

CINEMA COMPARAT/IVE CINEMA



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Cover image: *Poto and Cabengo* (Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1979).

Introduction

Cinema Comparative Cinema is a biannual publication founded in 2012. It is edited by Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los Medios Audiovisuales (CINEMA) at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), and focuses on comparative cinema and the reception and interpretation of film in different social and political contexts. Each issue investigates the conceptual and formal relationships between films, material processes and production and exhibition practices, the history of ideas and film criticism.

Cinema Comparative Cinema addresses an original area of research, developing a series of methodologies for a comparative study of cinema. With this aim, it also explores the relationship between cinema and comparative literature as well as other contemporary arts such as painting, photography, music or dance, and audio-visual media.

Cinema Comparative Cinema is published in three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. The issues come out in June and December. At least half of the articles included in the journal are original texts, of which at least 50% are written by authors external to the publishing organisation. The journal is peer-reviewed and uses internal and external evaluation committees.

Finally, each issue of the journal is complemented by documentary materials and texts published online, which facilitate and enrich the topics studied in each volume, thus establishing links between longer research projects and monographic focuses throughout this process.

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Editorial. *The Sound as Image. The Voice-over.*

Manuel Garin

In the climax of *Nostramo*, when we eagerly await the resolution of the novel's great enigmas (a war, the protagonist's disappearance, the destiny of several characters), Joseph Conrad introduces a radical ellipsis, refusing to describe the central images that –until then– he has carefully carved in the reader's mind. We're talking about powerful images, since the book's Second Part –which precedes the ellipsis– conveys an unremitting flow of adventures, narrated in an overwhelmingly visual way. The reader craves *to see* new images at all costs, and Conrad thwarts such desire by transforming present-tense narration into a retrospective tale: the voice of an old seaman –captain Mitchell– who *tells* what happened in hindsight, years later, while he acts as cicerone for a random newcomer. Filtered through his voice, those images –that we so intensely longed for– become a sort of touristy *print the legend*, completely opposed to our expectations, thus boycotting both the images themselves (their historical interpretation) and the reader's desire “for images”. A double-boycott that forces us *to see through the voice*:

“And in the superintendent's private room the privileged passenger by the *Ceres*, or *Juno*, or *Pallas*, stunned and as it were annihilated mentally by a sudden surfeit of sights, sounds, names, facts, and complicated information imperfectly apprehended, would listen like a tired child to a fairy tale; would hear a voice, familiar and surprising in its pompousness, tell him, as if from another world, how there was ‘in this very harbor’ an...”
(Conrad, 2007: 349)

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Conrad's elliptic treason is not only a temporal displacement, that is to say, a prime political gesture, it is also a manifest on the power of the voice and, particularly, of those voices-over that seem *to come from another world* and challenge –with just a few words– all our assumptions about what cinema is or is not. Voice-over, understood as a way of generating images and as an act of resistance (to images), constitutes the main topic of this *Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema* issue, for which we have gathered a chorus of heterogeneous and sharp voices, combining interviews and essays with work-in-progress documents by filmmakers, editors and sound designers, in order to juxtapose different uses of oral narration as a key resource for cinematic creation.

Looked down by some, mystified by others, voice-over is one of the most underrated assets throughout film history, one that has provoked many misunderstandings... a fact that already proves its usefulness for experimentation and critique. We are currently facing a period of changes and cost-reductions due to digital modes of production, and films like *Historias Extraordinarias* (Mariano Llinás, 2008) or *Tabu* (Miguel Gomes, 2012) are starting to shape new ways of relating images and words, through cinematic and literary devices. A new voice-over tradition is being developed through those films, and that is precisely why this issue discusses certain concepts and historical assumptions linked with different genres, periods, countries and filmmakers.

These pages do not attempt to solve anything, but to gather an ensemble of voices that question –like captain Mitchell's– the links between seeing and telling: words as images. •

The Word Is Image

Manoel de Oliveira

The word is magic too, the word is cinema. At the beginning, cinema worked around the idea of movement. Cinema is part of photography, which is quite objective by itself, that's why it stands out from painting. Since people appeared static in photographs, no matter what they were doing—jumping, dancing, walking—, that fostered the desire for movement. That's where cinema had its origins, right there, in the desire of movement. But cinema is not only that. Gilles Deleuze, the French writer and philosopher, wrote two very important books for me: *The Time-Image* and *The Movement-Image*. He held many theories in them, that I make mine. For instance, it can be said that the word is image, since when I say table I see it, and if I specify how that table looks like, the table's image gets sharper. If I speak about a door, I instantly feel what a door actually is; but if I say a flat door or a completely flat door, that is different, its image gets far more precise. Therefore, the word equates to the image. And time equates to movement. We can stand still here, stopped, but time won't stop because of it. It's a time that precedes and succeeds each and every thing. That's why Deleuze wrote *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*. Images imply words and time implies movement, and that ensemble shapes cinema. Cinema used to be silent, so there was a concern about how images should explain everything. Then voice and color came. But before, cinema was like dreams, which don't have sound or color, so it might be said that cinema used to be dreamlike. By gaining color and sound, the word started to turn cinema more realistic, closer to life. In fact, the word was what truly made cinema become more realistic. That's

why we should abandon the idea that cinema is only movement, because it's not enough. Only the gesture carries an expression. Something that moves doesn't have to express anything. With gestures there is a sense of communication, an escape, a fear... That's why I think the word is an irreplaceable part of what we call cinema. Sound, word, image and music are, in my opinion, the four foundations that ultimately support—like the columns in a Greek temple—the building of cinema. They render its unity and meaning. •

Extract from «Entrevista a Manoel de Oliveira» in Letras de Cine nº7, 2003. By: Arroba, Álvaro; Diego, Israel; Villamediana, Daniel Vázquez; Rodríguez, Hilario J.

As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty

Jonas Mekas

I have never been able really to figure out where my life begins and where it ends.

CHAPTER I

I have never, never been able to figure it all out. What it's all about, what it all means. So when I began now to put all these rolls of film together, to string them together, the first idea was to keep them chronological. But then I gave up and I just began splicing them together by chance, the way I found them on the shelf. Because I really don't know where any piece of my life really belongs.

Let it be, let it go, just by pure chance, disorder. There is some kind of order in it, order of its own, which I do not really understand, same as I never understood life around me, *the real life*, as they say, or the real people, I never understood them.

I still do not understand them, and I do not really want to understand them.

1. This document includes the film's voice-over fragments only, not the written texts that frequently intertwine with

Without knowing, unknowingly, we carry... each of us, we carry with us somewhere deep, some images of Paradise. Maybe not images... some vague, vague feeling where we have been some place... There are places, there are places in which we find ourselves in our lives. I have been in such places where I felt, ah, this must be like Paradise, this is Paradise, or something like that. A little fragment of Paradise. Not only the places... I have been with friends. We have been together, my friends, many times, and we felt some kind of togetherness, something special, and we were elated and we felt, ah, we felt like in Paradise.

But we were right here on this Earth. But we were in Paradise... Those brief moments, those moments... And that is maybe what it's all about... Forget eternity, enjoy. Yes, we enjoyed those moments. Those brief moments, those evenings. And there where many such evenings, many such evenings, my friends. I will never forget them, my friends...

and relate to the spoken word. We'd like to thank Manuel Asín for allowing us to include this text.

I think Nietzsche was the transition. I believe one of the absolute greatest philosophers of the Western culture is Nietzsche. The most precise of all.

That's why he was the greatest influence...

He changed my life in 1960. In 1959 I read his "Dramaturgie", and I read the introduction of the second or third edition, which was years later, and he says, "Oh if I would have only written poetry and incorporated it all, instead of trying to say it as a philosopher! That was my failure". So I said: "That's enough. I have to make my films now". And that's when I left my job at the Graphic Studios and made "Guns of the Trees". He had his mind and he continuously struggles...

CHAPTER II

Here I am, in my editing room, this late night, this late night again. I have stopped my tape recorder here... That is, I am rewinding... as I'm working on my sounds... Here I am, just with my images and my sounds, by myself, now, in a practically empty house.

Oona is now married and happy and she is in Brooklyn. But actually, this very minute she's watching with Sebastian. They went to a movie. Hollis is out, she left early this morning. I left before her, so I don't know where she is and when she's coming back home. So here I am, just myself, and cats and my images and my sounds. And myself.

Myself, wondering, wondering about myself. Actually, maybe I am exaggerating. I'm not really wondering. I'm just doing my work. I'm just working. This is my little workshop here, this little room, loaded, stacked with film, and my two *Bayans*... Here is one, and here is another.

