1 Aims, research questions and hypothesis

Portable Communication Devices (PCDs)[5] are a common feature in our daily lives. In popular film, too, PCDs are common as well and have been so for a long time. This, of course, is not very surprising: To the extent that films are connected to the society they are being produced

[4] Rishi Kaneria, "Why Props Matter", *www.youtube.com*, 2015. www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4XDvZKntpA&t=98s (Collected 2018-04-10)
[5] Henceforth, I will use the shortening of 'Portable Communication Devices', mainly in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of the term.

in, technological development cannot be separated from the activity of making feature-films. Another aspect is that props in the form of PCDs encompass a great variety of processes, intentions and outcomes that can affect a films narrative, thus constituting opportunities for the filmmakers. [6]

Props that take the particular form of PCDs serves as the main subject for this thesis where chosen sequences of scenes from *Die Hard* (1988) and *Die Harder* (1990) are analysed. The question posed in this thesis is:

- What narrative functions can prop's, that takes the form of portable communication devices, have within the narratives of *Die Hard* and *Die Harder*?

Through this inspection, I argue that PCDs can have an important narrative function which affects not only certain contexts of the narrative, but its entirety as well. Both *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* are suitable materials to use in this study, partly because they can be understood as archetypes of the contemporary action film, but also because each of the narratives revolves around communication technology where PCDs, more specifically walkie-talkies and airplane phones, are an important aspect of each film and seems to function as a narrative agency on their own. Additionally, the current choice of material is valuable because, as will be shown below, there is a gap in film studies regarding the, already narrow, field of research concerning the narrative function of props (and the *Die Hard* series).

1.2 Disposition

This thesis is divided into four major chapters. The second provides an overview of the research field of *Die Hard*, as well as previous studies on the uses of props in film. Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White's different principal forms of props and Antoni Smuszkiewiez' definition of

[6] J. Macgregor Wise, *Surveillance and film*, 2016, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, p. 4.

props will together represent the theoretical framework, which I introduce in the second chapter. In the third chapter, “Methodology”, delimitations and selections regarding the number of films and sequences of scenes I have chosen for this work is presented, along with a summary of a set of critical questions and themes used in the analysis in order to explore answers to the research question. As a conclusion to the chapter there is a short introduction of cinematic semiotics in order to present the concepts of denotation and connotation which functions as the main analytical tool to highlight the narrative significance of the props.

In the fourth and fifth chapter lies the analysis of *Die Hard* (1988) and *Die Harder* (1990) where the narrative functions of the PCDs serve as the main subject. The analysis of *Die Hard* is introduced with a short background on *Die Hard* as a new action film within the action genre with a new type of hero and then followed by a plot summary. Analytical focus, however, lies on how the PCDs in *Die Hard* can function as a resource of information, concealer of identity, obstacle and advantage for both the antagonist and protagonist and how this in turn affects the narrative.

The fifth chapter is introduced with a plot summary of *Die Harder*. The plot summary is followed by the analysis of how the props function as crucial narrative elements when the protagonist can’t access them, when the protagonist gets access to them, and how the devices function as creator of obstacle for the protagonist and how this affects the narrative.

The sixth and final chapter presents the answers to the research question and concludes with an evaluation of the props effect on the narrative. Here, I also discuss how this research can be applied to other studies which focus on communication-based films, where horror and thriller films use props in a similar manner, in the sense that they can be understood as central elements of the narrative.

2. Previous research and theoretical framework

In the following section, an overview of previous research on the *Die Hard* series and props in films will be given in order to outline and construct the relevant research field for this thesis. The following section aims to highlight that there is a gap in the research field of film studies concerning not only the significant role of props in film in general, but action films in particular, where the first two instalments of the *Die Hard* series serve as a case in point. Having done so, in the final part of this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented.

2.1 *Die Hard*

To begin with, to this author's knowledge, no study has explored the narrative functions of props in the form of PCDs in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder*.[7] However, within the realm of film studies more generally, the series has been explored by several scholars. The conducted studies are scattered in their themes, theories, and analytical focus. Thus, for example, Ann Ardis and Dale M. Bauer have examined the first two *Die Hard* films and shown how they erase the history that produces racial, sexual and ethnic differences, an erasure which makes the film's popularity crucial to a culture intent on forgetting history.[8] Peter F. Parshall, on the other hand, examined how the first *Die Hard* film from 1988 contains contemporary archetypal hero, John McClane, who battles both external and internal monsters. The article focuses on five different themes (Christmas and the family, the role of women, the terrorists and the corporation, evaluating the values and John McClane as a cultural hero).[9] In yet another study, Robyn J.

[7] During the preparatory work for this study, systematic search of literature (concerning props in the *Die Hard* films) was conducted in the following databases at Lund university: FIAF (International Index to Film Periodicals Databse), LUBsearch, Lovisa, Libris and the search terms that was used during the search was: '*Die Hard* props' 'Props in *Die Hard*', 'narrative props in *Die Hard*' and 'John McClane props'. The results were negative.
[8] Ann Ardis & Dale M. Bauer, "'Just the fax, ma'am'": Male Sentimentality in the *Die Hard* Films" in: *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture and Theory*, Summer 1991, Volume. 47, Nr. 2, p. 117-129.
[9] Peter F. Parshall, "Die Hard and the American Mythos" in: *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, Winter 1991, Volume. 18, Issue 4, p. 135-144.

Stilwell analyses the first film's musical score, arguing that the archetypical roles of the protagonist and the antagonist can be distinguished by their distinct musical scores. As may be expected, in such studies, PCDs are not included in the analyses.[10]

More relevant for the present study is the link between the *Die Hard* series and terrorism, made by scholars such as Tony Shaw and Helena Vanhala. Shaw traces how terrorism has been depicted on screen from early cinema through to the *Die Hard* series, across a range of different countries. The *Die Hard* series is analysed as one single coherent film, with Shaw giving the reader a detailed and thorough account of the production, content and reception of the *Die Hard* films, which he then uses as cultural-historical touchstones to explore the relationship and interactions between culture and history. Shaw underlines, at the end of the chapter, that:

> In their repeated depictions of terrorist threats, predominantly set in the United States, the *Die Hard* films, together with their critical and popular reception, offer a valuable window into changing American perceptions of political violence over the past thirty years. As a franchise, the films display the nuts-and-bolts machinery of a commercial industry that earned extraordinary profits from the spectacle of a kind of violence that was deplored in virtually every other sector of American public discourse.[11]

Importantly, Shaw discusses how each instalment of the *Die Hard* films captures the changing nature of terrorism, its growing threat and how it has progressed throughout the years parallel with the technological development and the global terror.

In contrast, Vanhala offers an understanding of how the commercial film industry's economic interests intertwined with U.S. foreign policy interests have influenced the portrayal of international terrorism in blockbuster Hollywood films, by analysing the ideological role of film in society. Discussing the first three *Die Hard* films, Vanhala emphasizes that while terrorism became a familiar foreign policy and news media topic under the era of President Reagan, terrorism as a product of film did not emerge as a true blockbuster until *Die Hard*

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[10] Robyn J. Stilwell, "'I just put a drone under him…':Collage and Subversion in the score of *Die Hard*'", *Music & Letters Journal*, Winter 1997, Volume. 78, Issue 4, p. 551-580.
[11] Tony Shaw, *Cinematic Terror: A Global History of Terrorism on Film*, 2015, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, London, p. 183-184.

arrived in 1988. This is because *Die Hard* introduced a new type of hero and a smart but yet sophisticated villain. The "re-creation of the hero's and the villain's prototypes match[ed] the political and cultural conditions of the emerging post-Cold War world [which] opened the door for a new generation of heroes and Hollywood terrorists in the 1990s.".[12]

Vanhala uses the first three *Die Hard* films as examples of a changing world order where the films introduce left-wing Euro terrorists and North and South American communist hunters who raises a threat to the private and public sphere. Meaning, they threaten the white Anglo-Saxon hero's personal life and U.S. interests. Vanhala concludes the chapter by underlining that the first three *Die Hard* films depiction of terrorism and ideological aspects is an emphasis of the collapse of communism and left-wing ideologies in the post-Cold War world.

