

CHAPTER 16

The Dual Substance of Cinema

What Kazantzakis's Christ Can Teach Us about Sound/Image Relationships in Film

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I have fought to reconcile these two primordial forces which are so contrary to each other, to make them realize that they are not enemies but, rather, fellow workers, so that they might rejoice in their harmony—and so that I might rejoice with them.

—Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*

In the last of fourteen koans on Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, film scholar Phillip Lopate suggests that the double ending of Christ's narrative amounts to both he and the audience having their cake and eating it too. In Lopate's words: "If Jesus has already enjoyed a normal full life, including the pleasures of the flesh, *even if only in his imagination*, . . . can he be said to be sacrificing quite so much in going back to the cross?"¹ The contradiction inherent in the idea of Christ (and the witnesses to his representation) having the best of two worlds is central to the primary conflict between flesh and spirit. This conflict lies at the heart of Nikos Kazantzakis's depiction of the Messiah and lays the foundation for Scorsese's cinematic adaptation. Appropriately enough, having the best of two worlds is no less than exactly what I expect from the cinema, a medium founded upon two main channels of transmission: sound and image.

Having one's cake and eating it too amounts to what might seem like an insurmountable contradiction, one in which no amount of struggle between the two options might reconcile. As with all koans, though, the benefit comes not from its resolution but rather from the process of mulling over the problem. Dwelling upon the myriad contradictions found in the story of Christ's life and death is precisely Kazantzakis's objective, a dwelling that yields plenty without need for concrete resolution. So it is as well in the ongoing struggle between sound and image in the

cinema. A reconciliation of sound and image, understood as two parts of the same thing, may never be embraced in the way that Christians are called upon to accept Jesus as being both human and divine. Nevertheless, their interactions with one another make up the substance of what we know as the cinema, and they have tremendous potential as such. It is in acknowledgement of the struggle between sound and image that the deeper nature of their interaction might be revealed, just as Kazantzakis suggests that the struggle between the spirit and the flesh is revealed to be, in the story of Christ's life, a productive and necessary collaboration.

In the prologue to Kazantzakis's novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*, the author describes his own "incessant, merciless battle between the spirit and the flesh," and his belief that the key to the reconciliation of these two forces is an understanding of the nature of this struggle.² Kazantzakis posits Christ as the ultimate model for the battleground between these forces and their final resolution, and that to follow the Messiah's example, "we must have a profound knowledge of his conflict."³ Essentially, Kazantzakis's project seeks to illuminate just exactly what it is that Christ would have had to experience, in human terms, in order to make his struggle of such importance to the rest of humanity. Finally, in Kazantzakis's point, the struggle itself is the key to its own reconciliation, a contradiction worthy of finding a place within a belief system that posits the human and the divine as being, in the figure of Christ, one and the same thing.

A similar belief in the need for exposing the struggle between opposing forces is expressed by leading film sound theorist Michel Chion. In *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, the author discusses the struggle that sound faces against the image in the cinema and the need for awareness of this struggle if sound and image are to find a better balance with one another in a world that privileges sight over all other senses.⁴ The purpose of his project is to foster an understanding of how sound has been treated in the cinema over the years in order to illustrate the role it has had in relation to the image. In this way, Chion's project can be likened to that of Kazantzakis's: Each understands his subject as the product of a struggle between opposing and often contradictory forces, a struggle that can be transformed into productive collaboration through knowledge and understanding.

Not surprisingly, the environment in which Kazantzakis places his Christ is one rife with sensory information, not the least of which is sound. Indeed, it is through descriptions of sound that much of Christ's psychological environment is represented in both the novel and the film. My purpose here is to demonstrate how Kazantzakis's Christ makes an excellent foundation on which to base a cinematic adaptation that blends this content with a formal approach seeking to illustrate some of the key issues found in film sound theory today.