As I'm working on my sounds, I'm not so sure what I'm doing really. It's all chance. I'm going through all the reels of my sounds, picking

up this, picking up that, splicing it all together, putting it all together, by chance. Same as the images, same as... I am putting those images together, exactly the same when I originally filmed them: by chance, with no plan, just according to the whim of the moment, what I felt at that moment that I should be filming. This or that, without knowing why.

Same with the sounds that I have collected through all those years. I'm picking up all those sounds and putting them here on the soundtrack, by chance.

Memories... Memories... Image, sound, memories...

No judgement here... positive, negative, good, bad... They're just images and sounds, very very innocent in and by themselves, as they pass through... As they go and they go. Very very innocent. Yes, people are bad, cinema is innocent, innocent. People are not innocent. They are not.

CHAPTER III

Here is a surprise for Chapter Three.

Now, what do the normal, regular people usually do? Of course: they get married. So, Hollis and me, that is, the protagonists of this film, we decided to try to be like all the normal, serious people: we decided to get married.

Ah, Almus, with your boundless energy!

Ah, Jacques Ledoux, sweet Ledoux!

Ah, P. Adams, Allan!

Ken, and Richard.

Harry, I miss your jokes. I miss your jokes.

Ah, and there is the man of the minute... and Hollis's father. And Hollis's brother.

Watching the snow fall. Keep looking for things, in places, where there is nothing.

The dream.

The crying room. The crying room. The crying field. There is a room... there is a room, we never see its inside. There is a room in which there is a woman who cries and cries. We hear her crying, but we never see her. The crying field. There is a room.

The silence. The silence. But what happens during the silences? Yes, the silences...

But what happens during the silences?

But what happens during the silences?

The pain is stronger than ever. I've seen bits of lost Paradises and I know I'll be hopelessly trying to return, even if it hurts. The deeper I swing into the regions of nothingness, the further I'm thrown back into myself, each time more and more frightening depths below me, until my very being becomes dizzy. There are brief glimpses of clear sky, like falling out of a tree, so I have some idea where I am going, but there is still too much clarity and straight order of things, I am getting always the same number somehow. So I vomit out broken bits of words and syntaxes of the countries I've passed through, broken limbs, slaughtered houses, geographies. My heart is poisoned, my brain left in shreds of horror and sadness. I've never let you down, world, but you did lousy things to me. This feeling of going nowhere, of being stuck, the feeling of Dante's first strophe, as if afraid of the next step, next stage. As long as I don't sum up myself, stay on the surface, I don't have to move forwards, I don't have to make painful and terrible decisions, choices, where to go and how. Because deeper there are terrible decisions to make, terrible steps to take. It's at forty that we die, those who did not die at twenty. It is at forty that we betray ourselves, our bodies, our souls, by either staying on the surface or by going further but through the easiest decisions, retarding, throwing our souls back by thousands of incarnations. But

I have come close to the end now, it's the question will I make it or will I not. My life has become too painful and I keep asking myself, what I am doing to get out of where I am, what am I doing with my life. It took me long to realize that it's love that distinguishes man from stones, trees, rain, and that we can lose our love and that love grows through loving. Yes, I've been so completely lost, so truly lost. There were times I wanted to change the world, I wanted to take a gun and shoot my way through the Western Civilization. Now I want to leave others alone, they have their terrible fates to go. Now I want to shoot my own way through myself, into the thick night of myself. Thus I change my course, going inwards. Thus I am jumping into my own darkness. There must be something, somehow, I feel, very soon, something that should give me some sign to move one or another direction. I must be very open and watchful now, completely open. I know it's coming. I am walking like a somnambulist waiting for a secret signal, ready to go one or another way, listening into this huge white silence for the weakest sign or call. And I sit here alone and far from you. And it's night and I'm reflecting on everything all around me, and I am thinking of you. I saw it in your eyes, in your love, you too are swinging towards the depths of your own being in longer and longer circles. I saw happiness and pain in your eyes and reflections of the Paradises lost and regained and lost again, that terrible loneliness and happiness. Yes, and I reflect upon this and I think about you, like two lonely space pilots in outer cold space, as I sit here this late night alone and I think about all this.

CHAPTER IV

So, my dear viewers, we have arrived at Chapter Four.

Sorry that nothing much, nothing extraordinary has so far happened in this movie. Nothing much extraordinary. It's all very simple daily activities, life. No drama, no great climaxes, no tension. What will happen next. Actually, the titles in this movie tell you right there what's going to happen. I guess, by now you have noticed that

I do not like any suspense. I want you to know exactly, or at least approximately, what's coming, what's happening. Though, again, as you have noticed, nothing much is happening anyway. So let's continue, and see, maybe something will happen. Maybe. If not, forgive me, dear viewers. If nothing happens, let's continue anyway. That's how life is. It's always more of the same. Always more of the same. One day follows another, one second follows another second.

OK, I'll give you now some suspense and let's see... Let's see how the time is going... I'll record exactly one minute beginning now.

Cut! That was one minute. One minute is longer than one thinks.

And the mist now covers the sand.

And the mist now covers the sand.

I have been so totally alone with myself for so long.

I've been so totally alone with myself for so long.

He sits under the tree in the park, listening to the leaves of the trees in the wind.

That day you wanted to come with me, but you couldn't. I went alone, but it wasn't the same. You said you had a feeling that in one of my lives I had something to do with the circus. You said, you could see me in Spain.

No image. Only soundtrack of Louis and Storm discussing something. Bits, glimpses of mystics.

My dear viewer, it's midnight now. I am talking to you and it's very very late in my little room. I'm looking at these images and I'm trying to provide you with some sounds to go with these images, and my imagination. My mind has just stopped dead.

I am looking at these images, now, many many years later. I recognize and remember everything. What can I tell to you, what can I tell to you. No. No. These are images that have some meaning to me, but may have no meaning to you at all. Then, suddenly, this being midnight, I thought: there is no image that wouldn't relate to anybody else. I mean, all the images around us, that we go through our lives, and I go filming them, they are not that much different from what you have seen or experienced... From what you have seen or experienced. All our lives are very very much alike. Ah, my dear Blake! Just a drop of water. We are all in it and nothing, there is no big difference, no essential difference between you and me, no essential difference.

CHAPTER V

You must by now come to a realization that what you are seeing is a sort of masterpiece of nothing. Nothing. You must have noticed my obsession with what's considered as *nothing*, in cinema and life, *nothing* very important. We all look for those very important things... Very important things. And here there is nothing important, nothing. It's all little daily scenes, personal little celebrations and joys. Nothing important. It's all nothing. Nothing. That is, if you have never experienced the ecstasy of a child making the first steps... The incredible importance of that moment, of a child making his first steps. Or the importance, the incredible importance of a tree in the Spring suddenly all in blossoms. All in blossoms! The miracle... Miracles of every day, little moments of Paradise that are here now. Next moment maybe they are gone. Totally insignificant... but great.

«The reader should be carried forward not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself.» Coleridge.

Is it June? Yes, June 26th, oh boy!

June 26th. Now what do we have to say for ourselves on this day?

June 23rd.

The voice said: "You don't have to go anywhere. You just have to make yourself ready. Prepare yourself. Know it's there. It will come by itself. Your work is here, it will come by itself. Just have trust and knowing, and be open and ready. Don't worry, don't frustrate. It will come.

CHAPTER VI

By the time a viewer, that is you, reaches Chapter Six, one expects, that is you, you expect, you expect to find out... more about the protagonist, that is me, the protagonist of this movie. So I don't want to disappoint you. All I want to tell you, it's all here. I am in every image of this film, I am in every frame of this film. The only thing is: you have to know how to read these images. How? Didn't all those French guys tell you how to read the images? Yes, they told you. So, please, read these images and you'll be able to tell everything about me.

So, here it is, Chapter Six.

Ah, the summers of New York! The summers, when everybody is leaving the town, when I can walk the streets just almost by myself, and the sun beating on the streets, and sweating, and hot, I like it, I am in ecstasy during those days, weeks of the midsummer, the hottest time in New York. I like it, I like New York when it's hot and when I am sweating and I am walking the streets. I have walked those streets all my New York life, many many years. I have memories... I have memories of those streets, going back many many many years. The summers... the summers of New York. Ecstatic! New York downtown rooms are hot and the mysterious wind comes through the windows and blows the curtains gently. Ah, the winds of New York summers! You

sit or maybe you lie in your hot bed in your hot room, and you are sweating, and you don't know what to drink, and whatever you drink comes out immediately through your skin as sweat. Ah, those are the days that I like! And you sit maybe by the window and you look out, and maybe you don't even have a fan going, and it's hot in the room too, and you look out, and it's all white and washed out by the sun. Ah, then you go to the park, and you lie in the grass and you look at the blue sky, maybe there is not a single cloud in it, and it's hot, and it's hot. There are millions of people around you on the blankets, the trees, the trees, and there is you, maybe just by yourself, in the middle of the summer. Ah, what an ecstasy, what an ecstasy!

