

NOTES ON SUNRISE:

I. NOTES ON VISUAL ACOUSTICS IN MURNAU'S *SUNRISE*

(based on Melinda Szaloky's "Sounding Images in Silent Film: Visual Acoustics in Murnau's *Sunrise*")

I. DEFINITION: visualized sound = pictorial rendering of narratively significant phenomena, a kind of acoustic close-up, e.g., image of a crowd rhythmically swaying to music

II. PERCEPTION IS DIRECT AND INDIRECT:

Direct: based on processing of external stimuli

Indirect: based on cognitive schemas that contain "chunks" of knowledge distilled from past experience which are used to fill in, predict, and classify new sensory data

Sound = a form of knowledge rather than a state of the real world

E.g., *The Great Train Robbery*: a good deal of shooting. No sound is heard, but smoke issues from the pistols, and bodies drop dead left and right. This is example of top down inferred hearing of a narratively significant visualized sound, foregrounded by distinctive use of pictorial style.

III. SOUND AS "VISUAL SURPLUS" IN *SUNRISE*

Visual Surplus used to convey sound effects through plastic elements

e.g., close-up of bell ringing translates an aural effect into an image

A. THE WHISTLE OF THE CITY WOMAN: SHOT/COUNTER SHOT USED TO PRESENT VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF A SOUND

1. She is self-centered and coquettish: camera follows her stroll reframing and centering on her several times.
2. She purses her lips, whistling toward the house in a frontal medium shot (p. 118)
3. In next shot, the Man slowly turns his head toward to window, acknowledging his hearing of the whistle from outside.
4. Cut back to City Woman whistling again
5. Wife appears from depth of background, so Man is caught between two opposed spaces inhabited by a woman.

B. THE TRACKING SHOT ACCOMPANYING MAN THROUGH FOG TO HIS RENDEZVOUS WITH CITY WOMAN

1. Camera movement used to prolong the composition rather than advancing narrative, **I.E., EMPHASIS ON VISUAL TRACK AND CAMERA MOVEMENT OVER STORY**
2. The camera hurries to arrive at the clearing before the Man to present the City Woman as an independent, active, and determined subject (not just the object of the Man's desire). As she hears the man approaching and responding to her whistle, she powders her nose. Here is **A SHIFT OF ACOUSTIC POINT OF VIEW**, reinforcing her mastery of the situation. Thus this tracking shot continues the one of her going to the Man's cottage and whistling. (p. 120)
Other signs of her mastery: she seduces him, performs a dance to the beat of a fantasy jazz band, and convinces him to murder his wife.

**C. THE DEATH BOAT RIDE ACHIEVED THROUGH SERIES OF VISUALIZED SOUND EFFECTS
RELATING TO THE DOG'S ODD BEHAVIOR:**

1. Barking of dog injects acoustic element to scene:
2. Man walks to lake along diagonal line from bottom left to top right, shot from high-angle, stationary camera
3. MS of dog barking, located along same diagonal, facing same direction as Man (p. 122)
4. Man trying to hide bulrushes in bow of boat turns his face toward the camera in direction of the house.
5. Shot of Wife closing garden gate
6. LS from behind the boat reveals great distance between house and dock.
7. MS Shot of Man on boat hearing dog's barking (p. 123)
8. Short shots in which dog breaks leash and clears the gate;
LS of boat moving away from landing;
Wife sits facing the camera, Man rows the boat with back to camera (p. 123)
9. Wife hears splash behind her and turns abruptly. (p. 124)
10. **PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPTH ACHIEVED THROUGH USE OF SOUND EFFECTS FILTERED
THROUGH CHARACTERS' PERCEPTIONS**

**D. THE DAY IN THE CITY: VISUALIZED SOUNDS ARE IGNORED BY CHARACTERS OBLIVIOUS TO
OUTSIDE WORLD**

1. Man and Wife do not hear tram conductor knocking on glass door, suggesting their ecstasy with one another.
2. Couple enjoying music is abruptly interrupted by scratching noise of waiter's pencil writing the check (p. 126)

E. THE CLIMAX: THE STORM

1. Man's desperate calls for his wife are drowned out by the storm
 2. Man fails to hear the whistle of the City Woman.
 3. When he hears her, he attempts to strangle her
 4. Cp. Voice of Maid reporting that Wife has been found (p. 126)
 5. Man's gradual awakening to Maid's voice: camera cuts back 3 times to shouting maid, each time closer
 6. Final image of Maid: CU of her face and open mouth
- CU USED TO REPRESENT LOUDNESS OF VOICE**

IV. CONCLUSION: (p. 127)

1. visible sounds vs. visualized sounds (visualized sounds through use of CUs., camera movements, editing, gestures of actors)
2. desire of camera to follow flight of sound in order to express character subjectivity accounts for dynamism of Murnau's imagery
3. **BREAKING THE FRAME THROUGH SOUND, WHICH CANNOT BE FRAMED**

II. BRAD PRAGER – “EXORCISM OF EXPRESSIONISM IN *SUNRISE*:

285) mobile camera, few subtitles

287) compare Eisenstein's montage vs. Murnau, who does not rely on editing

288) mise-en-scene: color block

e.g., **sailing home**: like a painting, shots of boats and lanterns across the water

Impressionism – subjective representation of visible world

286) **impressionism = antidote to expressionism: realistic fantasy**

289) **expressionism = associated with woman from city**

The woman = allegory of expressionism: exaggerated movements in love scene

289) **distortions of space**: protagonist's psychology, his untamed sexual desire + unconscious

290) **man's dream of drowning wife: use of superimposition**

Romantic representation of woman = antidote to expressionism

285) Question of happy ending

10) **superimpositions used to present subjective states of mind** (vs. trolley ride sequence)

Vision of city evoked by city woman: superimpositions + lateral tracking shots

Man sitting on bed: superimposition of city woman appears behind him

11) **Expressionism** does not = distortion of reality; = **still life of wooden bowl & bread;**

= color blocks of boats sailing in dark

12) sense of movement – feeling of space and distance

13) **tracking shot that traces man walking to marshes, disorientation**

14) contrast trolley car ride

16) city called up in marshes vs. city visited by couple

Generic horror film suggestions linked to city woman

18) recurrent motifs: rushes, city woman, storm, lanterns