

IN AND OUT OF SYNCH

A comment on cinema intermingled with the experience of three audible spaces.

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Both Pier Paolo Pasolini (1967) and Robert Smithson (1971) essays¹ relating to cinema deal with the act of coordinating and synthesising fragments of events. While Pasolini focuses on the cinematic techniques employed by the film-maker and Smithson concerns himself with the viewer and his perception, they both see the process of editing as re-constructive. Either by virtue of recounting events or recalling films in a way that is not simply a linear reality but a constructed or re-constructed viewpoint.

What emerges from reading their essays is that the complexity and incompleteness of current reality can be rendered by assembling fragments of past moments in a sort of mosaic; a pattern which is given by creating an objective system of relationships between the various subjective readings of a moment or event.

So, how does the editing process operate for Pasolini and Smithson with respect to recording events?

Both of them present editing as a technique, an attitude and a mode of reading reality; they conceive it as a way of framing what is seen and what is experienced and perceived.

The particularity of their stances can be found in their suggesting that the coherence and cohesion of a re-constructed event is independent from the order chosen when concatenating its constituent fragments. By way of

¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Observations on the Long Take*, 1967, translated by N. MacAfee and C. Owens in *October*, issue n. 13, 1980; Rober Smithson, *A cinematic Atopia*, 1971, in Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings, edit by Jack Flam, University of California Press, 1996, Los Angeles

example, a sequence of moments or images does not require to be generated by their logical succession, such as the cause-and-effect principle, in order to make sense.

As to the idea of mosaic a question may be relevant, how does the mosaic of fragments come into being?

The technique proposed seems to be based on the idea of vectorising space in time, giving to the series of moments constituting an event intensity and direction throughout time. When reordering fragments no strict rules of how to treat them are set into place. Each fragment has specific duration, intensity and qualities and when interconnected the various pieces create a surprising narrative replete with modulation, transition and climaxes. The rhythm of the resulting sequence is enriched by the disparate features of the fragments and characterised by different speeds, repetitions, overlapping and multi-layering.

At this point, a separate overview of Pasolini and Smithson's essays might be necessary before highlighting some other viewpoints that they share.

According to Pasolini, cinematic techniques of recording reality (he specifically refers to the long take in his text) are subjective in that they are bound to reveal one way of representing reality, depending on the point of view of the spectator or film-maker. They are *in the present*, because ultimately present is the time in which an action happens. Then he states that only through a multiplication of presents (point of views),

followed by their juxtaposition and coordination, reality becomes more coherent and, he adds, objective. Here Pasolini refers to his conception of montage, the technique par excellence that, according to him, overcomes the relativity caused by the simultaneous existence of different viewpoints (subjectivity). How does he explain this process? Montage inserts fragments in the *present perfect*, a dimension of time that allows them to be re-organised in order to acquire a coherence as a whole.

As for Smithson, who focuses on the effects of viewing films and therefore on the cinematic experience, the flux of moving images becomes a recollection of fragments in the viewer's mind that cannot be organised in an absolute way. Cinema is for the artist the realm of perception in that it allows the perceiving subject to create groupings that are other than the original order of fragments. He conceives it as a place far away from the present world in which the viewer may be brought into a myriad of *elsewheres* that could be reorganised according to any chosen order. The grouping would be highly subjective, although it would enable the viewer to better understand the distance that exists between the dimension of his perception and that of the original world.

One of the concepts emerging from Pasolini and Smithson's essays is that of a whole made of different, but interconnected, time-scapes. In line with the Postmodern notions of deconstruction and fragmentation, current reality is presented as a dimension impossible to grasp because of the constant being in flux of its constituent elements. In order to read it, a re-organisation of fragments of moment appears to be necessary.

Thus, those fragments are temporarily put to a halt to be inserted in a system of relations and correspondences. This system operates regardless any cause-and-effect principle because its cohesion can be rendered by overlapping, multi-layering and extending the fragments; to put it in a nutshell, by manipulating them when creating a sequence.

HOW IS TIME RENDERED IN A PIECE OF DOCUMENTARY MUSIC?