As I was watching you that moment, I thought there can not be anything more beautiful or more important on this earth, between heaven and earth, as you were there one with them, one with heaven and earth, giving life, giving life to Oona. I admired you that moment and I knew that you were completely somewhere else, somewhere else where I could never be, something I could never totally understand. The beauty of the moment, that moment, was beyond any words.

Now, this is from William Carlos Williams, from his autobiography: «That is the poet's business, not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal». John Dewey had said: «I discovered it quite by chance. The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds». Quotes closed.

Then all the sound stops suddenly.

CHAPTER VII

My dear viewers, I guess you have come to another realization by now: and that is, that I am not really a filmmaker. I do not make films. I just

film. I am obsessed with filming. I am really a filmer... It's me and my Bolex. I go through this life with my Bolex and I have to film what I see, what is happening right there. What an ecstasy just to film. Why do I have to make films when I can just film! When I can just film, whatever is happening there, in front of me and now, my friends, whatever I see. I may not be even filming the real life, I may be just filming my memories. I don't care! I just have to film. Like, I have to film snow. I have to film snow. How much snow there is in New York? But you'll see a lot of snow in my films. Snow is like the mud of Lourdes. Why do they always, when they paint Paradise, show it just full of exotic trees? No! Paradise, my Paradise was full of snow! I tell you: Paradise was full of soft, white snow, and I used to roll in it and I was so free and happy. I was in Paradise. I knew... I know when I as a child I was in Paradise. I know.

I guess I am a romantic. You can call me a romantic. It's OK with me. I do not understand, I never really understood, never really lived in the so-called *real world*. I lived... I live in my own imaginary world, which is as real as any other world, as real as the real worlds of all the other people around me. You also live in your own imaginary worlds. What you are seeing is my imaginary world, which to me is not imaginary at all. It's real. It is as real as anything else under the sun. So let us continue... Let us continue.

CHAPTER VIII

As I am putting these pieces of film together, this late evening, I am thinking about myself, I am thinking how during the years, I have covered myself with layers of civilization, so many layers that now even myself I don't see how easily wounds are made deep inside... Deep inside by things that I don't even suspect. What do I know about this civilization, this life? I know nothing. I do not understand anything. And I know nothing. I know nothing. I do not know how I managed to reach this point, how I have reached this point in my life. But I continue moving ahead, slowly,

moving ahead, and some glimpses of happiness and beauty come my way, by chance, when I do not even expect it... when I do not even expect it... So I keep moving ahead, I keep moving ahead, my friends...

I understand animals: cows, horses, cats, dogs... But I do not understand people. I do not understand people. So let us continue.

Life goes on.

My camera... To film... I am not making films. I am just filming. The ecstasy of filming, just filming life around me, what I see, to what I react, to what my fingers, my eyes react, this moment, now, this moment when it's all happening. Ah, what ecstasy!

CHAPTER IX

So let us continue. It's very late at night now, in New York and in my little room, where I am putting all these pieces together. It seems that the only time I have for myself is those late late night hours when everybody's sleeping, when the air is clearer from all that daily noise, activity. Those are the little bits of time and, of course, it has always been so, that is why this film consists of little bits, fragments of time, time from my life... little fragments. But sometimes the fragments contain all that there is, as Blake said...

CHAPTER X

In the background you can hear some noises from the New Year's celebration. New Year's 1999 into 2000. Tomorrow will be the first day of the year 2000. I am here in my editing room splicing. I made about one hundred and fifty splices today, and I am looking at my old footage, footage of the XXth century, the last quarter of the XXth century, as the world is celebrating the new year. The new year... I am celebrating all the past years in this

footage, this film. It's about twenty minutes to the end of this millennium as I sit here, in my editing room making splices, splicing little bits of my own past, my own millennium. Each of us have our own millenniums, millennia, and they could be longer or shorter. And when I look now at this footage, I look at it from completely somewhere else, I am completely somewhere else now. This is me, there, here, and it's not me anymore, because I am the one who is looking at it now, at myself, at my life, my friends, the last quarter of the Century. Now it's about seventeen minutes to the end of this century, this millennium. It's just time. Time goes on, life goes on; same as this film is going on through the projector gate... projector gate. The film, these images recorded casually at different times, long ago, and they mean just what they mean, just what they are, and nothing else beyond themselves.

The Sundays... The Sundays in Central Park, when you sit in the grass... when you sit in the grass with friends and, maybe, a bottle of wine, and some cheese and some Italian sausage. Ah, the ecstasy, the beauty, the happiness of Sundays in Central Park! If you have never spent Sunday, many Sundays, as many Sundays as I have spent there, you'll never know the happiness, the pleasure, the ecstasy, the beauty of Central Park on Sundays. Central Park! Summers in Central Park... The summers of Central Park...

The seasons of the year pass New York, quietly, very often unnoticed. Here is winter and then, before you know, suddenly, Spring. Sometimes you think it's already Spring, and then, it snows for a surprise. And then again, the Spring takes over and suddenly everything is blooming. Everything is blooming and you know then it's really Springtime. Yes, it is Springtime. And then you go to the Central Park. Eh, my friends! The Spring, the summers of New York!... I don't think you believe me. But I tell you: it is beautiful in New York in the Spring. And when the summers come, I am ecstatic, I don't want to go anywhere, I want to stay here, in New York.

Memories, memories... They come and go, in no particular order. I remember this, I remember that; places, faces, situations, they come and go, they come and go.

My dear friends, to be in Paradise is to be with good old friends. Ah, my friends! The hours, the evenings we spent together! That was Paradise. As time goes... as time goes, there is nothing more important than good friends, my friends!

CHAPTER XI

As I sit in my room this late night and look at some of the images that I am splicing, putting together, I wonder how much of yourselves you'll see and recognize in these images.

I am talking to you now, Oona and Sebastian and Hollis. I am talking to you now. These are my memories. Your memories of the same moments, if you'll have any, will be very different. These are my memories, the way I saw it when I was filming it. It was through my childhood memories, I guess, I was filming my own memories, my own childhood, as I was filming your childhood. I picked up those moments to which I responded, coming, remembering my own childhood. So I do not know how much of yourselves you'll see in it, though it was all real, it was all real life. It's you, it's you in every frame of this film, though it's seen by me. But it is you. You'll see it all very differently. It will mean completely something else, these images, to you than to me.

Yes... It's late night again. The city is sleeping. I am here alone, looking at these images, fragments of my and your lives; talking into this mike, by myself, by myself...

CHAPTER XII

I am still in Provence, this evening, here, in my editing room, this late night. I am in Provence! I feel the sun, I feel the lightness, I see

the landscape, the trees, the flowers. I can smell the air of Provence and I can feel the happiness, the happiness of that summer in Provence, as we, Hollis and me, as we were driving through the little towns up and down and around hills, little towns. Provence! As we drank the wine of Provence, the air of Provence. Ah, the happiness, the ecstasy of that summer. It's still here, now, with me, this very moment, it's stronger than anything that I have experienced, gone through. Today... today, now and in New York it's much much stronger and closer and much more real. You ask me about beauty! What do I know about beauty! But I know that I have experienced moments of happiness. Moments of happiness... and that was, if there is beauty, that was beauty.

Provence is beauty. Being in love is beauty. Drinking the wine of Provence is beauty. That was, that is beauty, my friends! Yes, friends is beauty. To have a glass of wine with friends, old friends and new friends, is beauty. I drink to you tonight, here, by myself, I lift my glass of Provence wine, Ben's wine, to you, my friends!

My dear viewers: as we continue I do not feel any guilt making you watch these very personal insignificant moments of my life. We all look for something more important... for something more important... But, as life goes, at some point we realize that one day follows another, and things that we felt were so important yesterday we feel we have forgotten them already today.

Life is continuing... Life is continuing... And what's important to me may be totally unimportant to you, totally unimportant to you... Though everything eventually passes, except this very, this very very moment, and the next second we are in another moment and something else happens and everything else is gone, is past, is memory, is memory. But some of the memories... no, they never really go away. Nothing really goes away, it's always here, and sometimes it takes over you, and it's stronger than any reality around you, around me, now. That is... reality. That is real. That is really real, though it's not here anymore, as they say, it's not here anymore. But it's here for me, it's here and now.

