

SOUND PRODUCTION IN THREE FILMS BY RAÚL RUIZ*

GUSTAVO CELEDÓN BORQUEZ

UDO JACOBSEN CAMUS

CRISTIAN GALARCE LÓPEZ

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores three examples of films in which a reflective or aesthetic use of sound diverges from what we could call “official sound use” in cinema. These divergences are presented as creative alternatives that open up real possibilities not only for study, but also for film production. By “official sound use”, we refer mainly to three objectives that have always formed part of the phenomenon of sound in cinema: technological evolution, synchronisation and quality. These three key elements have developed together in a reciprocal, interconnected manner. To provide but one example, before *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) there were several attempts to add sound to cinema, resulting in several pictures that were effectively sound films. However, *The Jazz Singer* is considered to be the first sound film, “probably due to the fundamental issue that sound-on-disc systems never completely resolved: the synchro-

nisation of sound and vision”¹ (Larson Guerra, 2015: 100-101).

Since then, with the synchronisation issue resolved, the challenge would become quality or fidelity, i.e., the clarity and audibility of what film audiences were hearing. Today, digital technology offers possibilities for using sound in film that were much more complicated or even impossible a few years ago (Mouëllic, 2014: 159).

However, the interaction of these three objectives obviously encompasses different possibilities for the use of sound in film. Before developing a theory in this regard, this paper focuses on analysing specific examples of reflective sound use. It thus presents an aesthetic analysis of three films by Raúl Ruiz that suggest an idea of film sound that is much vaster than the idea developed in official practices.

A filmmaker like Raúl Ruiz, who in his first films focused on representing a Chilean voice, and to this end made use of the appearance of direct

sound in those same years (Ruiz, 2013: 85), was no stranger to the relationship between film sound and technology. However, as opposed to the conventional approach, i.e., an approach focusing on the combination of technology, synchronisation and quality, Ruiz also explored the construction of an audible dimension of film.

In a certain way, the element of synchronisation naturalises sound on the screen. We take for granted the combination of sound and vision, sound and source, and listening tends to become automatic. If we add to this the vococentric condition (predominance of voice) and the verbocentric condition (predominance of words) of film sound, to quote Michel Chion (1982: 15-16, 2008: 9-10), it becomes clear that the norm tends to use sound as a medium and not as an element that could develop a specifically audible dimension of film. Cinematic sound effectively focuses on meaning in general, on the transparent transmission of what is being said.

CINEMATIC SOUND EFFECTIVELY FOCUSES ON MEANING IN GENERAL, ON THE TRANSPARENT TRANSMISSION OF WHAT IS BEING SAID

This voco/verbocentrism subordinates all sound in a film to the purpose it pursues. This means that all sounds other than the voice, even when they stand out and take a leading role in the frame or scene, are distributed in such a way that the whole audible dimension of a film is reduced to the optimal transfer of meaning and message. “Discourses: voices and music occupy all the space, almost always relegating the world of noises to the background. Using an expression like ‘mute cinema’, rather than speaking of a silent image or a film without a soundtrack, would give a good indication of the nature of what is missing: this would be a cinema that needs words more than it needs sound” (Deshays, 2010: 22).

This is compounded by a sense of volume, suddenly striking the spectator through an extreme dose of spectacular technological fidelity. This supports the idea of the importance of conveying meaning because it focuses the external qualities of voice on the pure reproductive quality of the sound, engaging and automating the spectator’s listening experience and enhancing the transmission of the meaning of the film. “In our era, the appeal to digital technology has become the promise of access to an absolute by means of a technique [...]. The aesthetic quality of the soundtrack, its reproduction and selection always remain beyond all consideration, considering only the informational aspect and the quality of the coding” (Deshays, 2010: 24).

In this respect, music is no exception, as in most cases it is used to an equal extent to communicate a meaning, a message, a feeling or some kind of emotion. Music creates pauses and key moments; it indicates, vectorises and points towards a conclusion. This is what Michel Chion (1994: 8-9) describes as the empathetic and anempathetic effects of music in film.

In this way, being subject to these functions, the full range of possibilities afforded by the use of sound in film tend not be explored. The listening experience is subordinated to the general meaning of what is happening on the screen, becoming naturalised and automatic.

There are, however, some exceptions. From a certain distance, each of these explores the audibility of cinema, i.e., the assurance that film is also, and to a great extent, something that is listened to. For example, *I Love You, I Love You (Je t’aime, je t’aime)*, Alain Resnais, 1968) creates a parallel between memory and montage, jumbling up elements to such an extent that at one point it shows the image of a fireplace combined with the sound of water recorded by a scuba diver. This scene reminds us that sound and vision are separate in film, that synchronization is a construction effect, even an idea, and not a cinematic reality. In this

regard, Raúl Ruiz remarks: “It is also important to draw attention to object-sound pairs. A sound associated with a specific object: an egg/bell, a fountain pen/hen, a finger/baby, a lamp/chime” (Ruiz, 2010: 311). He goes on to add: “Task: give poetic value to a set of objects, using arbitrary sounds to animate them and link them together. To give poetic value: to challenge the rules regulating the soundtracks for objects” (Ruiz, 2010: 313).