As a point of departure, I examine issues pertaining to R. Murray Schafer's concept of *schizophonia*.⁵ Within the concept of schizophonia, I show that the separation of a sound from its source constitutes in equal parts a transgression of both time and space. Schafer feels that this transgression is responsible for a psychological malaise, or perhaps separation anxiety, pervading the world in the age of recording

technology. In the context of cinema, I consider the separation of a sound from its source in terms of Michel Chion's discussion of *acousmatic* sound, whereby sounds are heard whose sources are not visible on screen.⁶ Chion gives the term "active offscreen sound" to the category of acousmatic sound that can create tension by causing us to question the source of a sound, a questioning often reflected in a character's psychological unease, as with Christ in Scorsese's film.⁷ The notion of separation anxiety is then discussed in terms of the birth of cinema itself. As Tom Gunning suggests, the cinema might best be understood as having originated as a medium founded on the separation of the senses both from each other and from their grounding within the human body.⁸ Finally, the anxiety that Gunning discusses surrounding this separation of the senses is considered in light of Chion's model of *transsensoriality*. Thereby the cinema offers the means for reconciling sound and image by acknowledging their points of intersection within human perception and the potential for these intersections to be exploited creatively.⁹

Schizophrenia, acousmatic sound, and cinema's emergence out of anxieties surrounding the technological separation of the senses yield points of entry into some of the basic questions facing film sound theory today, questions that can readily be applied to Kazantzakis's Christ and his cinematic representation in Scorsese's film. Ultimately, the notion of cinema being based on a separation anxiety borne of technologies of representation is seen as emblematic of the schizophrenic state that Schafer believes to be prevalent in contemporary society. Through a discussion of Kazantzakis's Christ as represented in Scorsese's film, I suggest that, though taking place two thousand years before the invention of the phonograph, Christ's experience is much in line with Schafer's idea of the schizophrenic. As such, Christ's experience can be understood as being relevant today, especially when represented through the medium of film.

Twenty-First-Century Schizoid Man

To begin, let us consider the fact that through sound's relationship to the image (or absence thereof), one of Christ's biggest struggles is illustrated, most notably in the narrative's first third. Here we have his separation from God, a separation that is the source of the uncertainty regarding his destiny, and thus the very substance of his struggle between the flesh and the spirit. This separation plagues Christ in the form of a paranoia specifically related to his hearing of things unseen, leading him to believe that he is being observed and followed by a potentially malicious force. This paranoia is represented through the separation of sound from source. It is of great significance when considering how Christ's own dual substance might be understood as a metaphor for the struggle that sound faces with respect to the moving image. As we explore, this separation of sound from source can be understood in terms of a deeper separation anxiety, one related to contemporary metaphors of the schizophrenic.

R. Murray Schafer, founder of the World Soundscape Project, coined the term *schizophonia*, which he describes as “the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction.”¹⁰ In *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer discusses the role of reproduction technologies in creating a disjunction between original sounds and their propagation through space, and the effect this disjunction has on humans within their sonic environments. Schafer suggests that the technological enhancement of the spatial characteristics of sound is characteristic of late-twentieth-century attempts to “transcend the present tense,” again a symptom of the schizophrenic mind-set.¹¹ Schafer’s point is that with the artificial creation of sonic environments, any environment can stand in for any other, thus removing the natural context (both temporal and spatial) for the sound’s original propagation.

Schafer’s argument is echoed by Frederic Jameson’s description of the negative connotations of symptoms associated with schizophrenia. In *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson argues that the fragmentation, isolation, and surface reassemblage of experience characteristic of postmodernism amount to a loss of historical context. He likens this loss of context to a breakdown in the signifying chain of memory that schizophrenics exhibit in the form of “a series of pure and unrelated presents in time.”¹² The crucial point of joining Schafer’s thought with that of Jameson is to recognize the role of technologies of sound representation in the breaking down of linear time through acts of recontextualization. By using recording technology to document a moment of both time and space, this time and space can be resituated and reexperienced outside of their original context. In so doing, a layering and often disorientation of one’s immediate environment can result. This disorientation can lead to a feeling of separation and anxiety surrounding a lack of stable context.