Shaw and Vanhala thus focus on the same kind of depiction in the *Die Hard* films, terrorism. Moreover, they focus on shifts in this depiction over time, and connect them to shifts in society. Shaw, in particular, mentions technological development as an important process here.[13] This study adopts a similar strategy in that it traces shifts within the series, but with a different focus: the use, and thus the narrative meanings and functions of, PCDs. In passing, both Shaw and Vanhala mention such devices, for example when noting that McClane uses them to eavesdrop on the terrorists' internal communications in films one and two, and in discussing the anonymous caller in the third film. Yet, neither Shaw or Vanhala, nor any of the other researchers mentioned above, discuss the *Die Hard* films with a focus on props that takes the form of PCDs or the idea of communication in general.

[12] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980-2001*, 2011, McFaraland Company & Inc Publishers, London, p. 14.
[13] Tony Shaw, *Cinematic Terror*, 2015, p. 170.

2.2 Props and their function in films

Props and their function in films have been studied by several scholars. Thus, for example, Adele Glimm has examined props in her article ”The props that propel your fiction: They're not just for stage and film, but can help establish character, plot and theme in your stories”.[14] The article offers tips on how authors can use inanimate objects to help establish the character, plot and themes of their stories. The significance of props in stage and film direction and in fiction writing are emphasized with examples in her article as well which highlights how a prop can function as support, characterization, tone and meaning for the narrative. Christine Sprengler, on the other hand, in her in-depth study *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in contemporary American cinema* (2009), has scrutinized the impact of nostalgia on contemporary American cinema.[15] Sprengler gives a lucid analysis of the development of nostalgia in American society and culture by navigating a path through the key debates and aligning herself with recent attempts to recuperate its critical potential. The work by Sprengler contains four case studies where *Far From Heaven* (2002), *The Aviator* (2004), *Sin City* (2005) and *The Good German* (2006) are analysed in the ways in which aspects of visual signs such as props, in particular, contribute to the nostalgic aesthetic which makes it possible to both critical distance and emotion.

The most prominent works, which I partly make use of in the analysis, are the work by Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White *The Film Experience: An introduction* (2003) and an essay by Antoni Smuszkiewiez, “Props and their function in Science Fiction”.[16] Corrigan & White’s work is an introductory book for film studies, meaning a survey of the film’s formal elements which includes all the basic blocks of all film; from the way a scene is arranged and

[14] Adele Glimm, ”The props that Propel your fiction: They're not just for stage and film, but can help establish character, plot and theme in your stories”, *Writer Kalmbach Publishing Co:* Winter. 2005, Volume. 118 Issue 12, p. 34-36.
[15] Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in contemporary American cinema*, 2009, Berghahn Books, New York, p. 1-20.
[16] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, “Props and their function in Science Fiction”, *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14, Issue 2, p. 222-229.

shot on camera to the use of sound and several editing styles and techniques. The work is consistent in explaining the larger cultural contexts that contribute to the power of film in our lives and in one of the chapters they give a thorough presentation of the history of mise-en-scéne and then they give a presentation of the elements of mise-en-scéne where four different principal forms of props are specifically presented, explained and exemplified.

The different principal forms of props are the *Instrumental* props, which entail objects displayed and used by actors according to their common function; a walkie-talkie's common function is to enable its user to communicate with someone from a distance. *Metaphorical* props are those same objects "reinvented or employed for an unexpected, even magical, purpose - like Gene Kelly's umbrella- or invested with metaphorical meaning. The distinction is important because the type of prop can characterize the kind of world surrounding the characters and the ability of those characters to interact with that world.".[17] *Cultural* props, such as a specific kind of car or a piece of furniture, carry meanings associated with their place in a particular society. A more important and central principal form of a prop is the *Contextualized* one which, in addition to the prop's common function within the film, may acquire significance in prominent ways. For example, a *Contextualized* prop can acquire a meaning through its changing place in a narrative, its changing place in possession of a character or in its relation to other props. Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White exemplify *Contextualized* props with *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (1964) where the focus lies on the changing meaning of the central prop of the film (a Rolls-Royce) where three different romances are linked through their connection to a beautiful Rolls-Royce, making the prop central for the narrative.[18] Some films specifically play with the meaning a *Contextualized* prop comes to acquire. For example, in *Ronin* (1998), a mysterious briefcase connects a group of mercenaries in a plot about trust and betrayal, which moves the plot forward because of the briefcase's significance where its secret significance becomes

[17] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 72.
[18] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 73.

ultimately insignificant. Props that appear in the beginning of a film, such as the stolen money in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), or props that reappear several times in the narrative, like 'the one ring' in Peter Jacksons *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, are props that are meant to move a plot forward even if they have little or big appearance and importance for the narrative.[19]

Another study relevant here is the essay by Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", which discusses the function of props in the presented world of fantastic fiction and of science fiction in particular. Firstly, Smuszkiewiez defines the prop as:

> An object indispensable to perform a certain function: serving a particular purpose' and, in a narrower sense, as 'an article or object to be used in a play or on a motion-picture set and pertinent to the plot'. By analogy, the prop may be equated with one of the plot elements in any literary text- i.e. with any object (described or dominated) accompanying the narrative agent. Thus understood, props perform a significant function: they become indispensable components of the presented world, furnishing its space and indirectly, to a certain degree, assisting the reader [and spectator] in determining its temporal locus. Of course, the importance of this function diminishes or increases depending upon the type of props and/or their location in the plot. […] The type of prop, the function it performs, in the presented world, and even its location – either in the main plot or in the setting- substantially influence the character of the entire narrative.[20]

Smuszkiewiez also emphasizes in his definition that props can be 'real' i.e. mimetic reflection of an objects existing in the empirical reality or 'fantastic' i.e. lacking any counterparts in the extra literary world. Smuszkiewiez discusses that the first category of props may be found in realistic as well as in fantastic narratives while the second type appears only in fantastic texts meaning science fiction and fantasy. The typical fairy tale and Gothic fiction mainly employ, according to Smuszkiewiez, real props, even if some of them are endowed with magical qualities (a flying carpet or the 'monkey's paw'). The latter do not change the nature of the real props in the fairy tale and Gothic fiction, whereas in science fiction they do. The fantastic props introduced in the presented world of science fiction impel the reader (and spectator) to perceive that world as being fantastic in its entirety and therefore real props also become, at least to some degree, endowed with science fiction colouring. Smuszkiewiez

[19] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 73.
[20] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14, Issue 2, p. 222-223.

has divided the props into three groups in relation to the historical period in which they were contrived (historical, contemporary and futuristic/fantastic) and in relation to the narrative time (past, present and future).

It should be noted that neither Smuszkiewiez, Corrigan & White, nor any other scholar discuss the props in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder*, or in relation to action films in general, with a focus on what narrative function they might have when they take the particular form of PCDs.

It is important to note that this study primarily uses the principal forms of *Instrumental* and *Contextualized* props, together with Smuskiewiez definition of props, as theoretical tools in the analysis. I will not be using the *Metaphorical* and *Cultural* props to any greater extent since they won't aid me in answering the research question because they focus on props that has magical purposes in a film (*Metaphorical*) or a prop which takes the form of a specific type or version of an object that are associated with their place in a particular society (*Cultural*). More important for the current study is the common function of the prop (*Instrumental*) and how it can be understood in relation to its meaning for the narrative and its certain contexts (*Contextualized*).[21]

3. Methodology

3.1 Semiotics and the cinema

A prop's function can be obvious in some films and less in others, depending on factors such as story and genre. If one would decode props as signs which aren't obviously important for the narrative, it would be difficult to determine their significant narrative function. Decoding the narrative function of a prop would be most fruitful by using the semiotic concepts denotation and connotation since film communicates meaning on denotative and connotative levels.

[21] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 72-73.

The term ‘semiotics’ means the theory of signs. Linguistics is one of those theories since it is the theory of language-as-a-system-of-signs. The semiotics of cinema is film-as-a-system-of-signs. We are thus to think of film as a language and to try to develop a linguistics of this language of film. According to Christian Metz, this means that we are only interested in certain aspects of film. Meaning, we will be concerned only with the various ways in which particular films can have meaning and significance for the spectators and we will be directly concerned with the nature of the film and its moving images as well as the relation between sound and image and the effect of various kinds of editing. Aspects which we are not directly concerned with are, among other things, camera mechanisms, the process of developing and printing films or the technological structure of the film industry.[22]

Metz underlines that in the first instance we should restrict our study to the narrative feature films and ignore the other types of film such as documentaries, travel films, advertising films, instructional films, abstract underground films and so forth. Narrative feature films are what we generally think of as films when we first hear the word ‘film’ and the narrative structure of narrative feature films are usually the same. According to Metz, *denotation* is basic because the basic materials of the film (its sounds and images) present a series of events which constitute the film’s plot or story. That is what is denoted, meaning that the basic materials of the film are directly a sign of the denotation.