It is clear that there is a whole dimension of sound that can be developed autonomously or semi-autonomously of the image. Cinema can also be listened to, and thus the added value that defines sound in film (Chion, 1994: 8-9) can be made to refer not merely to the construction of a synchronised, coherent apparatus, but also to the specifically audible value of a cinematic work.

It is in this sense that we will speak of the audibility of cinema. Using three films by Raúl Ruiz, we will attempt to exemplify how the particular features of these exceptions are developed. This does not in any sense mean that we will attempt to determine the essence of cinematic audibility; more simply, we will attempt to show how audible dimensions can be constructed in film production. These dimensions generally have a reflective and aesthetic nature, because they are designed as subversions of or deviations from official norms regulating film sound.

These films by Ruiz are examples not only of how we could understand cinematic audibility in general, but also of audibility as explored and developed specifically by Raúl Ruiz in his work. Our analysis of these three films thus aims to reveal some of the ways in which the Chilean filmmaker takes a conscious approach to cinematic sound and develops it with a view to making his films not only visible, but also audible. In this respect, it is important to stress that it is not our intention here to establish a definition of cinematic audibility in all of Ruiz’s work or in cinema in general, but rather to show directly how this audibility is de-

veloped in certain specific films. These examples will not be merely descriptive, but accompanied by a reflection on the subversions of and deviations from official film sound norms and on the different propositions, ideas and concepts that could contribute to a future theoretical perspective on audibility in the films of Raúl Ruiz and in cinema in general.

The three films we have chosen are: *Image de sable* (Image of Sand, 1981), *Les divisions de la nature. Quatre regards sur le Chateau de Chambord* (The Divisions of Nature: Four Views of Chateau de Chambord, 1983), and *Le film à venir* (The Film to Come, 1997). The first and the third share the quality of conceiving an independent audible dimension, “with a life of its own life”, which may contradict Michel Chion’s famous idea of the non-existence of a soundtrack (Chion, 1982: 13-15, 2008: 36-37). The second constitutes an exemplary work of aesthetic-reflective construction on the dimension of sound which, as such, not only adds to the image to give it greater meaning or consistency, but also acts *together* with the image.

IMAGE DE SABLE

Created by Raúl Ruiz and Nadine Descendre in 1981, *Image de sable* is a film about Pieter Wiersma, an Austrian architect who devotes his life to building sand castles. It is fifteen minutes long, was filmed on video and produced by TF1 (Ruiz, 2013: 275). It is about a character who arrives at a beach and starts building a sand castle. The building process is accompanied by his reflections (in voice-over) and different situations that represent the story one way or another: the sand castle is built, flooded by the incoming tide and visited by strangers, and then finally *outlasts* the story and its vicissitudes. This survival is illustrated at the end of the film by means of images of different sand castles that symbolize the triumph of the beauty of the created form.



Three still frames from *Image de sable*

There are three basic elements of sound: voice, ambient noise, and music:

- a) Voice: off-screen, intermittent, related to the protagonist's reflections on sand, building, the availability of material for building sand castles, the sea and the form (e.g. "experiment with the sand's capacity of resistance"; "the sand must not be too wet or too dry, too clean or too dirty"; "perhaps the sea is a source of inspiration").
- b) Ambient noise: in the beginning this is characterised by the sound of heavy machinery, the seaside, and the voices of children playing. The sound of the sea progressively takes over the ambient noise.
- c) Music: a string quartet is heard during the introduction as the title of the film appears on screen. A cello solo then plays throughout the rest of the film. This solo cuts in and out intermittently several times until the end of the film. It is Paul Hindemith's *Sonata for Cello solo Opus 25 No. 3*, composed in 1922.

These three elements are interconnected. Together they constitute a specifically musical composition. The sound of the cello is always counterpoised by the sound of the sea and vice versa. There are moments when the sound of the cello is heard on its own, without the counterpoint of the sea. At other moments, the sound of the sea is heard alone without the counterpoint of the cello. And at other moments they come together, creating harmonies, tensions, meeting points and dis-

ords. This creates a duration, transforming the film's sound into a piece of music on which the intermittent voice-over narration is harmoniously overlaid. It could thus be argued that the sound of this film is in fact an independent work, an autonomous composition.

An objection could be raised that this autonomy is always based on the images and is therefore not ultimately an autonomy at all. One answer to this could be that what is interesting about this film is that it composes the general function of sound in relation to the image musically. This function is what the French composer and theorist Michel Chion calls "added value": "By *added value* I mean the expressive and informative value with which a sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression, in the immediate or remembered experience that 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: 5).

All the information added by sound to this film is composed musically. Indeed, considering that the film is only fifteen minutes long, it would be feasible to simply listen to the film without viewing it: there is a process, a climax, a denouement and an ending—in fact, the film ends with a full stop, a pizzicato note on the cello closing the whole cycle and coinciding with the end of Hindemith's sonata. The entire sound dimension of the film is treated like a musical flow that is not limited to instrumental music, as it also introduc-

es specific noises, such as the sound of the sea and of voices. This musical flow is horizontal, as is the editing of images.