I don't know what life is. I know nothing about what life is. I have never understood life, the real life. Where do I really live? I do not know. I do not know where I come from, where do I go. Where am I, where am I? I do not know. I do not know where I am, and where I am going to and where I'm coming from. I know nothing about life. But I have seen some beauty, I have seen some brief... Brief glimpses of beauty and happiness... I have seen, I know. I have seen some happiness and beauty.

I do not know where I am. I do not know where I am! But I know I have experienced some moments of beauty, brief moments of beauty and happiness, as I am moving ahead, as I am moving ahead, my friends! I have, I know, I know I have experienced some brief brief moments of beauty! My friends! My friends! •

Back to Voice: on Voices *over, in, out, through*

Serge Daney

“Dubbing is crude and naïve”, writes Bresson in *Notes sur le cinématographe*. “Unreal voices, inconsistent with the movement of the lips. Out of sync with the lungs and the heart. Coming ‘from the wrong mouths’”. Bresson is one filmmaker (Jacques Tati is another) who has always insisted on a certain realism of sound. In this respect, he was deeply influential on the most innovative *New Wave* filmmakers. Note, however, that he mentions not only the mouth and lips but also the lungs and heart. Although he insisted on realism, he never made a fetish of directly recorded sound; rather, he stubbornly insisted on meticulous post-synchronization of carefully mixed and orchestrated tracks. Why? Precisely because he drew a distinction between *the voice and the mouth*. If one looks at the mouth, it is easy (and takes no effort) to see that something is being said. But the voice involves the whole body, including the heart and lungs, which cannot be seen.

In order to pursue this theme further, one needs to be wary of such terms as *voice-over* and the like, which are altogether too dependent on the visual and, as such, surreptitiously extend the hegemony of the eye, with the inevitable consequence that the ear is mutilated: film, we are told, is primarily images, which “strike the eye” and “orient vision.” The advent of direct sound recording in televised news reports, ethnographic documentaries, and propaganda films, together with the wild enthusiasm for the essential immediacy of the audiovisual (Jean Rouch and Jean-Marie Straub, quickly copied but poorly understood), led people to pattern sonic space after visual space, which served to guarantee its

veracity, to authenticate it. In fact, however, the two spaces are heterogeneous. A more precise description of each is required, along with terminology for specifying their interactions. [...]

In terms of images, the distinction between on-screen and off-screen occurrences, while no doubt useful for writing a screenplay or critically analyzing a film, is not subtle enough for a theory of missing objects because there are different types of off-screen events. Some objects are permanently missing (either because they are unrepresentable—for instance, to take the standard example, the camera that cannot film itself filming the scene—or taboo, such as the prophet Muhammad in *The Message* [Moustapha Akkad, 1977]), while others are temporarily out of sight, hence subject to the familiar alternation of presence and absence, of Fort Da, to use the Freudian metaphor. The possibility of eternal return is greeted by the spectator with either horror or relief. These are not the same, even if they happen off-screen.

The same on-screen/off-screen distinction that is already of dubious value in discussing the visual is altogether too crude for analyzing voices. Broadly speaking, the term *voice-over* refers to the voices of off-screen speakers. But this really depends on a distinction between sound that is synchronized and sound that is not: the voice is reduced to its visual stand-in, which is itself reduced to the configuration and shape of the lips. The *voice-over* is then identified with an absence in the image. I favour the opposite approach: voices should be related to their effects in or on the image.

I will use the term *voice-over* narrowly to describe an off-screen voice that always runs parallel to the sequence of images and never intersects with it. For example, in a documentary about sardines, the voice-over can say whatever it likes (whether it describes sardines or slanders them makes no difference); it remains without measurable impact on the fish. This voice, superimposed on the image after the fact and linked to it by editing, is a purely metalinguistic phenomenon. It is addressed (both as statement and delivery) solely to the viewer, with whom it enters into an alliance or contract that ignores the image. Because the image serves only as the pretext for the wedding of commentary and viewer, the image is left in an enigmatic state of abandonment, of frantic disinheritance, which gives it a certain form of presence, of obtuse significance (Barthes' third meaning), which (with a certain element of perversity) can be enjoyed incognito, as it were. To see this, mute the sound on your television and look at the images left to themselves.

Voice-over of this kind can be coercive. If, speaking of sardines, I say that "these grotesque animals, driven by a suicidal compulsion, hasten toward the fisherman's nets and end their lives in the most ridiculously way imaginable," the statement will contaminate not the sardines but the gaze of the spectator, who is obliged to make what sense he can of it despite the obvious disparity between what he sees and what he hears. The voice-over narrative, which coerces the image, intimidates the gaze, and creates a double bind, is one of the primary modes of propaganda in film.

This is the level at which a director like Godard operates: one might call it the "voice-over degree zero." In *Leçons de chose* (the second part of *Six Times Two / Sur et sous la Communication* [Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976]), the sudden intrusion of a shot of a marketplace (an intrusion that is as violent as it is sudden, since like all of Godard's images it is totally unpredictable) is immediately baptized "fire" by the soundtrack. This is justified in part by a play on words (*flambée des prix* is French

for "skyrocketing prices", hence the connection to the image of the marketplace, but *flambée* also means "blaze", hence the connection to the soundtrack), in part as a response to the intrusiveness of the image and the enunciation of the word, retroactively re-marking the violence. One sees the same thing in *Here and Elsewhere* (*Ici et ailleurs*, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, 1975) with the sequence on "how to organize an assembly line." With each new image, Godard's voice hollowly repeats the words: "Well, this way... like this... but also like that." In relation to the "one-by-one" sequence of images the voice plays the same role as quotation marks in a text: it highlights but also distances.

By contrast, I will use the term, *in voice* to refer to a voice that participates in the image, merges with it, and has material impact on it by way of a visual stand-in. If my commentary on sardines has the effect of leaving the poor fish stranded in their mere presence as sardines, my voice has a totally different effect if, in the course of a live report, I ask someone a question. Even if that question is spoken off-camera, my voice intrudes upon the image, affecting my interlocutor's face and body and triggering a furtive or perhaps overt reaction, a response. The viewer can measure the violence of my statement by the disturbance it causes in the person who receives it, as one might catch a bullet or a ball (or other small-"a" objects), to one side or head on. This is the technique used by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loidan in *How Yukong Moved the Mountain* (*Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes*, 1976). It is also the technique of horror films and of the "subjective" films of Robert Montgomery. One also sees it in the now somewhat outmoded technique of having a voice put familiar questions to the characters in a film, who halt their action long enough to respond. Think, for example, of Sacha Guitry's paternalistic attitude toward his "creations," or the complicity between the narrator and characters in films from Salah Abouseif's *Between Heaven and Earth* (*Bayn el samaa wa el ard*, 1959) to Luís Berlanga's *Welcome Mr. Marshall!* (*Bienvenido Mister Marshall*, 1953).

The *in voice* is the focal point of a different but just as redoubtable form of power. What is presented as the emergence of truth may well be merely the production of discomfort in the guinea pig forced to answer questions as the viewer looks on. There are at least two other kinds of voices: those spoken “within” the image, either through a mouth (*out voice*) or through an entire body (*through voice*).

The *out voice* is basically the voice as it emerges from a mouth. It is projected, dropped, thrown away: one of various objects expelled from the body (along with the gaze, blood, vomit, sperm, and so on). With the out voice we touch on the nature of the cinematographic image itself: though flat, it gives the illusion of depth. Both the voice-over and the in voice emanate from an imaginary space (whose position varies with the type of projection equipment, configuration of the theatre, placement of loudspeakers, and the location of the spectator). By contrast, the out voice emanates from an illusory space, a decoy. It emerges from the filmed body, which is a body of a problematic sort, a false surface and a false depth. It is a container with a false bottom, with no bottom at all, which expels (and therefore makes visible) objects as generously as Buster Keaton’s taxis can disgorge regiments. This filmed body is made in the image of the barracks in *Cops* (Buster Keaton, 1922) or of the church in *Seven Chances* (Buster Keaton, 1925).

The out voice is a form of pornography in the sense that it fetishizes the moment of emergence from the lips (stars’ lips, or, in *Dishonored* [Josef von Sternberg, 1931], Marlene foregoing lipstick before the firing squad). Similarly, porno films are entirely centered on the spectacle of the orgasm seen from the male side, that is, the most visible side. The out voice gives rise to a “material theatre” since it is central to every religious metaphor (passage from inside to outside with metamorphosis). To grasp the moment of emission of the voice is to grasp the moment when the object *a* separates from the partial object. [...] There is a pornography of the voice comparable in every way to the pornography of sex (abusive use of interviews, mouths of political leaders, and so on). Clever writers have woven stories around this theme (such as Daniel Schmid’s *Shadow of Angels* [*Schatten der Engel*, 1976], in which a prostitute is paid to listen, and *Pussy Talk* [*Le sexe qui parle*, Claude Mulot, 1975], in which a woman’s vagina expresses its insatiable appetite).