Connotation, on the other hand, is secondary in the sense that it is not directly presented by the basic materials of the film in the same way as denotation is. Instead, connotation is partly indicated by the denotation. What happens in the film has a certain significance, given the way in which it is presented. This significance is connotation: “The connotation is what is signified by a sign when the sign combines the aspects of the basic

[22] Gilbert Harman, ”Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen” in: Leo Baudry & Marshall Cohen, *Film theory & Criticism*, 2009, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 78.

materials of the film and the story that those aspect denote.”.[23] Signs can be denotive, that is, describe something while connotative signs basically carry a range of higher-level meanings of the sign. There are certain rules and conventions, or ‘codes’, which narrative feature films exploit to indicate their denotation and it is the task of film semiotics to specify these codes and explain how they work. Its task is also to reveal, interpret and explain the connotation. Semiotics is thus a logical system which helps describe how film does what it does. It offers useful analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broad systems of meaning.[24]

In the present analysis, I use the concepts of denotation and connotation as analytical tools in order to decode the narrative function of props in the form of PCDs as signs that exist in the visual material. By narrative function I refer, in a methodological way, to how the PCDs affect each narrative of *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* and what narrative function it has for the characters, the spectator and the narrative itself, other than its communicational abilities. By applying semiotics, I expand the possibilities of analysing props as signs within the visual material that carries a range of different (and higher) levels of narrative meanings.

3.2 Delimitations and selections

The analysis is limited to the first and second film of the *Die Hard* series for several reasons. Firstly, and mainly, because the script of the other three sequels – *Die Hard with a Vengeance* (1995), *Live Free or Die Hard* (2007) and *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013) – is:

> [o]bvious[ly] meant to be something else. The film[s] drastically move away from the *Die Hard* formula: Christmastime events, the hero’s relationship with his wife who has an impressive career, his conflicted relationship with official representatives of power, his heroic and largely individual confrontations with the villain’s, eavesdropping on the villains internal communications, and his sarcastic comments.[25]

[23] Gilbert Harman, ”Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen” in: Leo Baudry & Marshall Cohen, *Film theory & Criticism*, 2009, p. 79.
[24] Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 2001, SAGE publications, London, p. 69.
[25] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 190.

The quote by Vanhala concerns mainly the third instalment of the *Die Hard* series but it is applicable to the fourth and fifth as well since they are narratively very similar. For example, the events in the fourth and the fifth instalment doesn't take place during Christmastime and McClane's wife is no longer embedded in either of these narratives. Secondly, McClane's eavesdropping on the villain's internal communication is no longer a narrative factor. This is partly because the communication technology has been further developed in the three latest instalments, meaning the communication is no longer limited in the same way as it is in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* but more improved, complex, and accessible. Another factor is the series introduction of having a sidekick that is physically present and accompanying the hero throughout the films which removes the hero's dependency and necessity of having access to and using PCDs.[26]

The analyses rely on a sampling frame of sequences of scenes that contain props that takes the particular form of walkie-talkies and air plane phones that are considered as important for the narratives. Three sequences of scenes have been chosen from the first film and two sequences of scenes from the second. These five sequences are considered to be the most fruitful and important to analyse in order to answer the research question being asked.

By analysing these five key exemplar sequences of scenes through the concepts of denotation and connotation this thesis will identify and investigate what narrative function the props, that takes the form of walkie-talkies and airplanes phones, has. In order to answer the research question of this study I approach the *Die Hard* films with a set of critical questions and themes; Do they provide more than just information between the characters and the spectator? How does the device become a creator of suspense? When a character has no access to it? When it conceals a user's identity? When it becomes a resource of narrative information

[26] In the third instalment McClane is accompanied by a Harlem shopkeeper (played by Samuel L. Jackson), in the fourth a computer hacker (played by Justin Long) and in the fifth his own son Jack McClane (played by Jai Courtney).

for the spectator? Is it dependent on specific contexts? Does it give advantages to the protagonist or the antagonist? Does it provide power and control to its user? How can the PCD be seen as a catalyst of initiating narrative functions when the protagonist doesn't have access to it?

By asking these critical questions in the analysis they might provide answers that can support or give a good basis to answer the main research question of this thesis.

The following chapters below contains the analysis of *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* where the former will be introduced with background information because it highlights the significance of *Die Hard* as the contemporary, archetypical action film. Before each analysis, I provide a brief plot summary of each film.

4. Die Hard (1988)

4.1 Background and plot summary

Die Hard is based on a 1979 novel, *Nothing Lasts Forever*, by the American writer Roderick Thorp. When John McTiernan's adaption of the novel, arrived in 1988 it rejuvenated the action-adventure genre, which helped the film to gain financial success at the box office. The film introduced Bruce Willis as John McClane, a cocky New York City police lieutenant, who had modest muscles, compared to the hypermuscles of the big 1980s heroes such as Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger.[27] McClane wasn't just another professional warrior, he was a regular guy whose vulnerability appealed to the audience. He also had a sarcastic sense of humour and was married to a wife with an impressive career on her own, and a large role in the first two films of the series. McClane is a hero who makes the audience laugh and grip their seats when he finds himself in the "wrong place at the wrong time" and must fight terrorists to

[27] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 189.

save the day by relying on his intellect, abilities in handling weapons and his modest muscles.[28] Unlike previous heroes McClane's physique and weapons are not overpowering forces in the first film or in its sequels. Throughout the films McClane is the underdog who bleeds and gets hurt in his fights and he fail in love and in being a good father only to regain an understanding of his love and family relationships at the end of every film.[29]

Die Hard starts with McClane arriving in Los Angeles for Christmas to meet his wife, Holly Gennaro (played by Bonnie Bedelia), and their small children. The marriage is strained because Holly has made a career move to Los Angeles for a job at Nakatomi, a Japanese company. Soon after McClane's arrival, the German terrorist group lead by Hans Gruber (played by Alan Rickman) and his associates takes over the Nakatomi Plaza building to rob the building's vault containing 640 million dollars' worth of bearer bonds. He seizes thirty people as hostages, including Holly. McClane manages to slip out from the floor unnoticed during the seizing and starts picking off Hans Gruber associates one by one. Gruber is the brains of the operation who shuts down every communication technology in the building except for the walkie-talkies Hans and his group use to easily communicate with one another from different floors while the muscle force is led by the tall Karl who is in charge of the members of the group. Together they manage to wound McClane throughout the film. Although, McClane isn't completely alone in the film. After McClane kills one of Hans' associates in the beginning of the film, who happens to be Karl's little brother, he gets hold of a walkie-talkie through which he gets help of a portly African-American policeman on the ground, Al Powell. When Hans and his group finally break into the vault, Hans takes Holly as hostage since he has found out that she's McClane's wife. McClane, badly wounded after being tricked into an ambush by Hans, manages to kill Karl and other terrorists and gets the hostages to safety. Finally, he goes after Hans to save Holly.

[28] Tony Shaw, *Cinematic Terror*, 2015, p. 164–166.
[29] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 190.

McClane tracks down and kills him and embraces Holly. As McClane and Holly leave the building, McClane notices a man among the police officers. The man who has been his sidekick all along through the walkie-talkie, Al Powell, also saves McClane and Holly at the very end when Karl, who seems to have been resuscitated from the dead, finds his way out of the building to kill McClane in order to avenge his brother's death. Powell kills Karl with his six-shooter and saves the day.

4.2 Walkie-talkie as a narrative obstacle for the protagonist

To begin with, like all other films, *Die Hard* is full of props. One prop that John McClane, and the terrorists, are carrying and use throughout the film takes the form of a walkie-talkie. The walkie-talkie is an easily-handled amateur 144 megahertz FM (Frequency Modulation) transceiver called, *Kenwood TH21BT*, produced by a Japanese radio manufacturer during the 1980's (see Figure 1).[30][31]

Figure 1. The Kenwood TH-21BT 144 MHz FM transceiver.