This is clearly no ordinary listening experience. It is a soundtrack associated with contemporary music, or rather with a certain kind of music that experiments with the audio in pursuit of new listening experiences. In this case, it experiments with bringing specific noises (like the sound of the sea) into relation with instruments on a level of musical duration. Twentieth century music effectively sought to free sounds with the objective of creating new listening experiences. Makis Solomos suggests that one of the characteristics of twentieth century music is the liberation of sound, and in this sense, “the progressive opening up of sound in its generality is synonymous with a new way of apprehending sound, which is to say, of listening to it” (Solomos, 2013: 17). He later adds that “learning to listen in a different way is simply learning to listen” (Solomos, 2013: 176). In putting together different types of music that explore different aural dimensions, Ruiz demonstrates his interest in aural explorations; and, we could add, taking Solomos’s perspective, that by turning his attention to sound, i.e., by arranging different listening experiences in the film, he specifically encourages spectators to listen, and in doing so highlights the presence of sound in cinema.

Raúl Ruiz thus *develops* the sound dimension of the film. It is not *mere* added value. It is the development of that added value. And if he develops this dimension, it is because he is aware that the sound dimension of cinema is an element that needs to be treated with the same attention as the visual dimension. All kinds of aesthetic and reflective concerns are also vested in the sound, just as Ruiz has always vested these in the image. Nevertheless, this added value is still added value, i.e., the sound is composed in conjunction with the image. It is the presence of the sea that determines an ocean sound for the film, but it is

an aesthetic reflection on sound that results in its being placed in counterpoint to the cello, i.e., to the strictly and habitually musical dimension of cinema. In a manner of speaking, it is a *cinematic musical composition*.

Michel Chion (1997) also tells us that music in film is not the same as music on its own. It is always conceived in terms of the audiovisual ensemble. Music does not come into cinema to effect what might be called *specifically* musical achievements. It comes into cinema to work with the image. And it is through this work with sound and vision that Ruiz proposes a constant musical flow that characterises the whole soundtrack of the film. The composition is developed here *with* the editing of the visual. To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, there is a “becoming-music” in cinema: it is the essentially audiovisual work of filmmaking that is taken in a musical direction. For this very reason, if we listen to the soundtrack without the images, what we will hear will not exactly be a recognisable piece of music, but rather a piece of music that sounds particularly cinematic: it is not a strictly musical piece, but rather a cinematic piece in its purely sonic dimension. This is a fundamental contribution, because Ruiz is exploring aural constructions in film, not in music, although the paradigm used undoubtedly comes, as noted above, from his experience of contemporary music. Perhaps Ruiz’s approach is to reflect on what a cinematic listening experience is.

However, Raúl Ruiz challenges two fundamental principles here that Michel Chion has highlighted regarding the aural dimension of film: the non-existence of a soundtrack and the vertical nature of sound in cinema. Chion (1994: 35-37) argues that sound is added vertically in specific places onto the horizontal dimension of the visual montage. In *Image de sable*, the voice-over is added now and then, on specific occasions, when the protagonist is thinking, most often while he is on screen, whether it be looking out to sea, touching the sand or building a castle. The perpetual

sea is also included at particular moments: given that the entire film takes place by the sea, ocean sounds must be added *from above* to the linearity of the visual dimension. But the ingenious Ruiz will consider that all these points of sound can be understood as points on a pentagram and thus create a horizontality of sound, because each point of this pentagram, which is in fact the visual montage with each of its frames and scenes, relates to another to create the horizontal movement. In the words of Pierre Boulez, a flat space is recovered, which, although it is marked at specific moments, has a temporal development that erases or eliminates the point to create a flat time that spreads out without any specific vertical interruptions (Boulez, 1963: 95-96). In this film, Ruiz creates a flat space whose temporality spreads out in precisely in this horizontal fashion, nullifying or reducing the significance of the existing points in time and, as a result, the verticality. In other words, the audiovisual event is placed here in an arrangement of two horizontal lines (sound and vision) created on the basis of a normally vertical process of sound production in a film.

It is essential to bear in mind that the relationships between verticality and horizontality have deeply influenced the development of Western musical thinking. This has been the case from the transition from monody to primitive polyphony in the ninth century, to Renaissance and Baroque counterpoint, and to the rise and decline of the tonal system, and right up to our day. In the early twentieth century, this issue enjoyed a powerful resurgence on a number of levels, both among composers of twelve-tone serialism, and among the Expressionists and Neoclassicists, such as Hindemith himself, who showed a marked interest in medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music. It could thus be argued that in *Image de sable*, Ruiz was working with a specifically musical problem that permeates his filmmaking approach, as we have proposed. As Regina Busch puts it, it is an issue of verticality and horizontality: "It is the re-

lationship between homophony and polyphony, between harmony and counterpoint [...], that has always determined, though in continually different ways, the history of music and has always been the subject-matter of music history and musicology" (Busch, 1985: 5).

The above challenges another suggestion made by Chion: the non-existence of a soundtrack in film.