DIFFERENT TRAINS BY **STEVE REICH** CAME INTO BEING BY MERGING ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS, THE IDEA OF SAMPLING AND A MUSICAL ENSEMBLE.

IT IS A MULTI-LAYERED DIMENSION THAT REVEALS ITS NARRATIVE THROUGHOUT TIME.

An additional shared point between Pasolini and Smithson is that there is no linear narrative rendering reality, but constructed compositions that always originate from various point of views. In their suggesting a possibility of re-organising events they allude to a sort of mosaic that is generated by inverting or playing with the process of decomposition of reality. The acts and modes of reconstructing a scenario mentioned in their essays are considered realistic and naturalistic² processes. Precisely, the resulting assemblage is understood to be as valid as what was in front of the perceiving subject regardless of the fact that the so-assembled material is a consequence of a particular modification of the original order of moments.

² Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Op. Cit.*

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF DECOMPOSING FEDERICO FELLINI'S OUVRE?

UNA DOLCE NOTTE BY **RADIOMENTALE** TAKES FILMS, SUCH AS "LA DOLCE VITA", "ROMA", "SATYRICON" AND "GIULIETTA DEGLI SPIRITI" AND RECOLLOCATE THEM IN A SOUND PIECE THAT MIGHT SUGGEST AN ERASURE OF THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY.

Other two notions which are touched upon by the two authors are that of closeness and remoteness; elements that might appear to be in contrast between the artist and the film director's positions. For Pasolini editing allows proximity to real events, while for Smithson it generates distance from them. Although, both authors conceive montage as a medium that enables them to grasp a coherent significance of reality by moving back and forth from the perceived subject. Pasolini by distancing from the present achieves a proximity to it, whereas Smithson by being close to the present reaches a distance. It appears that both proximity and distance are intermingled because the merging of the two, the movement between nearness and remoteness as well as subjectivity and objectivity, allows an understanding of the fragments constituting moments and events.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CLOSENESS AND REMOTNESS ARE EXPLORED IN A SOUND PIECE?

THE "AUDIO SNAPSHOTS"³ USED ON **RELISTEN** BY **BERNHARD GAL** ARE
SCAPE RECORDINGS TAKEN FROM SPECIFIC LOCATIONS, SUCH US THE
BROOKLYN BRIDGE AND AN UNDERGROUND STATION IN NEW YORK.
SOMETHING IS CLOSELY REVEALED, WHEREAS SOMETHING IS MINIMISED
WITHIN A MELODIC FLOW OF SOUNDS.

Thus, the *in and out of synch* mentioned in the title of this text refers to the modality in which a framework of reality is generated. Framework that derives from a particular way of dealing with editing. The result is a sequence that despite being coherent in its structure and valid in its meaning, maintains the features of arbitrariness and contingency embedded in the act of recounting and recalling events. Expanding on Pasolini and Smithson's essays, it seems that the framing of reality is generated by acts of appropriation, accumulation and multiplication that operate as a whole within, and regardless of, the incompleteness and impermanence characterising the desire of rendering the actual reality. Ultimately, recalling the past is coordinating different times throughout time regardless of their being in or out of synch with its original structure.

LIST OF SOUND WORKS ON SHOW:

BERNHARD GAL

From **RELISTEN, 2001**, INTRANSITIVE RECORDINGS

1. BEE BEE, 14:51
2. 57A, 07:12
3. 68TH STREET, 14:01

www.bernhardgal.com

Courtesy the artist

RADIOMENTALE (JEAN-YVES LELOUP AND ERIC PAJOT),

UNA DOLCE NOTTE, 2003, 16:59, THE BROKEN TALES ISSUE, VIBRÖ

www.vibrofiles.com

Courtesy the artists

STEVE REICH

DIFFERENT TRAINS, 1988, 26:51, NONESUCH RECORDS

1. AMERICA – BEFORE THE WAR, 8:59
2. EUROPE – DURING THE WAR, 7:31
3. AFTER THE WAR, 10:21

KRONOS QUARTET

3 Bernhard Gal on *Relisten*.