When McClane, who is constantly in need of contacting the police after the terrorists have seized the Nakatomi Plaza, gets ahold of one of the walkie-talkies he runs up to the roof and starts contacting the police by using it to send mayday messages. When McClane reaches 911, the operator is suspicious about the call. Firstly, McClane claims via the walkie-talkie that

[30] *Kenwood Service Manual TH-21BT 144 MHz FM transceiver*, 1986, Kenwood Corporation, Japan. www.qrzcq.com/pub/RADIO_MANUALS/KENWOOD/KENWOOD--TH-21-User-Manual.pdf (Collected 2018-04-24)

[31] The Kenwood TH-21BT can here be seen as a *Cultural* prop since it is a specific kind of device that carry meanings that are associated with its place in the 1980's society.

terrorist with automatic weapons has seized the Nakatomi Plaza, the building which recently had a false fire alarm triggered manually by McClane to attract the authorities' attention. Secondly, since McClane is using a walkie-talkie and not a landline phone the operator responds: "Attention whoever you are, this channel is reserved for emergency calls only. If this is an emergency call, dial 911 on your telephone otherwise I'm going to have to report this as an FCC (Federal Communications Commission)[32] violation" (see Figure 2 and 3).[33]

Figure 2. John McClane (Bruce Willis) contacts the police from the roof via the walkie-talkie.

Figure 3. 911 operator receives McClane's call.

Since the operator can't trace a walkie-talkie, as they could've done with a telephone landline and get confirmation or possibly more credibility about the terrorist threat, they only send one police officer, Al Powell, to investigate the alleged terrorist threat. McClane is unaware that Hans and his associates are on the same frequency and have been listening to the conversation and they realize that the best way to transmit with a walkie-talkie is on the roof. This makes Karl and Hans' associates chase down McClane on the roof, which leads to a gunfight.

[32] "Technical Rule Violations" www.fcc.gov/reports-research/guides/technical-rule-violations (Collected 2018-03-14).
[33] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately 35 minutes.

Since the walkie-talkie is an authentic device we can begin to determine that the walkie-talkie prop is, as Smuszkiewiez means, a mimetic reflection of an object that exists in the empirical reality since we all know that walkie-talkies is an object that exists outside of the cinematic world in different models and sizes. Although, since each age invents different technological devices their fictional facsimiles may be defined in relation to the historical period in which they were contrived and reflects the historical time period of the film.[34]

The walkie-talkie prop occurs early in the narrative of *Die Hard* since the terrorists are using them in order to communicate with each other in the easiest possible way after they've seized the building and shut down the building's communication systems. Importantly, one of the walkie-talkies ends up in McClane's possession during the first stages of the narrative and reoccurs several times during these scenes where McClane is contacting the police. Therefore, the walkie-talkie becomes vital for McClane since it is his only link to the outside world. But what narrative function does the walkie-talkie prop have specifically in these scenes? Does it create suspense? Is it an advantage for McClane of gaining the walkie-talkie?

Firstly, the walkie-talkie can be seen as an *Instrumental* prop since it is used according to its common function by McClane and the terrorists: communication.[35] But because of the scenes context the prop can be seen as a *Contextualized* prop as well since the walkie-talkies are a central object for the context of these scenes. Since the walkie-talkies were never meant to end up in the hands of McClane, the prop can be seen to have acquired a meaning because it has changed place in the narrative, meaning the walkie-talkie has ended up in the possession of a character other than the terrorists. When the walkie-talkie ends up in McClane's possession and is used by him it gains additional meaning to the narrative.[36] Why? For several reasons, which at first may seem to contradict each other but within the narrative actually works to create

[34] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987 Volume. 14, Issue 2, p. 222-223.
[35] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 72.
[36] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 73.

suspense. Firstly, it is not until McClane gets ahold of a walkie-talkie, that the power dynamics between the characters begin to transform. McClane, armed with a walkie-talkie, has become a more powerful, agentic actor within the narrative, now capable of exercising a threat to the terrorists' plan. Secondly, however, the walkie-talkie also makes things (even more) complicated for McClane in the above-mentioned scenes. In order to get a good signal with a walkie-talkie you, generally, need to be at a high altitude. The mayday messages reveal McClane's position, since the terrorists are eavesdropping and are able to locate his position. In addition, this gives the terrorists the element of a surprise to attack McClane. Thus far, the prop can thus have the function of bringing characters together by altering the power dynamics between the characters.

The walkie-talkie and the narrative function it performs in the presented world in *Die Hard*, can be seen to substantially influence these scenes.[37] When we decode the visual material that presents the series of events that constitutes these scenes, meaning, by its images and sounds[38] it simply denotes a person who are in actual emergency trying to convince the authorities about the terrorist threat over a radio but being mistrusted because of the usage of a radio. The connotation of the prop, that are in and a part of the visual material, is that the walkie-talkie seems to function as, shown above, something more than just a communication device on a narrative level.

4.3 Walkie-talkies as resources of narrative information

In the next sequences of scenes, we will look closer at three different conversations between McClane and Powell over the walkie-talkie in order to see what the conversations can provide

[37] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14 Issue 2, p. 222.
[38] Gilbert Harman, "Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen" in: Leo, Baudry & Marshall, Cohen, *Film theory & Criticism*, 2009, p. 79.

to both the spectator and the characters themselves. The conversations take place at three different occasions in the narrative and we will go through them chronological:

> **Conversation 1**
> **McClane:** How many kids you got, Al?
> **Powell:** As a matter of fact, my wife is working on our first. What about you, cowboy? You got any kids back on your ranch?
> **McClane:** Yeah. Two. Sure hope I can see them swinging on a jungle gym with Al junior someday.
> **Powell:** Well, now that's a date but you bring the ice cream.[39]
>
> **Conversation 2**
> **McClane:** Hey, pal, you got flat feet?
> **Powell:** What the hell you talking about, man?
> **McClane:** Something had to get you off the street.
> **Powell:** What's the matter? You don't think a desk job is noble effort for a cop?
> **McClane:** No.
> **Powell:** I had an accident.
> **McClane:** The way you drive, I can see why. What'd you do? Run over your captain's foot with the car?
> **Powell:** I shot a kid. He was 13 years old. It was dark. I couldn't see him. He had a ray gun, looked real enough. When you're a rookie, they teach you everything about being a cop except how to live with a mistake. Anyway, I just couldn't bring myself to draw my gun on anybody again.
> **McClane:** Sorry, man.[40]
>
> **Conversation 3**
> **McClane:** Yo, Powell, you got a minute?
> **Powell:** I'm here, John.
> **McClane:** Listen, I'm starting to get a bad feeling up here. I want you to do something for me. I want you to find my wife. Don't ask me how. By then you'll know how. I want you to tell her something. I want you to tell her that…Tell her it took me a while to figure out what a jerk I've been but, um…That when things started to pan out for her I should've been more supportive, and I just should have been behind her more. Tell her that she's the best thing that ever happened to a bum like me. She's heard me say 'I love you' a thousand times. She never heard me say 'I'm sorry'. I want you to tell her that, Al. Tell her that John said that he was sorry.[41]

In contrast to the previous scenes the walkie-talkie has a considerably different narrative function here. To begin with, the visual material denotes conversations taking place between two persons through the walkie-talkies. Since the characters choose to converse about their private lives, the spectator is given information about McClane's background, meaning his family, his regrets regarding his relationship problems with Holly because of her successful career, Powell's family situation and his regret from killing an innocent kid and thus his fear of

[39] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 1 hour 17 minutes.
[40] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 1 hour 34 minutes.
[41] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 1 hour 42 minutes.

drawing his gun again in duty. This information is not just provided to the spectator but to the characters themselves as well which makes the characters "more human than the typical 1980s [characters]"[42] and therefore seen more as regular persons conversing about regular problems which the spectator might identify with which makes the spectator-screen relationship dynamically.