For Schafer, the negative connotations of the prefix “schizo” are used intentionally to describe a world that he feels has been drastically altered by the invention of technologies capable of pushing a sound well beyond the limits of its original source. Interestingly, Christ’s final struggle, the last temptation, is one in which the flow of time is halted, and he is allowed to live out an entire lifetime in the space of a microsecond. His last temptation is, precisely, a moment of existence outside the time of humanity and within the time of God: the living of a lifetime in what Kazantzakis describes as a “lightning flash.”¹³ In so doing, Kazantzakis’s Christ illustrates a key symptom associated with schizophrenia: a breakdown in the mind’s ability to manage time in a linear fashion, giving way to memory or hallucination being as central an experience as the lived present. This is a highly Bergsonian idea, and it is well-known that Kazantzakis studied under the renowned French philosopher and would have undoubtedly been exposed to similar ideas about memory and the experience of time’s passage. As demonstrated shortly, this last temptation is the culmination of various manifestations of Christ’s separation from God, the majority of which have been suggested by both Kazantzakis and Scorsese through the use of acousmatic sound, a use that foregrounds spatial/temporal disjunctions between the seen and the heard.

The Call of the Faithful—Questions of Sonic Fidelity

For the moment, however, let us consider the concepts of separation and reconciliation as they relate more specifically to the cinema as a medium. Cinema can be understood as having been borne of the separation of hearing and sight followed closely by a need to bring them back together again. Tom Gunning suggests that Thomas Edison's stated goal for the Kinetoscope, to "[do] for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear," is indicative of two concerns in early-twentieth-century life. These concerns were the separation of the senses popular for studies of perception and "a desire to heal the breach" resulting from anxiety surrounding this separation.¹⁴ Gunning holds that in the context of the spiritualist traditions alive and well at the time, the technological separation of the human voice from the body was often considered to be unnatural. For many, this separation was akin to the work of the devil and demanded a restitching of the isolated elements to undo the unholy influence. This situation illustrates people's anxiety over having one sense suddenly ripped from its dependence on the body, an anxiety matched by a desire to counter the imbalance.

Thus, cinema can be understood as having been borne of a technological trend toward breaking down the components of human experience into their constituent elements, a trend that made for much popular uneasiness. The bringing of sound and image together in the cinema, it seems, might have been an attempt at reconciliation between the two, a reconciliation as yet incomplete. Sound and image are still separated technologically from one another in film, and they are still removed from their origination in the human senses of hearing and sight through the cinema's technologies of representation. This separation might well be considered analogous to humanity's Babylonian condemnation to eternal translation between the fragments of the original and once universal language. However, the space of linguistic translation is rich with productive struggle, just as it is with translations between sound and image in the cinema. The fall of the great tower need not be considered a condemnation after all and may well have been the originator of new and stimulating negotiations of meaning within human experience.

On this note, one of the key issues raised by the notion of sound being separated from its source in both space and time, a basic tenet of the cinema, is that of the fidelity of transmitted sound to the original it purports to represent. Evoking the "proverbial tree falling in a forest," Rick Altman suggests: "By offering itself up to be heard, every sound event loses its autonomy, surrendering the power and meaning of its own structure to the various contexts in which it might be heard, to the varying narratives that it might construct."¹⁵ Here Altman focuses on the role of perception of sound within space, perception that depends upon the context of a sound's transmission. As James Lastra elaborates: "Even the original itself is intrinsically multiple and internally differentiated—a fact we recognize every time we choose between 'good' and 'bad' seats in an auditorium."¹⁶ Indeed, wherein lies the coveted original sound at a concert consisting of multiple sound sources

playing to potentially thousands of different points of audition in the space of the hall? The specter of subjective experience looms large, dampening notions that any given sound might have a tangible original that can be compared to all manifestations of its perceptions.