Finally, a *through voice* is a voice that originates within the image but does not emanate from the mouth. Certain types of shot, involving characters filmed from behind, from the side, or in three-quarter view or from behind a piece of furniture, screen, another person, or an obstacle of some sort, cause the voice to be separated from the mouth. The status of the through voice is ambiguous and enigmatic, because its visual stand-in is the body in all its opacity, the expressive body, in whole or in part. •

Excerpts from “L’Orgue et l’Aspirateur (Bresson, le Diable, la voix off et quelques autres)”, article published in *Cahiers du cinéma* n° 278-279, august-september 1977. Published in English in *Literary Debates: Texts and Contexts* (Postwar French Thought, Volume II), edited by Dennis Hollier and Jeffrey Mehlman, *The New Press*, 1999, pp. 474-483 (translated by Arthur Goldhammer, on-line version transcribed by Steve Erickson)

Interview with Pierre Léon. A Rhetorical Discussion of the Voice-over and Considerations Regarding the Actor's Voice as Filmic Material

Fernando Ganzo

ABSTRACT

This conversation attempts to address the question of the voice-over through various circular journeys. It begins with a consideration of the sense in which this resource could be deemed something essentially novelesque, something that began as a natural phenomenon in classic cinema and that today has ended up turning into a deliberate and conscious search. It then moves onto a reflection on the filmmakers who have made fundamental changes to cinematic narration using the voice-over. The work of Pierre Léon as a filmmaker, actor and even a sound engineer on some films also allows a technical approach to the work of recording the actor's voice as filmic material.

KEYWORDS

Sound, Orson Welles, Sacha Guitry, Boris Barnet, Éric Rohmer, Robert Bresson, Recording, Voice-over, Actor.

I've always been struck by how everything in cinema takes place in the present; how, to use an expression of Pier Paolo Pasolini, we perceive cinema, as we perceive reality, as an "infinite sequence shot"¹. Indeed, what we call the flash-back, the jump cut, and other time shifts are only fully comprehensible if there is something that involves text: a caption indicating the time we are in, a newspaper, a calendar, some information revealed in the appearance of the actors... Otherwise, for us one shot always follows the previous one. Above all, the privileged element for understanding this narration is normally the voice-over. Do you believe that the voice-over has been above all a means of bringing film closer to writing? In a manner, I'd be tempted to say, that is very natural and instinctive...

I'd like to begin by nuancing your introduction. To indicate time breaks, which is what flash-backs, jump cuts (and, I'd add, dreams) are by definition, the procedures are not necessarily textual, but visual: fades, lap dissolves, distortions, changes of subject matter, of light, stylisation of the performance of the actors and, above all, sound variations. There might be something "textual" in them, and they might not ensure comprehension of the exact nature of this time break with the same precision as written or spoken text, but they fulfil that function. And this is true of both so-called classic cinema (revelation of a traumatic past: Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* [1964]) and so-called modern cinema (fragmentation of a period of time by a failing memory: *Muriel* [*Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*, Alain Resnais, 1963]).

1. PASOLINI, Pier Paolo: "Observations on the Long Take". Originally published in: *Nuovi Argomenti*, Rome, September 1970. "I think that cinema is still (not from an aesthetic and stylistic perspective, but from a purely semiological perspective) an infinite long take. In this sense, it has the same characteristics as reality. Because, our lives – what are they? A reality – a process of actions, words, movements, etc. – that is ideally filmed by a camera, a reality that can only be captured through an infinite long

The voice-over has always seemed to me a dangerous process, because it is an exercise that demands rigour, strictness: to speak behind, beside or above the screen is no trivial matter. The voice-over is a burden, a weight that makes the spectator believe in the existence of an off-screen space, when in reality it is merely a sound track like any other. It is superimposed: it is the equivalent of the caption. It is also the place (and herein lies the danger) that allows all manner of formal abuse, leading to what for me is the most detestable: dramaturgical demagoguery. I'm thinking for example of the voice-over of the dead man (William Holden) in *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950), or in the tyrannical mildness of the man in *A Letter to Three Wives* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1949). I don't want to seem to be reducing it to this alone, but this is a tendency that predominates these days. When a filmmaker doesn't know how to resolve a problem in the story, he puts in a voice-over and thinks he has resolved the dilemma. Voice-overs should be prohibited for directors under 40. Precisely because it comes directly from literature, I believe that when you play with the voice-over you need to take that origin into account. Rohmer has made use of it this way, which allows him to feign innocence and, even when he doesn't use it, we always have the sensation of hearing it in the disturbing chatter of his characters. The same is true of Sacha Guitry: the voice takes the centre of attention, slowing down or suspending the straight action and ultimately takes its place. Rather than literary, it is something novelesque. The voice-over is proof of the novelesque (and this is the trick with which it can be introduced into the story, like the horse in a Troy under siege but impenetrable). However, it is a technique that has been utterly trivialised, and

take [...]. Death performs a lightning-fast editing job on our lives: that is, it selects its truly significant moments (which now cannot be modified by other potentially contrary or inconsistent moments), and orders them successively, turning our present, infinite, unstable and uncertain, and therefore linguistically indescribable, into a past that is clear, stable, certain and, therefore, linguistically describable (precisely in the context of general semiology). Only through death do our lives serve to explain us."

nobody notices it anymore, in Hollywood films at least. Perhaps it is something that has aged as badly as glamour does.

I don't think anyone except Orson Welles and, in France, Sacha Guitry, has transformed a barely convincing narrative process into purely filmic material. Welles' voice, obviously, standing in *ipso facto* for his body, is simultaneously an emanation and projection that is almost physical. Guitry too, and perhaps even more so: without his voice, the actor Guitry doesn't exist, nor do his dialogues. Welles had Shakespeare to give him that syllabification, that unforgettable rhythm. Guitry could only fall back on Guitry, that is, a brilliant writer, but with little variation and too marked by history, by the social game, by the obligation of excellence. So it's on the timbre of his voice that Guitry based his cinematic force: not in the theatrical grain, but in its optical translation. And Guitry was so aware of this force that he abused it to the point of concentrating the whole story of *The Story of a cheat* (*Le Roman d'un tricheur*, Sacha Guitry, 1936) outside the frame, where his voice plays both from inside and from outside, locating the desynchronisations and coincidences with disconcerting skill: his voice peels away from the stable image and, on occasions, dubs it, without concern for the age or sex of the characters it dubs. Only Fréhel's song has the right to sound in perfect synchrony. Marguerite Duras, finally, takes up where Guitry left off, and applies the distancing effect, taking it to the most demented of tragedies (*India Song*, [1975] and *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta desert* [1976]). Today, the use of the voice-over seems to me especially associated with mannerism (as in Miguel Gomes' *Tabu*, [2012]) or blandishment (as in Malick's films, where the maladjusted voice treads very carefully in its relationship with the spectator: it is what I call "the crafty² voice").

It is true that the image and the voice can work in the same direction. And if, as you say,

the image can "allow us to read" time shifts, sound is no different from the image in cases like Duras' films, in the sense that it "allows us to see".

I'm convinced that sound forms part of the image. It is another image, distinct from the visual image, stripped of its dimensions through the play with lenses and lights, but it is an image, a vertical image, if you will, that allows us to perceive something in relief.