The conversations that run through the walkie-talkie makes the prop have a significant but yet implicit narrative function that might not be illuminated at first sight. In these conversations the walkie-talkie simply functions as the *Instrumental* prop, since it is the common function of the device that makes this example interesting.[43] Although, the walkie-talkie connotes in these scenes that it, as a prop, functions as something more for the spectator than just a communication device that enables informational flow between the characters. It rather functions as a resource of narrative information for the spectator who gets information about the characters which "guides the viewer through the film, at times providing exposition through sarcastic comments in order to give the viewer necessary information".[44] By necessary information, this means for example Powell's fear of drawing his gun again (where the ending of the film suggests that he overcomes this fear when he is forced to draw his gun and shoot Karl in order to save McClane's life). The walkie-talkie-prop is a pervading object that accompany the narrative agents, John McClane and Al Powell, throughout this sequence of scenes which performs a significant function in these conversations: assisting both the spectator and the characters with information.[45] If there weren't any walkie-talkies in the film, there wouldn't be any possibility of creating a relationship between McClane and Powell (as well as between McClane and Hans which is highlighted in 4.4). Also, the spectator wouldn't get to

[42] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 190.
[43] Timothy Corrigan & Patricia, White, *The Film Experience: An introduction*, 2003, p. 72.
[44] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 200.
[45] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14 Issue 2, p. 222.

have the same information about the characters background since there wouldn't be any communication whatsoever between McClane and Powell or the police. The spectator-screen relationship wouldn't be dynamically but rather static if that were the case. Thus, it is because of the walkie-talkie that McClane's main sidekick, or ally – Al Powell – is introduced and their bond is formed. It is also through this device that they exclusively communicate throughout the film, except for the very last scene. The prop can thus have the function of bringing characters together to, in the first case, *engage them in conflict* (e.g. McClane and the terrorists, as seen in the previous section) but also, secondly, to *form alliances* (e.g. McClane and Powell), which all work toward the generation of suspense. The prop can thus be understood as a kind of node.

4.4 Walkie-talkies narrative importance of concealing identities

The limited communication abilities of the walkie-talkie make McClane take a metaphysical form for both the police and the terrorists; he is merely a voice coming from the walkie-talkie, nothing else, a voice which "surprises and upsets the terrorists well-rehearsed plans.".[46] This becomes clear when McClane contacts Hans for the first time in the narrative:

> **Hans**: I thought I said I wanted radio silence until further notice.
> **McClane**: Oh, I am very sorry Hans. I didn't get that message. Maybe you should put it on a billboard, figured since I waxed out Tony and Marco and his friend here, I figured you and Karl and Franco might be a little lonely, so I wanted to give you a call.
> **Fritz (off walkie-talkie):** How does he know so much about us?
> **Hans:** That's very kind of you. I assume you are our mysterious party crasher. You are most troublesome as a security guard?[47]

In this conversation the walkie-talkie functions as a connecting element between the protagonist and the antagonist, with the intention of develop and heighten the tension between them. Additionally, the conversation indicates a factor which is dependent upon the walkie-talkie, namely: identity, or rather the absence of it: McClane is Gruber's 'mysterious party crasher'. This becomes clearer in the following example of sequences where the FBI arrives to Nakatomi

[46] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 194.
[47] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 56 minutes.

Plaza, after the terrorist threat has been confirmed. McClane is, as mentioned above, just a voice sounding from the walkie-talkie and he is using a fake name in order to avoid revealing his identity and marriage with Holly, since he now knows that Hans is listening. This makes the police chief and the FBI consider the possibility that McClane could be one of the terrorists playing with Powell to confuse them, which makes them suspicious of who McClane really is. To make the point clearer, one can contrast the world of Die Hard (1988) with today's world. Had he been using one of today's modern communication devices – with visual abilities – or if the Nakatomi had had high-tech surveillance cameras, it would most likely have been easier for McClane to be identified and thus gain the authorities trust. For example, in Antoine Fuqua's *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013), a film with a very similar narrative to *Die Hard*, the protagonist Mike Banning (played by Gerard Butler) is a disregarded Secret Service agent who is trapped inside the White House after an attack on the president. Banning is recognized and identified by the authorities' through his voice via an communication earpiece hooked up to a satellite phone (see Figure 4)[48], but he is mainly identified through a high technological surveillance camera which captures his face inside the white house and reveals who he is to the authorities (see Figure 5).[49] After the face recognition, Banning is trusted by the authorities in the same way as McClane becomes trusted by the authorities when his identity has been confirmed by the police after its been leaked by one of the hostages.[50] In comparison, Mike Banning's identity becomes confirmed much earlier and faster[51] in the narrative.[52]

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[48] Antoine Fuqua, *Olympus Has Fallen*, 2013, approximately at 46 minutes.
[49] Antoine Fuqua, *Olympus Has Fallen*, 2013, approximately at 55 minutes.
[50] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 1 hour and 18 minutes.
[51] To be precise, Banning's identity becomes confirmed 25 minutes earlier than McClane in *Die Hard*. Even if the films have a similar plot but with a different storyline, and the fact that their stories take place in and was produced in different period of times, the comparison is still equitable.
[52] In comparing *Die Hard* and *Olympus Has Fallen*, one could apply the principal form of *Metaphorical* props since the analogue walkie-talkie in *Die Hard* and the high technological communication device in *Olympus Has Fallen* characterizes, together with the films other props, two different worlds surrounding the characters and the ability of those characters to interact with that world. The PCDs in these two films can also be seen to carry meanings associated with their place in a particular society, in this case the analogue walkie-talkie is associated with the 1980s society and the earpiece hooked up to a satellite phone with the 2013's society. This is a discussion for another thesis, but the historical context of both films can be highlighted in this way by using the principal forms of *Metaphorical* and *Cultural* props.

Figure 4. Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) communicating with the situation room via his earpiece.

Figure 5. Mike Banning's identity becomes confirmed through the lens of the surveillance camera.

But the important aspect of the walkie-talkie which we have briefly touched upon here is the walkie-talkie-identity relationship. Since the walkie-talkie has limited communication functions it helps McClane to remain anonymous to Hans who is having trouble of connecting the dots of who he is. This function is not only an advantage for McClane but for Hans as well. This becomes clear, especially in the later scenes of the narrative where Hans runs into an armed John McClane after checking explosives charges on the roof. Hans, who is a fast thinker and an articulate speaker, pretends to be one of the hostages by instantly "stealing" a name from a wall directory, even shortening the name William to Bill and easily losing his foreign accent. McClane realizes, after a while, that it is in fact Hans who stands in front of him which becomes even clearer for McClane when Hans uses the walkie-talkie and calls for reinforcements in the language of German (see Figure 6).[53]

[53] John McTiernan, *Die Hard*, 1988, approximately at 1 hour and 29 minutes.

Figure 6. Hans (Alan Rickman) uses the walkie-talkie to contact reinforcements.

But how does the walkie-talkie create suspense in these scenes when it is barely used? Through its limited communicational abilities? By the specific context of the sequence?

In this sequences of scenes Hans can remain anonymous about his identity since McClane have only heard Hans real voice, with foreign accent, when they've been conversing over the walkie-talkie. Moreover, McClane have not seen what Hans looks like meanwhile Hans can easily figure out who the person he encounters is. This provides Hans with the power to control the situation by changing his accent and act like a terrified hostage when he realizes that he is facing the 'mysterious party crasher'.

The walkie-talkie, together with Hans brilliance of adapting to the situation, makes this to be one of the most interesting sequences of scenes of the narrative. As we have briefly touched upon, the walkie-talkie can only transmit audio, meaning a person's voice. Therefore, the walkie-talkie simply helps and enables Hans in this context of the scene to conceal his own identity and is therefore able to avoid being captured by McClane. The walkie-talkie can here be seen as an *Instrumental* prop but mainly as a *Contextualized* prop since the context of this sequences of scenes is completely reliant on the walkie-talkies and their limited communicational abilities (its common functions) which has made it acquire a significant narrative function for this particular scene. Why? Firstly, the walkie-talkies have made, in a long-term perspective, this scene possible because it is in fact the walkie-talkies that has kept McClane from being able to identify Hans. Secondly, the visual material of the scene denotes an encounter between the protagonist and the antagonist where the former is unwittingly face

to face with the leader of the terrorist group. The connotation of the walkie-talkie in this visual material of the scene is that it has had a significant narrative function throughout the entire film which has been kept underneath the surface of the narrative in order to be able to create this surprising scene of encounter which can be seen as a long-term narrative result of the walkie-talkies ability of concealing one's identity. Therefore, the walkie-talkie can be seen, from a long-term perspective, to function as a narrative instrument that creates this certain narrative context for this particular scene because of its ability of concealing one's identity. As Smuszkiewiez means, the walkie-talkie has, as a prop, evidently influenced both the characters and the narrative in a substantial way and the importance of the walkie-talkies has increased during the progression of the narrative.[54] In other words, the PCD's concealment of identity generates suspense as the narrative can be said to utilize the fact that the spectator knows who the characters are, but the characters themselves do not. The walkie-talkie can therefore be seen as a crucial narrative instrument that makes it possible for the narrative to have this thrilling encounter scene.