Sound is dependent upon space, and a given point of audition cannot be occupied by more than one perceiver at a time. In light of this fact, Altman describes the need for a kind of narrative analysis of a sound's "spatial signature," close attention to the translation of a sound within a given space, and an understanding of how this space is an integral part of the sound itself.¹⁷ He refers to the notion of multiple perspectives in sound reception as the *Rashomon* phenomenon, invoking the ubiquitous 1950 Kurosawa film and its play on the idea of subjective realities.¹⁸ Altman's conclusion is that every sound is effectively a heterogeneous event that can never be heard by any two listeners in the same way. Thus, when analyzing sound, one must take great care to pay attention to every little nuance, since it is in the nuances that key information about the sound's production and propagation through space will be found. God is in the details, if you will.

As examined below, the theme of infinite subjectivities inherent in Altman's understanding of recorded sound can be applied to Christ's disorientation in the early part of Kazantzakis's narrative. Experiencing a disjunction between his visible world and its sonic counterpart, Christ suffers from an identity crisis commonly associated with the postmodern breakdown in objective grounding and its yield to endless subjective interpretations. In the early phase of the story, he cannot situate himself in relation to the original sources of the sounds that plague him, and this creates a severe anxiety that often finds him writhing on the ground in agony. As also to be examined, this agony gives way to a measure of peace when Christ embraces the disjunctions in his experience and turns them into productive collaborations.

Transcendent Collaboration

Just as there is increasing acknowledgement of the separation of the senses in the cinema, so, too, is there increasing interest in how the brain itself might process information initially broken down by our five sensory channels. Michel Chion's concept of *transsensoriality* will be useful to consider here. "In the transsensorial model," he says, "there is no sensory given that is demarcated and isolated from the outset. Rather, the senses are channels, highways more than territories or domains."¹⁹ He gives rhythm as an example of an element found in cinema that is neither specifically auditory nor visual:

When a rhythmic phenomenon reaches us via a given sensory path, this path, eye or ear, is perhaps nothing more than the channel through which rhythm reaches us. Once it has entered the ear or eye, the phenomenon strikes us in some region of the brain connected to the motor functions, and it is solely at this level that it is decoded as rhythm.²⁰

This transsensorial model for understanding cinematic experience suggests that there are more fundamental levels of the cinema than simply sight and sound, levels that do not differentiate between the auditory and the visual but that cut through both to a deeper and more holistic understanding of experience.

So what we have here are the makings for a “vision” of cinema that addresses it from a holistic perspective, one in which we need not necessarily differentiate between sound and image but rather respect them as being parts of one and the same thing: human experience. This is akin to the ultimate understanding of the dual substance of Christ himself, a removal of the separation between him and God in favor of the revelation that they are both one, housed in the body of a human being.

However, as both Kazantzakis and Chion suggest, it is through an understanding of the struggle between these separated elements that we may begin to move toward their reconciliation. In the case of cinema in particular, so much of what it has to offer comes in the way of tension in the translation from sound to image and back again. Sound designer and editor Walter Murch describes the relationship elegantly:

Image and sound are linked together in a dance. And like some kinds of dance, they do not always have to be clasping each other around the waist: they can go off and dance on their own, in a kind of ballet. There are times when they must touch, there must be moments when they make some sort of contact, but then they can be off again. . . . Out of the juxtaposition of what the sound is telling you and what the picture is telling you, you (the audience) come up with a third idea which is composed of both picture and sound and resolves their superficial differences.²¹

Thus the potential for cinema’s two basic elements to be understood as being two parts of a unified whole exists within us as a function of our humanity and its attendant perceptual apparatus. We reconcile the juxtaposition and superimposition of sound and image through our processing of them. In terms of the schizophrenia that Schafer suggests is so commonplace in contemporary society, this internal reconciliation would amount to facing the disjunction of sound and source through an awareness of our inherent ability to create meaning out of discordance. It would be an embracing of dissonant elements rather than a breakdown in their presence. Schafer suggests that we need to do away with the circumstances that lead to schizophrenia. Kazantzakis’s Christ, on the other hand, may well be an illustration that these circumstances exist to be dealt with through the power of humanity’s ability to process disparate elements of experience within a unified structure.

