

ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY AND THE CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE: STRAINS OF R. MURRAY SCHAFER'S ACOUSTIC DESIGN IN THE FILMS OF JACQUES TATI.

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1. INTRODUCTION

R. Murray Schafer's 1977 book *The Tuning of the World* examines the study of our sonic environments, how they have changed since the industrial revolution, and the effects of these changes on human experience. His goal is to implement the project of Acoustic Design: to develop awareness about the way modern spaces create and shape sound, and move towards the design of such spaces with an appreciation for how their sound affects their inhabitants. French filmmaker Jacques Tati made a career out of fashioning cinematic explorations of the sonic differences between old-world community spaces, urban environments, and the increasing sprawl to suburbia in the 50s and 60s. The culmination of the director's work can be found in his 1967 film *Playtime*, and it is here that we find a virtual template for Schafer's project of Acoustic Design and the ideologies inherent within. This paper examines *Playtime* through *The Tuning of the World*, demonstrating the theoretical and practical connections between both texts so that we might better understand each in light of the other. Without suggesting any direct influence of either of these men on the other, I believe that Schafer's work offers the best means through which Tati's use of sound can be understood as the foundation for the ideologies expressed in his films. In return, I suggest that Tati's aesthetic explorations of the cinematic representation of architectural space yield fascinating inroads into the real-world application of Acoustic Ecology.

2. METHOD

My methodology here is based on a standard Film Studies approach to formal/stylistic analysis. I will compare and contrast different sections of *Playtime* in terms of their presentation of architectural space in both visual and auditory terms. It will be shown that the film sets up a rigorous approach to the relationship between sound and setting for the first half, only to gradually break this relationship down resulting in a climactic scene in which sound is no longer governed by space as it once was. The difference between the film's beginning and ending will then be addressed in terms of the narrative progression between these two points, followed by an assessment of how this change in the film's relationship between sound and setting can be understood in terms of R. Murray Schafer's concept of Acoustic Design.

3. RESULTS

My intended results for this analysis are twofold. First, I simply hope to demonstrate Tati's formal and aesthetic approach to the cinematic representation of architectural space, and relate this approach to the larger thematics of the film as a whole. Second, I hope to illustrate how thinking of film sound in terms of Acoustic Ecology in general, and the work of R. Murray Schafer in particular, can offer a new paradigm in which formal and aesthetic analysis can be carried out within the discipline of Film Studies. In turn I will suggest how studying the cinematic representation of space can offer new paths for exploration within the field of Acoustic Ecology, ultimately forging connections between fields that have as yet remained quite separate.

REFERENCES

- Schafer, R. Murray (1977). *The Tuning of the World: The Soundscape*. Toronto: Mclelland and Stewart.
- Tati, Jacques (1967). *Playtime*. France: Jolly Film + Specta Films.

AUTHOR NOTES

This paper is part of my dissertation on the intersections between Film Studies, Acoustic Ecology, and Electroacoustic Music. This work is being done as part of the Interdisciplinary PhD Humanities program at Concordia University in Montreal.