

Notes on
Michel Chion's
Audio-Vision

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Chion on *Persona*

- “The house lights go down and the movie begins. Brutal and enigmatic images appear on the screen: a film projector running, a closeup of the film going through it, terrifying glimpses of animal sacrifices, a nail being driven through a hand.
- Then, in more "normal" time, a mortuary. Here we see a young boy we take at first to be a corpse like the others, but who turns out to be alive—he moves, he reads a book, he reaches toward the screen surface, and under his hand there seems to form the face of a beautiful woman.” (Chion 1994, pp. 3-4)

Chion on *Persona*

- “Stop! Let us rewind Bergman's film to the beginning and simply cut out the sound, try to forget what we've seen before, and watch the film afresh. Now we see something quite different.
- First, the shot of the nail impaling the hand: played silent, it turns out to have consisted of three separate shots where we had seen one, because they had been linked by sound. What's more, the nailed hand in silence is abstract, whereas with sound, it is terrifying, real.”

Chion on *Persona*

- “As for the shots in the mortuary, without the sound of dripping water that connected them together we discover in them a series of stills, parts of isolated human bodies, out of space and time. And the boy's right hand, without the vibrating tone that accompanies and structures its exploring gestures, no longer "forms" the face, but just wanders aimlessly.
- The entire sequence has lost its rhythm and unity. Could Bergman be an overrated director? Did the sound merely conceal the images' emptiness?”

Audiovisual Contract

- Sound does not correspond "naturally" to an image.
- **Audiovisual contract:**
 - "a kind of symbolic contract that the audio-viewer enters into, agreeing to think of sound and image as forming a single entity" (Chion 1994, p.216).

Added Value

- **Added value:**
 - "the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image
 - so as to create the definitive impression, in the immediate or remembered experience one has of it,
 - that this information or expression 'naturally' comes from what is seen,
 - and is already contained in the image itself" (Chion 1994, p.5).

Added Value

- Added value works reciprocally:
 - on the one hand, "sound shows us the image differently than what the image shows alone";
 - on the other hand, image "makes us hear sound differently than if the sound were ringing out in the dark" (Chion 1994, p.21).
- Added value is the most important of the relations between sound and image (Chion 1994, p.5).

Synchresis

- Based on the idea of synchronization (and also synthesis), Chion created the notion of **synchresis**:
 - "the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears at the same time" (Chion 1994, p.224).

Synchresis

- According to Chion, synchresis allows for numerous combinations of possible sounds with possible images: "for a shot of a hammer, any one of a hundred sounds will do" (Chion 1994, p.63).
- But random associations may not generate synchresis: "play a stream of random audio and visual events, and you will find that certain ones will come together through synchresis and other combinations will not" (Chion 1994, p.63)

Senses as Channels

- Chion states that there is no "sensory given" that is isolated from the start: "the senses are channels, highways more than territories or domains".
- He clarifies this, stating that "when Kinetic sensations organized into art are transmitted through a single sensory channel", they can convey all the other senses via that one channel. (Chion 1994, p.137).
- He exemplifies with the inherent viscosity of concrete music, and the implied sound behind silent movies.

Bibliography

- Chion, M., 1994. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia University Press.

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