The cinema’s job, it seems to me, is to present us with an entryway to an appreciation of the interaction between its two channels of transmission. It is here that most cinema fails utterly, wanting us to assume that sound is an accompaniment to the image, a complement that rarely calls into question what is presented visually. But Christ’s struggle revolves around questioning, and so should that of the cinema, as it does in Scorsese’s treatment of Kazantzakis’s novel. With this in mind, let us now turn to an examination of Scorsese’s film in order to see how, through various

strategies, the filmmaker addresses the dual substance of cinema and its relevance to the story of the Messiah's own struggle.

Seeing Is Believing

The role of sound in relation to Christ's struggle with his dual substance is set up immediately within the film's opening moments. First we find him lying on the ground, eyes closed, the sound of the opening credit music fading out as the sound of an eagle cry cuts through the air, followed by the wind, trees, and crickets. Christ's voice in narration describes a feeling of pain, and we see him stir in his sleep, raising his right hand to cover his ear as an unidentifiable ringing sound emerges. Shortly afterward, Christ's narration tells us that he has been plagued by hearing voices, at which point another unidentifiable, though decidedly choral, sound is heard. Finally, Judas confronts Jesus about the ethics of his cross-making. When frustrated that his words are falling on deaf ears, Judas asks: "Do you hear? Where is your mind? Do you hear me?" Each of these auditory strategies or suggestions of sound implies a distance of one kind or another. This may be the distance between the ringing or choral sounds from their invisible sources, or the distance of Jesus' mind from its grounding in the world as evidenced by his inability to hear what is right in front of him. Jesus is being tormented by Chion's category of acousmatic sound known as "active offscreen sound," a cinematic strategy that evokes tension and uncertainty through its lack of resolution between sound and image, sound and source.²²

These opening moments of the film set up an environment rife with elements that might be understood as symptoms of schizophrasia. Christ exhibits an unstable relationship with the world, one that suggests the primacy of subjective experience over an objective understanding of his surroundings. Certain of these sonic elements, notably the sound of the eagle cry, become motifs for the pain that Jesus suffers as a result of his separation anxiety, an anxiety later revealed to be the product of his separation from God. For example, the eagle cry is associated with Christ's feeling that something from outside is trying to enter his mind. It is heard as he is shown writhing on the floor in the arms of his mother, and later when Magdalene is taken from him during his last temptation. The eagle cry comes a final time as he is pulled out of this temptation and returns to his place on the cross—the final and successful infiltration of Christ's mind by that of God, an end to their separation once and for all.

Most notably, however, is the eagle cry early in the film when Christ walks on the beach and hears the sound of footsteps behind him. He calls out: "Who's that? Who's following me? Is that you?" The eagle is heard, and he drops to the ground and writhes again. This instance is particularly interesting because both the sound of the eagle and the sound of the footsteps suggest a presence that cannot be seen, and it is this lack of sight that induces the agony Christ suffers. If he could see what lay at the sources of these sounds, he would understand what was happening to him. The

uncertainty is the source of his struggle in this first third of the narrative, an uncertainty associated with a lack of sight. This is a telling situation. As humans we do indeed place sight at the top of our senses and rely on it for establishing many of our beliefs about the world. Christ can hear what follows him, but this hearing is not sufficient to move him from the realm of speculation to the realm of conviction. Like most humans, he has trouble with his faith because it goes against that most basic of tenets: "Seeing is believing."