By stating that *there is no soundtrack* I mean first of all that the sounds of a film, taken separately from the image, do not form an internally coherent entity on equal footing with the image track. Second, I mean that each audio element enters into *simultaneous vertical relationship* with narrative elements contained in the image (characters, actions) and visual elements of texture and setting. These relationships are much more direct and salient than any relations the audio element could have with other sounds. (Chion, 1994: 40)

By successfully creating a flat time assumed by the audio of the entire film, Ruiz creates a sound journey that advances horizontally and enables the development of a listening experience that identifies a continuity of sound which, although it may not take the same form as the visual continuity, affirms the possibility and existence of a soundtrack. However, the soundtrack created by Ruiz in *Image de sable* is a reflection and not a definition in itself. On the one hand, this reflection assumes that the continuity of the sound is not the same as the continuity of the images, simply because it does not stem from a horizontal *intention*, but rather from a vertical process that is considered and conceived horizontally. We may thus draw the conclusion that this construction of horizontality is an experience that reflects on the possibility and existence of a soundtrack. There is a relationship—fundamentally based on the sea/cello counterpoint and the intermittence of the voice—that enables the horizontality of sound and whose meaning is revealed in the shift from normal listening to experimental listening, i.e., a

listening experience in a way related to contemporary music but which is, strictly speaking, neither more nor less than the creative exploration of a cinematic listening experience.

LES DIVISIONS DE LA NATURE. QUATRE REGARDS SUR LE CHATEAU DE CHAMBORD

This film is a 16-mm short documentary on Francis I and Chateau de Chambord. The film is sixty minutes long. It was created as part of the *Un homme, un chateau* (A Man, A Castle) series (Antenne 3: 1978-1981), produced by INA in 1978 and broadcast on Antenne 2 in 1981. Its objective is to “observe the Chateau de Chambord from different ideological perspectives: from the perspective of a Thomist philosopher, a Romantic, or someone like Baudrillard” (Ruiz, 2013: 286). In other words, from a classical, a modern, and a contemporary perspective. The fourth perspective, we would suggest, would be that of cinema, Ruiz’s perspective.

Each of these perspectives entails a change in general disposition. Changes of frame, set design, and discourse. The Thomist or classical perspective conceives the castle as a place of transition towards Heaven. It is the metaphysical-Platonic reference that views everything as having an Idea: the castle represents the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. We hear in the film: “as long as we are on Earth and aspire to Heaven, any construction should help us to find the latter.” Ruiz plays

extensively with reflections of the castle on the water and in mirrors, symbolising that the castle is a reflection of Heaven.

In contrast, the modern perspective turns its gaze inside the castle, symbolising the paradigm shift introduced by modernity: subjectivity, the self. In fact, the voice-over narration is a text by J. G. Fichte, the German philosopher of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century whose doctrine confines reality exclusively to the subject—everything is absolutely subjective. This leads Ruiz to film indoors and to accentuate differences in colour and perspective in an attempt to offer a subjective impression of the castle.

Finally, the contemporary perspective views the castle as an ordinary object: thus, “*Les choses de la vie*” (“The Stuff of Life”) is the title of this section of the film. We see tourists, castle guards, tour guides, crowds of people walking through the castle simply because it is there, because it is something within reach that suggests a dynamic that gives it its existence. All gazes outward or inward disappear to make way for a moving camera without much perspective and without much framing, without much objective. People walk around the castle, inside and outside, with little emotion. Ruiz films their detached strolling which, as we have suggested, turns the castle into something mundane.

From the perspective of the audio, Ruiz’s work is extraordinary. Although there is quite an interesting selection of musical pieces, includ-



The three perspectives in *Les divisions de la nature*

ing compositions by Jorge Arriagada as usual, but also works by Arnold Schönberg and Robert Schumann, his work with and use of voice is worthy of special mention. In all three perspectives, the presence of narration is of utmost importance. In the first two, it is the narration that describes reality, which is represented by the castle. Objectivity or realism in the first, subjectivism in the second. The narration consists of description. Objectivity is described in the first case, subjectivity in the second. But the important thing is not the discourse. It is the *sound of the discourse*, what the ancient Greeks called *phôné*, the materiality of the voice (Aristotle, 2005: 4). In the first case, it is a normal voice-over, a description of the castle and its place in the universe. This voice sounds like that of someone with experience in describing: an objective announcer, a film narrator. This is the type of voice described by Daniel Deshays (2010: 23): the voice with “a sweetening effect, also heard on radio and on television, of the commentary on current affairs offered by a reporter who completely obliterates direct sounds.”

But when we move to the second section, this realist voice radically changes its pronunciation: it lowers its volume, speeds up, mutters. It is an internalized voice, totally in keeping with the indoor images that make up this part of the film.

The materiality of the voice is thus re-encountered. To provide an example, Chion describes this materiality in certain ways that Jacques Tati uses voice and sound: “In Tati, we no longer find gags based on the animistic use of noises, which makes objects and machines speak: men sitting on seats that go ‘pfff’ when they sit down (in *Playtime*) and the conversation they engage in while standing up and then sitting down is a ‘pfff’ conversation. A traffic jam makes a car squawk like a chicken. Windshield wipers that rave, coo or grunt, depending on each car owner’s personality. It is in relation with the way sounds *speak up* that the human voice is taken to the level of a noise” (Chion, 1982: 72).