Everything that certain great filmmakers (Hawks, Renoir, Barnet, Sternberg) invented between, say, 1930 and 1935 (an amazing period for "silent film", a type of cinema that was no longer silent but that was not yet completely "sound film"), is the result of this realisation. A realisation that is not at all theoretical. In many cases the inventions were the pure product of chance. I'm thinking of *The Outskirts* by Boris Barnet (*Okraina*, 1933), and in particular the famous shot where we see a horse sigh twice: "Oh, lord, lord...". The sound engineer on the film was Leonid Obolenski. He was self-taught, and he knew how to do everything. He'd studied with Kuleshov, like Barnet. A very good actor, and an interesting filmmaker, he took part in all the major experiences of the era. During the Second World War he was captured by the Germans, which cost him a few years in a gulag, until he found himself in the studios in Sverdlovsk, where he worked as first assistant and director of films of scientific dissemination. He also performed some great roles, like Prince Sokolsky in the beautiful adaptation of *The Adolescent* (Fyodor Dostoyevsky) filmed by Eugueni Tachkov (*Podrostok*, 1983). But let me return to *Okraina*. On the arrival of the sound film, the Soviet government sent Obolenski to Berlin, where he stayed for several years to learn the basic techniques. There's a story that he even worked on *The Blue Angel* (*Der blaue Engel*, Josef von Sternberg, 1930); the sound on this extremely famous (and therefore ignored)

2. In French, «malin», phonetically similar to «Malick».

film is, incidentally, absolutely dizzying. On his return to the USSR, he took part in all of the earliest experiences in sound film (with Kuleshov, of course, but not only with him). But it was in *Okraina* where he best demonstrated his skills. This is why it's absolutely essential to see the original version and not the "restored version" from the 1960s, in which all of the sound is completely re-fabricated. The sound is perhaps cleaner, but it is of no interest. Getting back to the story of the horse... Nikolai Ozorovov, Obolensky's assistant and student, recounted the following in a conversation with Bernard Eisenschitz: "We were shooting in Tver. There was one sequence... Barnet insisted like a madman that I record all the sound directly, including the cart, with the invalid, the soldier with the crutches who whipped the horse... It was galloping like a madman. On a turn, the cart tips over, and the kid falls into the ditch. And he says: 'Oh, Lord, Lord, what's happening...'. We shot it with direct sound. Everything went well, everything was normal. Then... it all happened like this: we gave the material to the lab, and the next day we'd be able to see what had been filmed. And so I get a call. It's the cutting room: 'Come in urgently, we need you. There's something that isn't working.' I get there and I ask: 'alright, girls, what's going on?' 'Look for yourself, on the cutting table.' There were already sound cutting tables then. The positive was there. But... everything was out of synch. Why and how, I had no idea. But it was a fact: it's out of synch. Perhaps the camera had a mind of its own, I don't know... anyway, more than half of the words had ended up over the shot with the horse shaking its head. And I burst out laughing. They say to me: 'Have you gone crazy? Just wait until Barnet sees it; he's going to kill you.' 'Nonsense!' I tell them, 'I'm going to call him.' And they say: 'Don't you dare! You know he doesn't even want to hear talk of dubbing.' I call him: 'You know what has happened?' He says: 'What?' I tell him. And he says: 'Ha ha ha ha ha! Maybe God exists after all. But tell the girls to synchronise it as well as possible, so it is really in synch with the horse.' And so I went to them: 'Hey, girls...'"

That's the technique, and nothing more than that: a track that went off synch. With that talking horse, Barnet gave his rather tragic story a tone of a pagan tale that drags the film towards a wild realm where everything gradually falls out of place. Direct sound, too free, as uncontrollable as the street, would disappear from Soviet cinema (as would the street, for that matter), replaced with dubbing (and with the studio, sheltered from reality). This obsession with control, ultimately accepted by everyone, had such an effect on the tradition that contemporary Russian cinema is still incapable of appropriately resolving this issue. For example, at the Moscow School of New Cinema, the film school where I've given classes in Moscow, they had no material to record sound, but they'd built an auditorium.

This imbalance that you're talking about is, in effect, proof of the material side of sound, beyond the voice-over: often, an actor's voice is so visual and enables spectators to see as much as the image. For example, Jeanne Balibar in your film, *L'Idiot* (Pierre Léon, 2008), who, in her diction, has something "Guitryesque", in my opinion...

Yes, that's what I was saying about the purely visual capacity of sound. On the other hand, I am convinced that the variations, both melodic and rhythmic, compel the whole body to perform a particular physical composition. Perhaps we'd have to ask a deaf person whether what I'm saying here makes sense. To see how they feel, for example, about *My Night at Maud's* (*Ma nuit chez Maud*, Eric Rohmer, 1969). Does the Pascalian conversation between Tintrignant and Vitez transform into something visible through their intonation, their expression, the gazes and gestures that it implies? I like to believe that it does.

I know that you don't really believe in what is usually called "direction of actors", but do you think that there is something that resembles it in relation to actors' voices? A direction of voices, almost in the same terms as an orchestra conductor?

Let's be precise: I don't believe in any method of directing actors in film. First of all, because of its intrinsic heterogeneity. Secondly, simply because the discontinuous technique of a film shoot doesn't allow for any logical construction of character. When I start to think seriously about the film I'm going to make, I listen first of all to the voices of the actors, and I try to imagine what that mixture of timbres would produce. It's true that I have the advantage of writing directly for actors I have already chosen and, even if when we start filming the cast is not exactly the same as what I'd planned, there is an overall idea that always remains; a particular sound, specific to the film, that is formed in spite of casting changes. The role of General Epanchin was intended for Pascal Greggory, and I had to replace him myself a little unexpectedly, but that didn't fundamentally change the relationship between the voices. My voice is less interesting than his, poorer, thinner, but I asked Rosalie Revoyre, the sound engineer on the film, to help me keep it at a low register. And I think that we more or less achieved it. When I'm shooting, I usually have the idea of bringing together very different types of actors. The Russian playwright Vsevolod Meyerhold said somewhere that a heterogeneous cast is a guarantee of inevitable catastrophe. He is right, for theatre. In cinema, what compromises success is homogeneity. Going back to your musical analogy, for me cinema is closer to Stravinsky (where everything has to be disconnected while still sounding together) than to Bruckner (where everything has to fuse into a single, powerful sound).

Let's go back to the voice-over. All too often it was excessively codified, turning it into something generic, something that formed part of the rhetoric, the language belonging to an era, of classical cinema. A casual spectator cannot see beyond this phenomenon in many cases, and so the voice-over always seems too ingenuous to superficial spectators today. Could you think of any examples that get away from this kind of use, like the case you mentioned of Orson Welles, for whom

the voice-over very soon became a means of speaking in first person in his films?

Yes, Welles, of course, and perhaps that's why I feel an immense affection for him, even if I don't particularly like his films. He is for me the word made flesh, as are also, in a certain way, Lionel Barrymore, Barbara Stanwyck, Delphine Seyrig, Faina Ranevskaya... They are actors we see if we close our eyes, and we hear if we cover our ears. They are voices that walk. Visible voice-overs.

In particular, I really like the rhetorical use of the voice-over in Hollywood cinema, precisely because it is related to rhetoric. Rhetoric doesn't stand for lying, or for mockery. There is great honesty in it and, therefore, clarity in elocution; the voice-over tells us the intrigue –that is its objective and its usefulness. On occasions, slightly displacing the rhetorical frame, it may give rise to very beautiful things, thanks to an effect of strangeness and of narrative density. For example, at the beginning of *Secret Beyond the Door* (Fritz Lang, 1947), in the church scene.

Welles was also practically a pioneer in consolidating what is generally called the essay-film with *F for Fake* (Orson Welles, 1973). Do you think that he was the first to use the voice-over as an instrument of thought within the film, in a similar way to some of the work of Chris Marker or Jean-Luc Godard?

I don't know. I don't have any relationship with Marker's films, and what I have with Godard is too episodic, although intense. But I think that, for him, the question doesn't even come up. The voices, the noises, the music, the collages of quotes, are like posters from the silent film era. He has his roots more in agitprop and Vertov than in Madame de La Fayette.

Many of your films are adaptations of Russian literature, translated by yourself into French. Do you try to preserve the texture of the Russian language? I believe, incidentally, that a language that we don't understand

conveys its material essence in cinema, and it doesn't matter whether we understand it or not, as in opera.

I don't try to preserve the texture, no. On the contrary, I believe that the transition from one language to another is not only indispensable, but advantageous. What I like to do when I adapt Dostoyevsky or Chekov is to look for what the actors who play them in French can say about them. It offers the possibility of creating a certain distance, which for me is indispensable. The spectator is invited to identify this distance as a difference, and it is in the difference that the possible similarities or linkages can be appreciated. If you put two Golden Delicious apples side by side, well, you have two golden apples. But if you put a Cox's Orange Pippin next to a Golden Delicious, you'll have two apples: one yellow, the other yellow with red streaks.

There is another reason: it is impossible to recreate the rhythm of Russian in French. As Russian is a tonic language, with shifting accents, and French is much more fixed, it would be like passing from a loud conversation to one whispered, with all the violence that such softness implies (remember what Pascal said about it, when he spoke of gentleness as an instrument of tyranny). In any case, the naturalist outbursts that are so successful in France don't interest me: it is my impression that we grasp the meaning better when it is articulated calmly. That is the true threat, without any fuss. Look at how a tragedy hits you in the films of Hawks or Tourneur: in a quiet voice.