The case of the footsteps on the beach is especially interesting in establishing the role of sight in Christ's quest for belief in himself. Their sound is highly reverberated, almost unrecognizable, perhaps even a function of Peter Gabriel's score, also heard in this scene. The otherworldly quality of these sounds indicates that they may, in fact, exist in another space and time. The fact that Jesus is aware of the sounds suggests his own separation from the environment that surrounds him. What ultimately distinguishes these sounds from Gabriel's score, and places them within Christ's range of hearing, is the act of looking. The sounds stop when Jesus turns to see where they come from. So much as a glance in their direction causes them to cease, demonstrating their commitment to remaining completely within the auditory realm as a function of Christ's psychological unrest. He quite literally cannot reconcile the sounds with their source, and so he remains separated from God.

Peace in Multiplicity

Christ's first sign of peace in the film comes when he is blessed by the appearance of dual serpents. Here he comes to understand that "everything is from God, everything has two meanings." The struggle between two things is at the heart of his communion with God. The snakes are intertwined, two beings mingled with one another, as Christ is with God. This image of the dual serpents also suggests that all humans are intertwined with the divine, if only we could embrace the duality. At this moment Jesus understands that he will open his mouth and God will speak through him. He becomes, in a sense, God's medium of sound representation, the site of mediation between the source and the listener.

This idea posits Christ as an embodiment of the problem of original versus copy in the propagation of sound through space. How mediated is Jesus' message from the true word of God? Can this mediation be trusted? How many possible subjective interpretations of the message might there be? Such questions, asked by those in hearing range of Christ's words, are quite similar to those asked by theorists like Rick Altman, concerned with the multiplicities inherent in a sound's transmission from source to perceiver. Christ asks people to believe, however, not that he is a copy of some mysterious original that nobody can see but that he *is* God; he *is* the original finally visible, finally tangible. The problem of fidelity is dealt with through Christ's embodiment of God on earth. There is no separation between the two; he transmits God's voice from God's own mouth. This is made possible by the collaboration of

the human and the divine within Christ, an embracing of a duality, revealed to him in the idea that “all things have two meanings.” The trick, ultimately, is to appreciate the relationship between the two meanings so that they may no longer seem to be at odds with one another, the struggle turned collaboration.

Revelations

The final stage in Christ’s self-recognition comes when John the Baptist confirms this recognition. The baptism scene raises some interesting questions. To begin with, it is one of the first instances of diegetic music whose source is clearly visible. We see people dancing by the water to the rhythm of the music, our first indication that the sound comes from within the space of the narrative. Jesus approaches the crowd, and a voice-over is heard while the rest of the sound track, music, and environmental noise alike is lowered to facilitate greater dialogue intelligibility. However, a different strategy is used when Jesus confronts John face-to-face. The sounds of the music are gradually faded out while the sound of the running stream remains constant. John looks around, and in a point-of-view shot we see the musicians playing but with no correlating sound.

This is a clear revelation of cinema’s power to offer a disjunction between sound and image, and it is an extension of the tension that Jesus himself has been feeling as a result of the separation of sounds from their sources. The isolation of the sound of the water comes at precisely the moment when Jesus is about to come into his full identity as the Son of God through recognition and baptism by John. The sonic isolation may even be an indication of Jesus and John stepping into another time frame, occupying the same space but at a time when the musicians and dancers are not present. This would suggest a discontinuity not only between sound and image but also between space and time, an idea in keeping with the notion that Christ exhibits symptoms of schizophonia. As soon as Jesus is baptized, however, the sound of the music returns and with it a full synchronization of sound and image suggesting a removal of the acousmatic separation that has plagued him since the beginning of the story.