Although the case of Ruiz in *Divisions de la nature* is not the same, it is reasonable to assert that the human voice is effectively taken to the level of materiality of sound. It is not there as a mere element that dictates or narrates; instead, it is immersed in its material condition, challenging the principle by which “the voice is always there [in the film] so that its materiality can be forgotten, and it is at this price that it fulfils its first duty [the meanings it conveys]” (Chion, 1982: 13).

A WORLD VIEW NECESSARILY ENTAILS A WAY TO LISTEN TO AND PRONOUNCE IT

Ruiz achieves this by changing the vocal texture of the narration that takes over in the second section. This audible change enables us to denaturalise the objectivity and neutrality of the first voice. In effect, Ruiz challenges the naturalness of the sound of film narrators. He ultimately calls into question the intended objectivity with which voice-over narration is generally presented in cinema. The nullification of the voice by the privilege it holds, by virtue of a naturalness or spontaneity in the editing of images and how these correspond to the spoken word, is revealed, at least here, as a myth of film history or, in the words of Chion, as a loss of the innocence of the voice (Chion, 1982: 21). What Ruiz constructs here is the description of different worldviews in which the action of description itself does not lie in the narrated words, but rather in what we could call a sensory ensemble. The narration is subordinated to the materiality of the voice, its tonality, intensity, emotion, tone and pronunciation on the one hand, and to the display of images on the other. We could speak here of a distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2000): a worldview structured according to the relationship between senses, in this case, seeing and hearing. A worldview necessarily entails a way of listening to and pronouncing it. For example, voices will not

sound the same if we see the world objectively compared to seeing it subjectively. Voices sound different in different times. And that is precisely what constitutes a distribution of the sensible as defined by Jacques Rancière: positionings and repositionings of sensory elements (in this case, sound and vision) constituting a fiction, a world view or, more generally, an aesthetic regime (Rancière, 2011). The aesthetic advances the discourse and this is the result of a deployed sensibility. Ruiz thus constructs an association of sensibilities: certain images with certain sounds. This combination is what supports spoken discourse, which reveals a sensible disposition (it does not generate a particular sensibility, but is itself the product of a sensibility).

This is achieved by Ruiz through his *mise-en-scène* of the materiality of the voice, which, for example, goes to the point of deformation in the contemporary narrative: Ruiz applies sound effects that distort the voice, dissolving all narration and making the words disappear. According to Ruiz, this dissolution of words in the materiality of the voice characterises the sensible state of vocalisation in our era.

The film thus explores the cinematic possibilities of the voice, striving to denaturalise it by means of a material variation that is, from the perspective of creation, an inherently aesthetic exploration, as it brings into play the development of elements that do not constitute the specifically discursive dimension of the film, but rather the sensibilities that surround and constitute the framework or order of the discourse and which, in cinematic terms, are what Chion called *voco- and verbo-centrism* in film. We argue that in this film, Ruiz effectively removes the voice from this generalising paradigm described by Michel Chion. In doing so, he makes the voice not an assumption but an element which, just like the image, may be subject to different creative operations to the extent that it is considered to be a material, an aesthetic element, an element open to sensibility that can therefore be worked with artistically.

LE FILM À VENIR

This film was made in 1997. Like *Image de sable*, it has a soundtrack. According to Ruiz, some of the sounds were recorded before they started working on the images. Jorge Arriagada, the composer for most of Ruiz's films, confirmed in a personal interview with us that the sounds recorded before the images were edited were recorded in his studio on Rue du Buci in Paris. He especially recalls the sound of a ping pong ball that is heard more than once.

[It was] a film that was a commission with total freedom, a 20-minute short, whose theme was something related to the future of cinema [...]. I started filming blindly and madly, haphazardly, and then I mixed it [...]; there was something of everything: noises, footsteps, music... That, in the end, also allowed it to be mixed at home and not in a studio, in a small house with a little studio, without seeing the film, the way music is done. Then I edited the images based on the mix, and finally I wrote the script, and I put in a voice-over. (Ruiz, 2013: 138)

The film takes place in a house, a place where a secret society meets to watch a film whose main characteristic is the endless repetition of a series of images. One of the first impressions is the film's rich sound. Several layers of sound could be described, from the voice-over narration to sounds like that of a ping pong ball, sounds that do not relate to any element or action on the screen. They are theoretically sounds off camera. But they are off camera in a very special sense, in that they do not necessarily correspond to anything that would be happening near the scene. On the contrary, if they relate to anything, it is to a confusing imaginary or, as is often said of Raúl Ruiz's films, to a phantasmagorical or spectral imaginary (de los Ríos, 2010; Vera, 2013). The sonic richness of this film thus results in the presence of numerous events that are apparently happening somewhere near the actions we actually see on the screen, as



Three still frames from *Le film à venir*

if they might in some way refer to unconscious or decidedly ghostly processes.

This effect occurs because the sound tends to become independent. This independence is the product of inherent articulations that are not the result of an identification with the image but of their relationship to the other sounds. It could be said that the audio of this film is a musical composition, very close to *musique concrète* and, considering that there is a voice-over describing the situation, very close as well to radio drama.