After analysing the specific sequences of scenes, one cannot elude the narrative function of the walkie-talkie. It evidently serves multiple functions which affect these narrative contexts. Especially when one highlights the walkie-talkie in connection with critical questions that underline its creation and initiation of suspense that is based in firstly, the obstacles created for McClane which facilitates the terrorists. Secondly, its establishment of relationships between McClane and Hans (with the intention to develop tension between them before their encounter) as well as between Powell and McClane which further provides the spectator with narrative information and finally, its limited communicational abilities that helps Hans to remain

[54] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14, Issue 2, p. 223.

anonymous enables the narrative to have the possibility of creating an encounter between McClane and Hans that, to some extent, can be seen as a critical point of the narrative.

Thus, the prop brings characters together to, in the first case engage them in conflict but also, secondly, to form alliances which all work toward the generation of suspense and altering the power dynamics between the characters.

5. Die Hard 2: Die Harder (1990)

5.1 Plot summary

Two years after the success of *Die Hard* the first sequel arrived, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, based on a novel *58 minutes* by Walter Wager.[55] An American Colonel named Stuart (played by William Sadler) with U.S. special forces units express their loyalty to a Central American military leader, Esperanza (played by Franco Nero), who is being extradited to Dulles airport in Washington in the U.S. to face drug charges. Their attempt to release Esperanza during Christmastime is complicated by John McClane, who is picking up Holly from the same airport. The terrorists take over the airport tower and gain control of all air traffic by accessing the communications systems through a technological setup based in a nearby church. In doing so, Colonel Stuart can impersonate air traffic controllers to crash the planes as a penalty if the air tower doesn't comply with their terms (the airport tower crew will let Esperanza land on the airport untouched without authorities intervening and there will be a fully fuelled Boeing 747 that will help the terrorists to escape the area). Holly is on one of the planes that is low on fuel, circling overhead with several other planes that the terrorists control. McClane tries to alert the airport police and the air tower by warning the airport's police chief, Carmine Lorenzo (played by Dennis Franz), and the air towers supervisor, Trudeau (played by Fred Dalton Thompson).

[55] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 188.

After being kicked out of the air tower because of jurisdictions rules, McClane instead tries to prevent the terrorists on his own. Getting help from the airports janitor, Marvin, McClane intercepts the plane that transports Esperanza before Colonel Stuart and his men arrive to the scene. Colonel Stuart and Esperanza manages to free Esperanza from McClane and returns to the church, which McClane and the authorities later attack after finding Colonel Stuart's headquarters. Colonel Stuart and Esperanza flee to the Boeing 747 at the airport and McClane tries to follow them but gets hindered because Thornburg, a reporter from the first film who happens to be on the same flight as Holly due to overbooking, has reported about the terrorist threat from the plane to the news. This creates chaos at the airport which forces McClane to hitch a ride on a news helicopter, dropping him on one of the Boeing 747's wings. McClane jams the wings inboard aileron preventing the plane from taking off. After defeating one of Colonel Stuart's mercenaries on the wing, he fights Colonel Stuart, who kicks McClane off the wing. However, Colonel Stuart fails to notice that McClane has opened the fuel hatch. McClane then uses his cigarette lighter and ignites the trail of the fuel which causes the 747 to explode. This in turn creates a trail of fire the circling planes can use as directions to safely land on the airport.

5.2 The narrative importance of accessing the walkie-talkies

As Hans and his associates did in *Die Hard*, Colonel Stuart and his men in *Die Harder* are using a *Kenwood* walkie-talkie. The walkie-talkie is an upgraded and further advanced version called *Kenwood TH-45AT* (see Figure 7) which has an encoder function that enables the users to communicate on a scrambled frequency which prevents outsiders from listen in.[56]

[56] "Discontinued Amateur Handheld Transceivers", www.universal-radio.com/catalog/ht/th25at.html (Collected 2018-04-10)

Figure 7. The Kenwood TH-45AT transceiver.

This is a function which the *Kenwood TH-21BT* in *Die Hard* has as well, but it isn't emphasized in the narrative or mentioned by the characters which may be due to the narrative of *Die Hard* isn't dependent on it as *Die Harder* is which I will show in the following examples below. Returning to *Die Harder*, how is the walkie-talkie's encoder function emphasized in the film and how can the walkie-talkie be seen as a catalyst of initiating narrative functions when the protagonist doesn't have access to it?

The encoder function of the walkie-talkie helps the terrorists maintain an internal communication which facilitates their plan. As in the original *Die Hard*, a walkie-talkie ends up in the possession of McClane early in the film, but with a significant difference: McClane cannot use it to eavesdrop on the terrorists. He needs to punch in a three-digit descrambler code in order to access the scrambled frequency Colonel Stuart is using.[57] Finding this code constitutes a central, recurring element throughout the first half of the film. Unlike in *Die Hard*, this lack of access puts both McClane and the airport police in a static progression of finding and preventing the terrorists. It is primarily this use of the prop, this study argues, which enables the narrative of creating the feeling of a hijack-film that produces the "'will-they-get-away-with-it?' excitement.[58] The film also relies, more than the first one, on an old Hollywood method of creating suspense by using a limited time structure. Holly's plane has fuel for only

[57] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 49 minutes.
[58] Tony Shaw, *Cinematic* Terror, 2015, p. 167.

a limited amount of time, forcing McClane into a race against the clock in his effort to save her and the other passengers by stopping the terrorists.[59] The fastest, most simple way to do that is by accessing the walkie-talkie. However, in contrast to *Die Hard*, this isn't an option for McClane. The walkie-talkie thus becomes an "'object indispensable to perform a certain function: serving a particular purpose' and in the narrower sense, as 'an [...] object [that can] be used […] [to be] pertinent to the plot.'" – but primarily through the fact that McClane *cannot* use it.[60] The denotation of the walkie-talkie is that it is an object that functions as a communication device, a crucial tool for the terrorists and their plan but a main obstacle for McClane, that this time *prevents* him from stopping the terrorists. The connotation of the walkie-talkie is that it functions as a main narrative instrument which, within the time-limited narrative structure, initiates suspense and excitement. The walkie-talkie's is as a springboard with the particular purpose of initiating narrative suspense and avoid having the spectator lose its interest of the film. But what happens when McClane finally gets access to the frequency after the first half of the narrative? What changes then?

After approximately 67 minutes in the narrative McClane gets ahold of a second walkie-talkie through the airport janitor Marvin. McClane is puzzled since he now has access to the scrambled frequency:

> **Marvin:** I found it [the walkie-talkie] on the floor, by the coat, next to the luggage belt.
> What the hell you so excited for?
> **McClane:** The code is punched in on this one.[61]

In this particular scene and conversation, the walkie-talkie and its decoder function are emphasized. The scene suggests the importance of accessing Colonel Stuarts frequency. While McClane and Marvin have their conversation Esperanza, conveniently, contacts Colonel Stuart by using a hidden *Kenwood TH-45AT* walkie-talkie in the plane cockpit (see Figure 8 and 9).[62]

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[59] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 194.
[60] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14 Issue 2, p. 222.
[61] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 7 minutes.
[62] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 8 minutes.

Figure 8. Esperanza contacts Colonel Stuart.

Figure 9. Colonel Stuart provides Esperanza with landing instructions.

Figure 10. McClane eavesdrops on the conversation.

McClane who now eavesdrops on their conversation gets information about which runway Esperanza is approaching (see Figure 10) since Esperanza is guided by Colonel Stuart who tries to figure out the nearest and most safe runway to use in order to avoid authorities' attention. McClane goes to the runway to capture Esperanza while Marvin contacts the airport police for reinforcements. After Esperanza has landed, McClane intercepts Colonel Stuart and his men which leads to an encounter between McClane and the terrorists.[63] McClane's tendency to cause

[63] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 13 minutes.

problems for the terrorists makes Esperanza spit on Colonel Stuart and his men: "Two months of planning and you can't anticipate one policeman?".[64]

Since the first walkie-talkie McClane gets ahold of doesn't have the descrambler code punched in, it becomes an obstacle for McClane which puts him and the airport police in a static progression of finding the terrorist. It keeps the narrative interesting but doesn't move it forward since the terrorist is only waiting for Esperanza's plane to land and in doing so they control the airport. In contrast, when McClane finds the second walkie-talkie with the descrambler code punched in, it rather becomes a resource of information for him. "As in the first film, he […] can use [the walkie-talkie] to listen in on and communicate with the terrorists, just as he did in the first film".[65] It becomes a key function for the culmination of the narrative.