The baptism scene is the clearest revelation in the film that sound and image can contradict one another. The isolation of the sound of the river is an illustration of the potential struggle between sound and image that mainstream cinema so often seeks to keep invisible. This approach serves to heighten the drama of the moment by concentrating our attention on Jesus and John rather than the people around them. It is also clearly intended to be an extension of the acousmatic sound that Jesus has been experiencing throughout the film. Awareness of such potential disjunction is what is most important here. Christ’s mission is one of creating awareness, as is the use of sound in this scene. The idea that “everything has two meanings” is an acknowledgment of the fact that dualities exist and must be embraced if they are to be reconciled. This scene foregrounds

cinema's potential creation of dual meanings and the power of reconciliation through their recognition.

Satan's Call, Satan's Fall

It is interesting to consider God's strategies for the embracing of dual meaning in relation to Satan's presence in the film. As the saying goes, the devil's greatest strength is that people don't believe he exists. Satan's method is to remain invisible so that he may go about his work unnoticed, much in keeping with mainstream cinema's desire to hide the processes of its own creation lest we be distracted from the illusionist spectacle it presents. God's way, that of dual meaning, is more in line with what is sorely needed in the cinema. It needs to move away from invisibility and toward a cinema that does justice to its dual nature, embracing the potential for multiple meanings to be created through the combination of sound with image.

Satan's role of deceiver is most clearly illustrated in the narrative when he appears as a young girl to lead Christ down from the cross and into the space and time of the last temptation. As Magdalene is bathed in light before she is taken, we hear the return of the eagle cry, harkening back to the time when Christ was caught in a separation from God just as he is again here. However, a subtler indication that all is not quite what it should be within the last temptation comes after Magdalene's death. Jesus runs outside with his ax and begins pummeling the ground in frustration that his wife has been taken from him. The sound of each blow reverberates in a manner inconsistent with the wooded outdoor environment in which he finds himself. This is partly a simple punctuation technique to emphasize the power of his anger. Yet this could also be a suggestion of the hollowness of the world he inhabits, the way that pounding on the thin wall of a film set might reverberate through the large space of the soundstage on which it is built. The discordant sound of the ax blows is a classic example of the kind of displacement of spatial signature that Schafer suggests is at the heart of schizophonia. Interestingly, this example falls in the midst of Christ's journey into the altered time frame of his last temptation. As suggested, such an existence outside of the normal flow of time is also a product of schizophonia, and it is certainly related to Christ's ongoing struggle with his separation from God.

It is in the treatment of Satan's voice in the film, however, that he is revealed as an apparently singular being that, upon closer inspection, is found to be in constant separation from himself. He is first called by name in the desert, appearing as a flame and with a voice that has a distinctly different spatial signature than the other voices Jesus speaks with. Its level of reverberation suggests a displacement indicating a potential spatial/temporal disjunction. This abnormal level of reverb turns into an almost complete separation from itself, becoming multiple voices at different pitches yet speaking in unison. This vocal separation effect is finally most pronounced at the end of the last-temptation sequence. Jesus, lying on his deathbed after a long and

comfortable life, is confronted by Judas about his succumbing to the pleasures of the flesh. Realizing what has happened, Jesus starts crawling outside to speak with God. Here, as Satan tells Jesus that he must “die like a man,” the separation in Satan’s voice is more pronounced than before, clearly revealing a multilayering indicative of his true identity.

This multivoicedness is a clever but telling inversion of God’s use of multiple meanings. Satan is double-voiced but does not offer double meanings. He does not seek to illustrate duality in the world so that it can be embraced. Rather, he seeks to offer the illusion of comfort to human beings so that he may betray them. God’s way is more painful, filled with uncertainty but also with productive struggle.

Shadow of the Cross

In conversation with Judas, Jesus says, “All my life I’ve been followed—by voices, by footsteps, by shadows. And do you know what the shadow is? The cross.” In saying this, Jesus acknowledges his reconciliation of the shadow of the cross with the source of this shadow. It is significant that he does this with reference to acousmatic sound. Voices and footsteps of unknown origin are now understood to be those of God. To this he adds the notion of shadow, which is the absence of light, the indexical marker of a visible object. Just as a sound must have a source, so, too, must a shadow. In many ways, sound in film is like the shadow of the image. Here Jesus finally understands that it is on the cross that the shadow will give way to the light, a reconciliation of source and representation. Christ’s journey, then, can truly be understood through the metaphor of the de-acousmatization of sound, the revelation of the sources of unidentified auditory stimuli.