Musique concrète works with sound objects, which are sounds that are produced in the studio and then edited, creating a sonic composition that is commonly known as *musique concrète* or electroacoustic music (Chion, 1982). It is also sometimes known as acousmatic music, which is in theory more relevant to our purposes here in that it is associated with a reflection on the origin of the image based on sound (Bayle, 1989). Its definition is related to a type of listening immersed in sounds disconnected from their sources (Chion, 1994: 71). Based on this paradigm, *Le film à venir* creates a soundtrack, meaning an assemblage of sounds that can be listened to acousmatically, i.e., with complete autonomy from the image. This soundtrack could easily be circulated as a work of electroacoustic music, acousmatic music, or *musique concrète*. It could also be circulated as a radio production because of the narration that constitutes it. The radio situation is, in effect, an acousmatic situation (Bayle, 1989) in which the separation of sound and image, beyond the fact it-

self, poses the problem of generating images based on sound. This is a question, however, that we will explore in a future study.

The important point here is that Ruiz has once again created a film with two horizontalities, sound and image, challenging the cinematic norm described by Chion: the timely verticality of sound. For the film, the autonomy of the sound challenges the reduction of the imagination to specific images shown on the screen. It could be argued that the soundtrack keeps the audience's imagination alive despite the actual images that make up the film. In other words, Ruiz is able to multiply the images and keep the audience's imagination awake without allowing it to rest comfortably on the images of the film.

In this regard, two essential points arise:

- a) What Ruiz calls the "mental palace where the film lives" (Ruiz, 2013b: 156), in the strict sense of the confusing, moving image that inhabits mind and body, which is not only imprinted after watching a film (a real issue highlighted by Ruiz), but is in a sense already there before seeing the film and contemplating any image, also applies to the sound. The film underscores this fact and takes it to the extreme. The decision to start with the recording of sounds that would become the soundtrack for the film constitutes an appeal to the imagination *based on and through* sound, to the generation of images out of what is heard. This appeal is a demand for both the production and the viewing of the film, in that the imagination or pro-

duction of images is elicited by sound in both cases.

- b) Raúl Ruiz has carried out a valuable cinematic exercise that can be taken as a filmic learning experience. “Task: film three different scenes that have the same soundtrack” (Ruiz, 2010: 311). Here, the idea that film is an *audio-visual* element takes on special characteristics, which do not reduce the necessary presence of sound accompanying images, but rather, quite to the contrary, explore its autonomy and capacity to *generate* images. While it is naturally accepted that images have sounds, which consequently entails the construction of a sound dimension, it is our argument here that the inverse *also* applies: that sound produces images, that it possesses an imaginative dimension. This is, for example, the Daniel Deshays’ thesis: before being born, everything already begins to be discovered and organized by listening (Deshays, 2010: 17).

This exercise is ideal for implementation at film schools and places where audiovisual productions are developed and presented. It involves exploring the different places inhabited by the image, not reducing it merely to what is seen, but also considering, for example, what is heard. This exercise, resulting from experiences in cinematic creation, offers a more open conception of film as it explores and exploits the equality of sound and image, dispensing with hierarchical assumptions inherent to the field.

WHILE IT IS NATURALLY ACCEPTED THAT IMAGES HAVE SOUNDS, WHICH CONSEQUENTLY ENTAILS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SOUND DIMENSION, IT IS OUR ARGUMENT HERE THAT THE INVERSE ALSO APPLIES: THAT SOUND PRODUCES IMAGES, THAT IT POSSESSES AN IMAGINATIVE DIMENSION

CONCLUSIONS

Raúl Ruiz shows a concern in these three films for reflective sound production. Firstly, in a broader sense, the Chilean filmmaker is exploring the audible dimension of film. This exploration includes working artistically on the audio element, addressing composition, presence and materialisation. It could be described as a sensibility towards the audio element of cinema, a sensibility that explores by constructing, composing and moving things. And what it moves is the normal approach to the integration of sound into film, represented in this study by the notions of added value, verticality, *voco/verbocentrism* and *synchronisation*. Our analysis of these three films reveals some shifts in these habits that contribute to the achievement of cinematic audibility. This operates in accordance with a progressive autonomy that these shifts give the sound. This autonomy can be described in three points:

1. The possibility of a soundtrack: both *Image de sable* and *Le film à venir* propose a soundtrack that can be listened to without any reference to the image. This does not mean that the film can be seen in the mind’s eye exactly as it is. Rather, it is an exclusively auditory journey, an uninterrupted period of development that offers a musical listening experience. We argue that both soundtracks can be described as *acousmatic* pieces which consequently correspond to an *acousmatic* listening experience and generally to a contemporary listening experience in the sense we have understood it: a possibility of opening up new listening experiences that entail simply learning to listen. We include a radio listening experience here as well, although the analysis of this aspect is proposed for a future article: these pieces could be reproduced perfectly as radio drama, as sound stories that project an imagination.
2. Emancipation of the voice: in *Les divisions de la nature*, Ruiz pushes the voice beyond its in-

tended message. He takes it back to its materiality and thus creates and develops an action that takes place exclusively through sound. In other words, there is also action in the soundtrack. And it is important to highlight that, once again, the sound does not conform to the action belonging to the image, but has an action of its own. This autonomy works together with the overall autonomy of the image. Ruiz explores the different spaces in which action can be developed and sound is one of these. That is the sonic achievement of this film. Together with the message transmitted by the voice, the latter is not immune to its transformations, its variations or its position in a broader sensory ensemble.