More clearly, the walkie-talkie can be seen as both an *Instrumental* prop and a *Contextualized* prop in this case because the scene's context is depending on it and it is a central element for this sequence of scenes; because it is the common function (listening to what one says from a distance via the radio speaker) of the walkie-talkie that initiates an encounter which leads McClane directly to the terrorists which creates suspense, but more importantly it acquires a greater meaning for the narrative. After McClane gets ahold of the second walkie-talkie, and overhears vital information, the narrative moves forward at higher pace. This is because of two factors. One is Esperanza's plane, which is descending and about to land and the second is the emergence of McClane's window of opportunity (by eavesdropping) to obstruct it. Both of these factors together create narrative motion, heightening the suspense of this sequence. After the landing and the encounter, the terrorists manage to escape with Esperanza which puts even more pressure on McClane and the airport police since the next move of the terrorists' plan is to leave Washington via the 747 Boeing with Esperanza. The hostages in other planes, still circling over Washington and close to running out of fuel, make the narrative become even

[64] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 13 minutes.
[65] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 203

more uncertain at this point. Will McClane be able to stop the terrorists even if they got away from the airport runway? If the terrorists manage to complete their escape, will they keep their promise of letting the airport tower get control again? In this sequence the walkie-talkies function as critical narrative instruments, catalysts which pushes narrative to move forward in a certain direction and in a much greater pace.

In sum, then, the first walkie-talkie obviously has two narrative functions: being an obstacle for McClane which prevents him from catching the terrorists, while it facilitates the terrorists' plans and keeps the suspense alive. The second walkie-talkie, which McClane uses to eavesdrop, can be seen to have several narrative functions. Firstly, it functions as a resource of information for McClane, secondly, it can be seen as an initiator and creator of suspense because it gives McClane the possibility to intercept the terrorists. Thirdly, after McClane has gained access to the scrambled frequency it is at this point where the narrative starts to take a turn and move the plot forward in a greater pace than before, partially due to Esperanza's arrival. The walkie-talkie can therefore be seen to function as a catalyst of initiating suspense and creating the specific context of the scenes where the encounter between McClane and the terrorists takes place. If McClane wouldn't get access to the scrambled frequency, the particular encounter between McClane and the terrorists wouldn't be possible; McClane would not have any knowledge of which runway Esperanza's plane are approaching or when it is about to descend. The walkie-talkie can therefore be seen to have produced a narrative context completely dependent on it (similar to how McClane's encounter with Hans in *Die Hard* became possible).

5.3 The narrative impact of Thornburg's live news report

A productive continuation of the thesis would be to analyse a prop that doesn't take the form of a walkie-talkie and isn't used by either the protagonist or the antagonist in order to see if it

still has narrative importance despite these factors. Therefore, I use a sequence of scenes that takes place in the later part of the narrative where another communication device – the airplane phone – is in focus.

The overeager news reporter Richard Thornburg (played by William Atherton), who lacks certain ethical standards, is stuck on the same plane as Holly due to overbooking. Both are concerned about the delays and the relation between Holly and Thornburg is tense since Thornburg has a restraining order against Holly after she punched him in the face on live television in the first film. As Thornburg is getting more worried and curious about the situation, he visits one of his news team members on the plane who has a receiver that can pick up the radio frequency that is discussing the events on Dulles Airport. The receiver reveals for Thornburg that the airport delays are not due to a snowstorm as the air tower claims but Colonel Stuart's terrorist attack which has already led to the crash of one plane. Thornburg decides to lock himself up in one of the restrooms to do a live report through the use of an airplane phone (see Figure 11).[66]

Figure 11. Thornburg reports live through the airplane phone.

Through his live report Thornburg reveals to the viewers at the airport about the terrorist attack. This creates panic at Dulles Airport. McClane, who is on the ground chasing the terrorists, ends up being involved in a car accident on the airports parking lot because of the panic which

[66] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 30 minutes.

prevents him from intercepting and stopping the terrorists from leaving the airport hangar in the 747. The sequence ends with Holly interrupting Thornburg's report by using a Taser gun on him to prevent further panic on the ground (and on the airplanes).

In this sequence of scenes there are two props that needs to be underlined: the receiver and the airplane phone. Both can be determined as props that is a mimetic reflection of objects that exist in our world.[67] The receiver can be determined as an *Instrumental* prop since it is displayed and used according to its common function, a device that channels information to its user. In this case, it functions as a resource of information for Thornburg. The airplane phone, on the other hand, can be seen as both an *Instrumental* and *Contextualized* prop. Thornburg is using the airplane phone according to its common function: communication, but through its common function it acquires meaning for this specific context of the narrative. The airplane phone is also the main instrument that enables Thornburg to reveal the story to his editors. Thornburg, who is a pushy reporter in trying to get the latest scoop and doesn't think about the impact of the story, unwittingly initiates panic at the airport (see Figure 12).[68]

Figure 12. The panic at the Dulles Airport.

If one would decode these scenes by its visual material it denotes a reporter covering the terrorist acts on the ground by using the airplane phone, while the airplane phone and the consequences of Thornburg's live report connotes narrative functions. Vanhala writes, "Terrorist acts are news but news coverage of them can add to the chaos, as happens in *Die*

[67] Antoni Smuszkiewiez, "Props and their function in Science Fiction", *Science-Fiction Studies*, Summer 1987, Volume. 14 Issue 2, p. 222.
[68] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 35 minutes.

Hard 2: Die Harder when Thornburg's report scares everyone at the airport".[69] Similar to Vanhala, Shaw writes "Thornburg phones into his editors [by using the air plane phone] that a sensational and exaggerated take on what is happening at Dulles Airport, leading to panic in the airport and preventing [McClane and] the police from reaching the plane on which the terrorist is about to escape.".[70] The quotes by Vanhala and Shaw suggest the main point I emphasize here; the connotation of the airplane phone. On a narrative level, the airplane phone is to be perceived by the visual material as an instrument that enables the narrative to increase the suspense which initiates and enhances the feeling of excitement and expectation of "how-will-this-go?" in the mind of the spectator. The consequences of Thornburg's live report become an advantage for the terrorists since the created panic facilitates their escape but becomes an obstacle for McClane and the police since the panic complicates things for them to continue their chase (see Figure 13).[71]

Figure 13. The panic complicates things for McClane and the police.

The airplane phone is to be understood as a narrative instrument that helps to heighten the narrative suspense even further with possibly the aim of exceeding the first film. The airplane phone has another, somewhat intriguing, narrative function as well. Other than creating narrative suspense and panic it functions to interlace humour amid everything that happens in this sequence.

[69] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 203
[70] Tony Shaw, *Cinematic Terror*, 2015, p. 173.
[71] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 37 minutes.

Figure 14. Holly overhears Thornburg's live report through one of the headsets on the airplane.

Holly, who overhears Thornburg's live report (see Figure 14), manages to open the restroom door and interrupts his live report by using the Taser on him which makes him drop the phone and collapse on the toilet seat, ending the live report in a comical way (see Figure 15).[72]

Figure 15. Thornburg's live report has been interrupted by Holly.

Thornburg's live report which is channelling through the airplane phone can only be stopped by getting Thornburg off the phone which functions here as a portal of informational flow to the news network station. If there weren't any airplane phones, the narrative wouldn't be able to have the possibility of utilizing the airplane phone in a comical way in these scenes and create the situation with Thornburg, who is a character who functions "to provide laughs under strained conditions".[73] Therefore, the airplane phone can be seen as a narrative tool that is not *only* meant to initiate suspense that moves the plot forward and have importance for the primary drama but to utilize specific context with humoristic inputs, leading to comic relief.

[72] Renny Harlin, *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, 1990, approximately at 1 hour and 38 minutes.
[73] Helena Vanhala, *The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980–2001*, 2011, p. 203.