Now Jesus seems to openly acknowledge an understanding of the relationship between the seen and the heard in the context of transsensoriality. By effectively drawing a metaphor between shadow and acousmatic sound, Christ seems to be offering a way of understanding their relationship on equal terms. The form of the cross that caps off this metaphor can be understood as the final and most perfect metaphor of them all: a single shape made up of two distinct elements. Taken on their own, these elements would reduce the cross to the meaninglessness of two simple lines. Together, joined at precisely the point at which they are, these two lines become one of the most powerful indicators of meaning in the world (different though the meaning may be from one person to the next). The cross is a wonderful metaphor for sound/image relationships in the cinema: two elements with a secure point of connection that allows much branching out beyond the confines of this point. This is the ultimate lesson of Kazantzakis’s Christ: acknowledge the points of unity between flesh and spirit while understanding the form that takes shape around their separation.

Finally, in this very conversation with Judas, Jesus concludes that he must die, and that to do so Judas must betray him. Judas is unwilling, and this is one of the

most interesting elements of the reinterpretation of Christ's journey by Kazantzakis. Revising Judas' role in relation to Jesus is an excellent metaphor for revising our understanding of the role of sound in film. Judas once said to Jesus: "I struggle, you collaborate." What Kazantzakis wants to illustrate is that both of these are one and the same thing, that a struggle is a collaboration. Few would argue that sound and image are collaborators in the cinema. What needs to be exposed is that this collaboration is more of a struggle than is usually acknowledged. In a vision-oriented society, it is only natural that cinema has evolved as a predominantly image-oriented medium. However, sound is here to stay, and few would argue that the great potential for sound to rise to equal status with the image is a long way from being achieved. Sound must be reimagined as a collaborator with image through struggle, an exposition of tension between the elements that can yield a harmony impossible if sound is always to remain little more than support for the seen. The purpose of Kazantzakis's Christ is to illuminate the dual nature of all things and to show that when this dual nature is embraced, a more holistic existence can be achieved. Much of Christ's struggle is represented through the use of sound by both Kazantzakis and Scorsese. Because of this, *The Last Temptation of Christ* provides us a great place to indulge in pondering relationships between sound and image in the cinema. It becomes a place to stimulate my hope for a time when all of cinema truly offers the best of its two fundamental worlds.

Notes

1. Phillip Lopate, "Fourteen Koans by a Levite on Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*," in Lopate, *Totally, Tenderly, Tragically* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1998), 123–37.
2. Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, trans. Peter Bien (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 1.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.
4. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
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Edited by

DARREN J. N. MIDDLETON

Featuring essays by

MARTIN SCORSESE, PETER BIEN,
& PETER T. CHATTAWAY



continuum

NEW YORK • LONDON

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The Continuum International Publishing Group, 15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010

The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, The Tower Building, 11 York Road,
London SE1 7NX

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Cover art courtesy of Dr. Patroclos Stavrou
Cover design by Lee Singer

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Scandalizing Jesus? : Kazantzakis's The last temptation of Christ fifty years on / edited by Darren J. N. Middleton.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8264-1607-1 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-8264-1606-3 (casebound with jacket : alk. paper)

1. Kazantzakis, Nikos, 1883–1957. O teleftaios peirasmós. 2. Kazantzakis, Nikos, 1883–1957—Characters—Jesus Christ. 3. Jesus Christ—In literature. I. Middleton, Darren J. N., 1966—PA5610.K39T4325 2005
889'.332—dc22

2005006615

Printed in the United States of America