3. These three films expand the cinematic reflection of a filmmaker. Sensitivity to the creative possibility of sound in film allows a diversification of the ideas that will be used to produce the cinematic work, which is considered to be not merely a visual creation, but an audiovisual creation, with the requirement of learning to separate sound from vision in order to resist habits that normalise the presence of the former in the world of films. This importance of cinematic audibility therefore entails a broader conception of film construction by the production team. And it also has an impact on the habits of spectators who, beyond the spectacle, are invited to recognise an action inscribed at the very core of the sonic flow of a film. Through these experiences, the film is no longer a purely visual sensibility and becomes a *sensory ensemble* that brings together both sound and vision. This is another way of affirming what Michel Chion has called *Audio-vision*, which is to say that the audiovisual work does not require a viewer or a listener, but rather an “audio-viewer: a specific perceptive attitude” (Chion, 2008: 3).

However, in contrast with Chion’s view, we argue that this audiovisual combination should

not sacrifice the autonomy of the image or the autonomy of the sound. The fact that they *combine* does not imply a non-differentiating unit, but rather a task of reflection and ongoing creation that allows these two autonomous spheres to *produce* encounters. In addition, we believe that reflecting on this combination will involve not only analysing the general patterns of sound in film, but, as we have seen this with Raúl Ruiz, exploring alternatives related to modes of creative exploration that move away from the norms in order to dispense with habit and normality in cinema. Such an approach, in these three films we have analysed, is indeed fully audible. ■

NOTES

- * This paper is part of Fondecyt Project 11150655, *Estética del sonido en el cine de Raúl Ruiz* coordinated by Dr. Gustavo Celedón.
- 1 The translations of all quotes from texts not in English are our own. In the case of this quote, the source text actually makes reference to the French term for silent film, “*cinéma muet*” (lit. “mute cinema”), and the importance that this term obviously ascribes to speech.

REFERENCES

- Aristotle (2005). *Política*. Madrid: Centro de estudios políticos y constitucionales.
- Bayle, F. (1989). *L'image du son, ou i-son. Métaphore/Métamorphose*. In S. McAdams and I. Deliège (eds.), *La musique et les sciences cognitives* (pp. 235-242). Brussels: Editions Mardaga.
- Boulez, P. (1963). *Penser la musique aujourd'hui*. Paris: Editions Denoël/Gonthier.
- Busch, R. (1985). On the Horizontal and Vertical Presentation of Musical Ideas and on Musical Space (I). *Tempo, New Series*, 154, 2-10. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/946351>.
- Chion, M. (1997). *La música en el cine*. Barcelona: Grupo Planeta.

- (1982). *La musique electroacoustique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- (1983). *La voix au cinema*. Paris: Editions de l'Etoile.
- (1994). *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Translated by Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press.
- (2008). *L'audiovision. Son et image au cinéma*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- de los Ríos, V. (ed.) (2010). *El cine de Raúl Ruiz. Fantomas, simulacros y artificios*. Santiago, Chile: Uqbar Editores.
- Deshays, D. (2010). *Entendre le cinéma*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Larson Guerra, S. (2015). *Pensar el sonido. Una introducción a la teoría y la práctica del lenguaje sonoro cinematográfico*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Mouëllic, G. (2014). *De quelques performances musicales dans le cinéma contemporain*. In S. Abhervé, N. T. Binh and J. Mouré (eds.), *Musiques de films. Nouveaux enjeux* (pp. 145-162). Brussels: Les impressions nouvelles.
- Rancière, J. (2000). *Le partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*. Paris: La Fabrique.
- (2011). *Aisthesis. Scènes du régime esthétique de l'art*. Paris: Galilée.
- Ruiz, R. (2010). *Las seis funciones del plano*. In V. de los Ríos (ed.), *El cine de Raúl Ruiz. Fantomas, simulacros y artificios* (pp. 305-316). Santiago, Chile: Uqbar Editores.
- (2013). *Ruiz. Entrevistas escogidas – filmografía comentada*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- (2013b). *Poéticas del cine*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- Solomos, M. (2013). *De la musique au son. L'émergence du son dans la musique des XX^e-XXI^e siècles*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Vera, A. (2013). *Políticas de la espectralidad en el cine de Raúl Ruiz: una lectura desde una filosofía de la desaparición*. *Revista de Humanidades de Valparaíso*, 1, 93-101. Retrieved from <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/5652338.pdf>.