Foreign accents have also become a way of codifying characters in this naturalist avalanche. Biette spoke of an almost chauvinistic streak in the language of Bresson³. If we imagine what *Pickpocket* (Robert Bresson, 1959) would have been like filmed today, we can be sure that the main actor would have a foreign accent.

3. See Fernando Ganzo's article on Biette, among others, in

Sound, through the voice, has almost turned into a way of stigmatising the character...

Exactly. And Abdellatif Kéchiche or Maïwenn would direct it. And there would be a steadycam following the thief through the train station, and he would end up singing, "*Oh Jeanne, pour aller jusqu'à toi/Quel drôle de chemin/Il m'a fallu prendre*", with music by Benjamin Biolay. Everything would end in a karaoke scene, but without failing to address the painful problem of prison overpopulation. What a fantastic project! I don't know if there is chauvinism in Bresson's language: there is a trace of classism, yes, but that's also typical of the era when he was making films. Although his models don't obviously look like professional actors, there isn't that much difference, from a lexical point of view, between the dialogues written by Bresson and (I'm caricaturing here) those of Aurenche and Bost. In my opinion, the true break came after 1968, when certain intonations, certain vocabulary, that were not the language of the street, came through the news, before penetrating the cinema.

Having said that, I would say that the idea of an accent as a stigma is actually a thing of the past (the good blacks, the bad Jews, the stupid Germans, etc.), while today the accent has turned into the external sign of that phenomenon that has been given the horrible name of "diversity". In the film traditions where dubbing was (and continues to be) almost an obligation, they didn't hesitate to replace an actor's voice if it was deemed that his accent revealed too much, if I can put it that way. I don't know when Cluade Cardinale finally got back her beautiful raspy voice; she was always dubbed. And the Soviets never put themselves in embarrassing situations because of their excessive caution. Alexei Guerman had no scruples at all, and declared that real filmmakers never resorted to direct sound. This would force us to toss a good number of people into the garbage... although Pasolini hated direct sound, by the way, which didn't stop him from

the first issue of *Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema* on this cycle.

taking the utmost care to compose the linguistic arrangement of his films, where he mixed different levels of language, dialects, etc. It is the Pasolinian accent, with actors who spoke fluent Pasolinian: Ninetto, obviously, Laura Betti...

The care taken with sound in your films is far from being the general rule in films recorded on digital video. Earlier you mentioned the processing of your voice in *L'Idiot* (Pierre Léon, 2007). How do you work with your sound engineers?

Do you think it has something to do with digital video? Perhaps in the sense that, for several years now, sound has begun to be treated as raw material rather than as a recording. The same thing has happened to music. The name given to this is "production". I call it destruction. Technicians, not always competent ones, dissect the sonic mass, before saving each element on a track assigned for the purpose, and then fiddle around with the whole until they get the sound they like best, or rather, that conforms best to the unwritten law of cultural consumption. For example, you cannot (I mean, you are not allowed to) reject Dolby, and certainly not stereo. On a film shoot the sound is often recorded unconsciously thinking about post-production. Many sound engineers (who also do the sound mix for the film – a serious mistake from my point of view) simply don't worry about articulation, which submerges at least a quarter of the dialogues into the fog, but then they can spend a whole day mixing sounds that don't go together at all. This is what they call "sound design". I call it sound disaster. This fiddling about (and the same thing happens with the image) simply keeps me from being able to follow certain films (like *Leviathan*, for example).

In the case of my films, it took me forever to begin to feel satisfied. We were never able to get the sound right. We would do what we could, and we usually did it poorly. It would drive me crazy. I could only dream of what might have been heard! The image, on the other hand, always has a quality that, even when it's dated, gives an idea of

reality, beyond the mere technical outdatedness, that allows you to identify an image with an era. Without talking of Super 8, there is something interesting and unique in Video 8, Hi8 and DV images, something that HD cannot offer. HD is full and flat; it's an image bloated by its own spotless beauty. But the colours are cold, even the warm colours, especially with the Canon that everybody uses without a second thought. But, although it is objectionable, although it is tasteless in this respect, the image does preserve that documentary quality. Sound, however, is more discreet: you need to have a very good ear to distinguish analogue sound. On the other hand, the technical defects are something that clatters in the ear at once. I had the good fortune of benefiting from the help of very thorough people, like Serge Renko, on many of my films, or Christophe Atabekian and Anne Benhaïem. They weren't sound technicians, but at least we were able to try something. I believe that, in spite of everything, the sound in *Oncle Vania* (Pierre Léon, 1997) is interesting (the night scenes sound exactly as I heard them), and also the sound in *Le Dieu Mozart II* (Pierre Léon, 1998). But it wasn't until *L'Adolescent* (Pierre Léon, 2001) that the sound really began to resemble something. I would still have to wait seven more years, when I started working with Rosalie Revoyre, to finally get the quality I was looking for.

There are also films, like *Le Brahmane du Komintern* (Vladimir Léon, 2004), for which you yourself were the sound engineer. Has that work in recording sound enabled you to reflect on the question in a different way?

It's a curious story. Vladimir, for his film, which followed the trail of M. N. Roy, a highly eccentric and well-travelled Indian communist, had to shoot one part in Moscow, and he wanted to have a technical crew with someone who could speak Russian. I accepted on the condition that I could make use of the crew to shoot my own film during the breaks between shooting my brother's film. The result was my film *Octobre* (Pierre Léon, 2004), another adaptation of Dostoyevsky.

Well, the experience was not easy for me. I had some a few rather vague ideas, and I had to do the best I could with them. The technical side of sound is very difficult, because you always need to be ready and never complain, because the filmmaker has better things to do than worry about getting you out of your problems. So I complained to myself, I got caught up in cables, I assembled the control panel back to front, I used the wrong microphone... all kinds of fun. I ended up getting it in any case, and above all I learned (a little) about how to aim at the voice, and not to lose it. In Russia they call it “angling”, and it seems to me a very appropriate term; the

voice is something you have to fish for, and it is like a fish –agile and free.

I've also learned a lot by acting in other people's films. When I act in a film, I spend most of the time looking at what the technicians are doing (in my own films I'm too busy to do it), with the lighting, the sound, the set design, the make-up, etc. And the same thing happens when I'm giving classes: I learn by watching how the students learn. Sometimes I have the feeling that I learn more than they do. They're always so distracted... •

Translated from Spanish by Martin Boyd

PIERRE LÉON'S FILMOGRAPHY

Deux dames sérieuses, 1988
Hôtel Washington, 1993
Li per li, 1994
Le Lustre de Pittsburgh, 1995
Le Dieu Mozart, 1996
Oncle Vania, 1997
Le Dieu Mozart II, 1998
Histoire-géographie, co-directed with Mathieu Riboulet, 1998
L'Adolescent, 2000
L'Etonnement, 2001
Nissim dit Max, co-directed with Vladimir Léon, 2002

Octobre, 2004
Guillaume et les Sortilèges, 2005
L'Idiot, 2007
 First episodes of *Galimafré, carnets de cinéma*, YouTube, 2008
Biette and Biette Intermezzo, 2008
Notre Brecht, « un film sans pellicule », presented at the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris, in the context of the programming for *La Dernière Major !* (Serge Bozon, Pascale Bodet), 2010
Par exemple, Electre, co-directed with Jeanne Balibar, 2011

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Sounds with Open Eyes (or Keep Describing so that I Can See Better). Interview to Rita Azevedo Gomes

Álvaro Arroba

ABSTRACT

In this conversation, Rita Azevedo Gomes –filmmaker and film programmer at Cinemateca Portuguesa– analyzes from her own practice and experience as a spectator the relationship between the voice-over and the image, following Manoel de Oliveira's idea that the word is an image, and that sound should open the eyes or encourage vision, which is exemplified in *Branca de neve* (João César Monteiro, 2000). The filmmaker, then, focuses on her films *A Vingança de uma Mulher* (2012) and *Frágil Como o Mundo* (2002) to explain, with different examples, the use of the poetic word or the creation process of a soundtrack. Later, Rita Azevedo approaches the work of the sound technician, filmmaker and colleague Joaquim Pinto and, finally, the relationship between Manoel de Oliveira and João Bénard da Costa from the documentary that she directed about them, *A 15ª Pedra* (2007).

KEYWORDS

Voice-over, direct sound, sound / image, Portuguese cinema, filmed conversation, Manoel de Oliveira, Joao Bénard da Costa, Joaquim Pinto, João César Monteiras.

The use of a voice-over narration is a much stronger tendency in Portuguese cinema than in any other cinematography. With that in mind, we could start talking about *Branca de neve* (João César Monteiro, 2000), which probably is the apotheosis of this tradition.