By analysing these sequences of scene's, the walkie-talkie and the airplane phone have similarities in their narrative functions, despite the fact that the latter one isn't used by the protagonist. The walkie-talkie functions as the main narrative instrument which, within the time-limited narrative structure, initiates suspense and excitement. It functions as a springboard with the particular purpose of initiating narrative suspense in order to avoid having the spectator lose its interest of the film. When the protagonist get access to the walkie-talkie and overhears vital information it makes the narrative move forward at a higher pace and it becomes a key function for the culmination of the narrative. The airplane phone, on the other hand, can be seen as a narrative tool that is not only meant to initiate suspense but to utilize specific context with humoristic inputs which leads to comic relief.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Results

The aim of this thesis was to determine what narrative functions a specific kind of prop, PCDs in the form of walkie-talkies and airplane phones, have in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder*. After applying the semiotic concepts denotation and connotation, with the theoretical support of *Instrumental* and *Contextualized* props, together with Smuszkiewiez definition of the concept, it should be clear that the walkie-talkies and the airplane phone affects each of the narratives in a substantial way; they may in fact be viewed as nodes through which much of the narrative's drama, tension, information, and suspense are channelled.

To begin with, there is a similar narrative pattern as to how the walkie-talkies functions in both films which is partially a result of the *Die Hard* "formula" (see chapter 3) that the films utilize.

Firstly, the terrorists in each film are dependent on walkie-talkies since they need to communicate with each other across time and space, and the walkie-talkies are used, in a

narrative way, with the effect of creating and putting the protagonist in inferior situations, meaning certain narrative contexts, which in turn generates narrative suspense.

Secondly, eavesdropping is a critical narrative factor in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* in order to make it possible for the protagonist to intercept and prevent the terrorists and the narrative importance of eavesdropping becomes quite obvious when there is a lack of it in *Die Harder*; it affects the pace of the narrative until the protagonist finally get access to the walkie-talkie and the descrambled frequency.

Thirdly, the tense relationship between the protagonist and the antagonists in both films are developed and heightened with the help of the walkie-talkies, which functions as narrative instruments that enables the protagonist and antagonists to interact with each other since they rarely meet face to face. Moreover, the power dynamics between the characters is enabled to develop and transform because of the narrative use of walkie-talkies.

As I have shown at each analytic stage, the most obvious and general function of the walkie-talkies and the airplane phone, are that they are used for communication; they provide a means of information channelling between characters located at different places. At a deeper level, after analysing them as signs within the aspects of the basic materials of the film (its images and sounds) and the story that those aspects denote, the props connote functions important for the narrative structure. Overall the walkie-talkies function as objects which bring characters together by altering the power dynamics between them, engage them in conflict and form bonds which all work toward the generation of suspense within the narrative.

Their meanings are not static. The narrative functions of, especially, the walkie-talkies shift and change throughout each film. They entail the possibility of creating and influencing certain narrative contexts; at one moment, the walkie-talkie has the function of providing the spectator with important narrative information required in order to understand the wholeness of

the narrative (consider here, especially, the ending in *Die Hard*); in another instance, it rather functions as the main narrative instrument which enables, generates and initiates narrative contexts that are contingent on it (and the airplane phone).

If one would remove the walkie-talkies in *Die Hard* and *Die Harder*, there wouldn't be any possibility of providing the spectator with narrative information, creating and developing the tension between Hans and McClane, having the terrorists eavesdropping on McClane's mayday messages or having McClane eavesdropping on the terrorist which in turn would have a great impact on each narrative. In other words, it would eliminate the possibility of creating the narrative contexts that has been highlighted in the present study and it would exclude other important narrative aspects and functions as well (consider here McClane's difficulties in gaining the authorities' trust, the narrative feeling of "will-they-get-away-with-it" and "how-will-this-go?", and the possibility of putting the narrative in motion by using specific narrative milestones that pushes the narrative into a certain direction, as it is exemplified in chapter 5.2).

Yet, an unintentional result has surfaced in this study. It refers to the elements of suspense. It has been stated that the walkie-talkies create suspense in each narrative, but what hasn't been emphasized (since it lies beyond the boundaries of the present study to do so), is the different *types* of suspense or excitements that the walkie-talkies create and enable. Eavesdropping, which we have determined to be an important narrative factor in both films, creates a narrative motion and suspense that can be found in both films. When the protagonist has access to the walkie-talkie (and its frequency), there is a possibility for the protagonist to eavesdrop. At this moment, the narrative is put into a heightened motion and pace resulting in certain narrative contexts that contain suspense and create the excitement of "how-will-this-go?". When there is a lack of access, meaning no possibility for the protagonist to eavesdrop as in *Die Harder*, the narrative is put into a more static and slower motion, which instead creates suspense based on

the excitement of “will-they-get-away-with-it?”. Thus, the level of narrative suspense, motion and pace differs depending on whether the protagonist has access to a walkie-talkie (and the descrambled frequency) or not. These two interconnected but highly different questions approach one of the core elements of the action movie – the generation of suspense – and result from the two different uses of the walkie-talkie as a prop (and thus its function in the narrative).

The airplane phone in *Die Harder* has a similar narrative function. Yet, the difference is that it isn’t used by either the protagonist or the antagonist of the narrative. Instead it is used by a side character which culminates the narrative and affects it in a similar way as the walkie-talkies do but the difference is that it utilizes a specific context with humoristic inputs. This also shows that a prop can still have a major impact on the narrative despite the fact that it isn’t *only* used to produce narrative suspense, that it isn’t pervading the narrative as the walkie-talkies do and the fact that it isn’t used by neither the protagonist or the antagonist.

6.2 Further research

Regarding the contributions of this study to future research, this study can contribute to film studies which focus on props, mise-en-scéne, *Die Hard* or narrative studies. Since this thesis focus on analogous PCDs it could also function as a good example or resource for a study comparing analogous and digital technology within the fields of communication studies or media history.

The present study has shed light on aspects concerning the narrative importance of a specific kind of prop within a specific genre (the contemporary action movie). In doing so, the analysis hints at the structure of the narrative suspense, which, in this study, emerges as constituted by tensions of power, information (including the concealment and reveal of identity), obstacles

and confrontation. Furthermore, as has been discussed throughout this thesis, props that have a significant narrative function can affect a specific context of the narrative and the narratives entirety and they can do so in a short matter of time or in a long-term perspective (depending on the progression of the narrative). However, as *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* only are a fraction of all the action films that has been made since the birth of film, there is still a lot of films (in other genres) that could possibly be analysed in a similar way. Furthermore, this study could be useful in film studies that concerns communication in horror and thriller films such as the *Scream* series (1996-2013), *When a Stranger Calls* (2006), *One Missed Call* (2008), *Unfriended* (2015), *Phone Booth* (2002), *Enemy of the State* (1998), *Panic Room* (2002), *Cellular* (2002) or *Buried* (2010). These are all examples of communication-based films where communication devices in different forms and sizes are central narrative elements. Here, one could possibly apply similar themes used and emphasized in the present study to highlight the narrative importance of PCDs, such as concealment of identity, which is a key narrative factor in *Scream* where the antagonists sacrifice their identity, self-presence and coherence by "us[ing cell phones and] electronic voice [devices that helps them to] disguise their anonymity and distance themselves from the action.".[74] Acquiring power and creating power dynamics between characters and develop relations is also a theme that has been emphasized in this study and can most certainly be found in these other communication-based films as well (e.g. *Cellular*, *Buried*, *When a Stranger Calls*). Although, one aspect that differs these examples of films from *Die Hard* and *Die Harder* is their use of cell phones, landline and cordless phones. The usage of walkie-talkies is narrower and there is considerable technological difference between these two groups of films due to the technological transformation that has taken place since 1990. In other words, there is a difference in how the PCDs look, function and are used in the newer films which in turn could affect a film's narrative in a different way compared to how the

[74] Kimberly Jackson, *Technology, monstrosity and reproduction in twenty first century horror*, 2013, p. 14.

walkie-talkies (and the airplane phone) affects the narratives of *Die Hard* and *Die Harde*r – but maybe not. It is a question for future studies.

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Producers: Charles Gordon, Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver.

Director: John McTiernan.

Scriptwriter: Roderick Thorp, Jeb Stuart, Steven E. de Souza.

Cinematographer: Jan de Bont.

Film editing: John F. Link, Frank J. Urioste.

Music: Michael Kamen.

Actors: Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman, Bonnie Bedelia, Reginald VelJohnson, Paul Gleason, William Atherton, Alexander Godunov, Hart Bochner.

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Country: USA.

Production year: 1990.

Producers: Charles Gordon, Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver.

Director: Renny Harlin.

Scriptwriter: Walter Weager, Steven E. de Souza, Doug Richardson.

Cinematographer: Oliver Wood.

Film editing: Stuart Baird, Robert A. Ferretti.

Music: Michael Kamen.

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Producers: Guy Avshalom, Gerard Butler, Ed Cathell III.

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