SOUND PRODUCTION IN THREE FILMS BY RAÚL RUIZ

Abstract

Through an analysis of three films by Raul Ruiz, *Image de sable*, *Les divisions de la nature* and *Le film à venir*, this article explores the creative practices used by this Chilean filmmaker to construct a mode of cinematic audibility. The common factor of these three films is the way they challenge standard practices in cinematic sound, practices that have been dictated by technological progress, synchronisation and sound quality, and that have given rise to other constants, such as the predominance of the human voice and the spoken word. The article concludes by confirming the feasibility of cinematic audibility, the existence of a soundtrack, the aesthetic richness of the materiality of the voice, the breadth of perception in filmmaking and the need to understand film as an ensemble of images and sound, in which neither of these elements loses its autonomy or uniqueness.

Key words

Raúl Ruiz; Audibility; Sound; Cinema; Materiality of the voice.

Authors

Gustavo Celedón Bórquez (b. Viña del Mar, 1977) is a lecturer at the Film School and for the Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Studies on Thought, Culture and Society at Universidad de Valparaíso. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from Université Paris VIII Vincennes – Saint-Denis. He is the author of *Sonido y Acontecimiento* (Metales Pesados, 2016), *D'un silence à un autre* (L'Harmattan, 2016) and *Philosophie et experimentation sonore* (L'Harmattan, 2015). Contact: gustavo.celedon@uv.cl

Udo Jacobsen Camus (b. Valparaíso, 1962) is a lecturer of film history and theory at Universidad de Valparaíso and is currently completing a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies on Thought, Culture and Society at the same institution. He is the author of *Leyendo cómics. Una introducción al lenguaje de la historieta* and the co-author of *La imagen quebrada/Palabras cruzadas*. He has published several papers on cinema, comics and videogames in specialised journals and has contributed to anthologies on cinema. He holds a degree in audiovisual communication and a master's in literature. Contact: udo.jacobsen@uv.cl

Cristian Galarce Lopez (b. Valparaíso, 1978) is a composer. His catalogue includes chamber music, electronic and mixed electroacoustic works, as well as music and sound design for theatre, cinema and new media arts. He has lectured on music composition, polyphony, music analysis, audiovisual

TRABAJO SONORO EN TRES FILMS DE RAÚL RUIZ

Resumen

A través del análisis de tres films de Raúl Ruiz, *Image de sable*, *Les divisions de la nature* y *Le film à venir*, se da cuenta de prácticas creativas con las que el realizador chileno construye una audibilidad del cine. El factor común de este trabajo es el cuestionamiento al funcionamiento normal del sonido en el cine. Esta normalidad está dictada por el progreso tecnológico, la sincronía y la calidad del sonido. De ellas se desprenden otras constantes, como el predominio de la voz y la palabra. Se concluye la factibilidad de una audibilidad del cine, la existencia de una banda sonora, la riqueza estética de la materialidad de la voz, la amplitud perceptiva en el trabajo cinematográfico y la necesidad de comprender el cine como conjunto imagen-sonido en donde ninguno de estos elementos pierde autonomía y singularidad.

Palabras clave

Raúl Ruiz; audibilidad; sonido; cine; materialidad de la voz.

Autores

Gustavo Celedón Bórquez (Viña del Mar, 1977) es profesor titular de la Escuela de Cine y del Doctorado en Estudios Interdisciplinarios sobre Pensamiento, Cultura y Sociedad de la Universidad de Valparaíso. Es Doctor en Filosofía por la Université Paris VIII Vincennes – Saint-Denis. Autor de *Sonido y Acontecimiento* (Metales Pesados, 2016), *D'un silence à un autre* (L'Harmattan, 2016) y *Philosophie et experimentation sonore* (L'Harmattan, 2015). Contacto: gustavo.celedon@uv.cl

Udo Jacobsen Camus (Valparaíso, 1962) es profesor titular del área de teoría e historia del cine en la Universidad de Valparaíso y doctorando en Estudios Interdisciplinarios sobre Pensamiento, Cultura y Sociedad en la misma institución. Autor de *Leyendo cómics. Una introducción al lenguaje de la historieta* y co-autor de *La imagen quebrada/Palabras cruzadas*, ha publicado diversos artículos sobre cine, cómics y videojuegos en revistas especializadas y participado en libros compilatorios sobre cine. Es comunicador audiovisual y magíster en literatura. Contacto: udo.jacobsen@uv.cl

Cristian Galarce López (Valparaíso, 1978) es compositor. Su catálogo contempla música de cámara, electroacústica y mixta; ha realizado música y diseño sonoro para teatro, cine y nuevos medios. Ha sido académico de pre y postgrado en composición, polifonía, análisis, semiología audiovisual y nuevas tecnologías. Actualmente cursa el Doctorado en Es-

semiotics and new technologies. He is presently completing a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies in Thought, Culture, and Society (DEI-UV) at Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile. Contact: cristiangularcelopez@gmail.com

Article reference

Celedón, G., Jacobsen, U., Galarce, C. (2018). Sound Production in Three Films by Raúl Ruiz. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 193-204.

tudios Interdisciplinarios sobre Pensamiento, Cultura y Sociedad DEI-UV, de la Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile. Contacto: cristiangularcelopez@gmail.com

Referencia de este artículo

Celedón, G., Jacobsen, U., Galarce, C. (2018). Trabajo sonoro en tres films de Raúl Ruiz. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 193-204.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com