Branca de Neve is not only a voice-over narration: the voice is the film. I saw it at a movie theatre and I did it with my eyes open. Looking at the screen I remembered João César explaining me that he had had a problem while doing the color correction of the black colors. And, suddenly, there is a scene in which Snow White is talking with the Prince and sees the stepmother kissing the hunter under a tree far away. The Prince describes the scene to her (“see, at a distance, the other one is kissing the hunter”) and tells her “Look there” and she replies “No, I don’t want to look, keep describing it to me so that I can see it better”. This scene is, in my opinion, key in *Branca de Neve*. Snow White saying “No, I don’t want to see, continue telling me so that I can see better”. It is an amazing game! When I heard that, suddenly, I really saw the breeze, the bridge... I even saw the colors: the stepmother in red (I’m not sure if it was really red), but I was watching all the colors. And, suddenly, she says “Don’t make me look there, I don’t want to open my eyes, keep talking, keep talking”.

The voice-over is a bit like that. It is as when we listen to stories in our childhood; we see all that we hear. When someone tells us a story, we see it immediately. If the film has a voice-over narration, the voice, the narration, adds an additional image that comes from what is being heard to what is being seen on the screen. This, in terms of the experience of the spectator, in some way, creates a third element beyond the sound track, the dialogue and, even, beyond the film: it creates someone who is not there, as if there would be another person... A voice-over can take me to something more oneiric. It’s like if cinema went back to the beginning of cinema, as if there was someone already discussing the film or proposing another point of view about it. That’s why I really

like the voice of the narration, the voice that is written on top or under the film, or that comes out of it.

In this sense, the voice-over can even create a kind of fantasy and nostalgic tone. And nostalgia is something that really belongs to us Portuguese, even if I increasingly try to avoid it. But there is a sort of fixation, of dreaming, I don’t know...

In any case, like Manoel de Oliveira says, a word is an image in and of itself. And I find this idea really present in my work because I believe that, sometimes, we don’t necessarily need to show in the image what can be found in the text. For instance, in my last film, *A Vingança de uma mulher* (Rita Azevedo, 2012) I thought that portraying the Portuguese woman as an absent, crazy or dramatic person would be redundant because I think that the text is so convulsive, so visual, that it wasn’t even necessary for them to gesticulate. Therefore, there is always a line between the narration and what is being watched. A line that, I think, cannot be trespassed... So that things are not repeated, ¿do you know what I mean? And a voice-over, sometimes, can do that.

On some occasions, like in *Frágil Como o Mundo* (Rita Azevedo, 2002), you use the voice and the literary quotation. How did you happen to include texts by Agustina Bessa Luis, Camões, Rilke and Ribeiro?

What happened in *Frágil Como o Mundo* was that, after the film had already been shot, I was reading Berdardim Ribeiro. And, suddenly, I felt a connection between *Menina e Moça*, which is Bernardim’s best poem, and *Frágil Como o Mundo*, which took me directly to the narrator’s voice. There, the narration works as another layer of the film: it’s the film told in a different way. The whole poem that is being developed through the film acts as if it was a veil on top of all that. In this case, the voice-over works a bit as if it was music. But music is an abstract thing and the voice-over, by contrast, is able to make the image subjective. In other words, while the camera makes the image

objective, since it places things nearer to reality or to an image of reality, the voice-over makes them subjective.

Have you ever chosen an actor or actress for their voice or for how they pronounce a language? I'm not only referring to how their voice works in the voice-over but also for what the voice provides to the body.

Of course! I am always looking for that voice. In *Frágil Como o Mundo*, Mario Barroso has a voice that I find perfect. He has a beautiful Portuguese. Exactly like in one of Oliveira's films, the one about Camilo Castelo Branco...

***O Dia do Desespero* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1992)?**

Yes, exactly, the death of Camilo. After Camilo dies, there is a shot in which we find three candles in a cemetery and suddenly the voice of Mario Barroso says "it's really cold, it's unbearably cold" and that voice is extraordinary: it's beyond the physical world. I really believe that happens because it is the voice of Mario Barroso: his Portuguese is incredible.

And, of course, I also love Luis Miguel Cintra. When I listen to him I cannot separate the voice from his body, from the person, and that would make it difficult for him to do a voice-over in a movie of mine, or at least it couldn't be an anonymous voice. He's a really brave actor because he accepts to do all those things that Manoel de Oliveira asks and he gives himself totally, understanding perfectly what is happening. For instance, in *Cristóvão Colombo – O Enigma* (Manoel de Oliveira, 2007) when, suddenly, he starts reciting that poem... It should have been something really uncomfortable for the actor, but he does it extraordinarily. In any case, in the history of cinema there have been many voices that I would have liked to film, like Margaret Sullivan's or James Mason's, which is, for me, the voice of cinema, with its tone of sarcasm, his incredible English... There are voices that immediately transport us.

In this sense, what I find very interesting is looking for a character or a person that only exists because of his or her voice, like what happened with Mario Barroso in *Frágil Como o Mundo*. He doesn't appear on film, he just speaks. A voice which is not tied to a person is an amazing discovery: the voice floats in the air and, suddenly, it opens the story; it is as if there were two movies, two layers or one thing on top of the other.

Alicia Mendoza has observed that the word that is more used in your films by your characters, and that you also use a lot, is *espantoso* (terrific). She also told me that it is a very uncommon word nowadays in Portugal, people say other synonyms such as magnificent. In some way, we could start to define your cinema from that word.

Espantoso is a magnificent and charming thing. *Espantoso* means that you find yourself overwhelmed with admiration. It's not an old-fashioned word, it's just that it's never been really used. João Bénard de Costa used to say it lots of times: when something or a film dazzled him completely, it was an *espanto*. People tend to say other things as it's *marvelous* or it's *fabulous*... *Espantoso* is that which absorbs all your attention. You get totally *espantado*, you can't see anything. *Espantoso* is more than marvelous. But the funny thing is that she noticed that. I would have never noticed it...

Talking about sound, it is impossible for me not to ask about Joaquim Pinto who, in some way, has covered all Portuguese cinema –if we follow the sound of films... How does he work? How does he face the soundtrack as a layer of the film?

I think Joaquim Pinto is the best sound technician that we have ever had. He has an infinite music culture and an *espantosa* creativity. Regarding *A Vingança de uma Mulher*, honestly, the initial concept that I had of the soundtrack was very far from what it ended up as. When I showed the film to

Joaquim (I think that in addition of having incredible taste, he is technically very knowledgeable) and to Nuno, they turned to me and told me that it was an ultramodern film, not a period film. I actually really wanted the film to touch our contemporary days, even if it was a period film, which is why there is a narrator and all those things. But then, they started to see that the film couldn't have all the romanticism that I had thought. And they were truly right; you couldn't insert in the soundtrack that which already was in the image. Therefore, we went to an unexpected proposal: the second school of Vienna. But, of course, when I heard those sounds, I felt a little out of place in the film. The coincidence between the image and the music was perfect but it was disconcerting: I was used to what I had in mind. Some days went by until I managed to get into the project and, after that, it was a delirium with every aspect that appeared. If Joaquim and Nuno hadn't been there, the film would have been very different and I like this deconstruction.

Why do you think they chose dodecaphonic music for such a romantic story? Although it also has a distanced mise en scene, a little Brechtian, a little Schroeter.

Although that story seems unreal in our times, it is not so far fetched. Suddenly, it turns into something composed, the composition is needed to get there. I think that cinema has a lot to do with this idea: its like music, it needs to be composed, to put some things together with others. And, in this case, the music, which is not music from the same period but more recent, adds something artificial to the film. I think it enriches it because if, as I would have expected, we had used Mozart in the scene of the loom, it would be another film. That is why I felt an imbalance at the beginning but later I understood the balance: with the music and the sound of Joaquim and Nuno, instead of slipping on top of the image, the sound opened the image.

Apart from this, which is the principal contribution of Pinto when capturing and conceiving a soundtrack?

When he is on a film, he suggests many things, he is really imaginative and has an amazing capacity to see things in sound that we don't see. For example, in the scene of *A Vingança de uma Mulher* with the recital, when that girl stays at the end and there is a shot of her hands... suddenly, Joaquim Pinto inserted there the sound of a leaving carriage. And at the beginning it felt strange but later it was *espantoso*. They are little details, really creative, really inventive... He has amazing ideas.

On the other hand, I remember that in *Frágil Como o Mundo*, I had problems in the shooting and ended up without any sound. I had it all very well planned but the sound technician left and I had to shoot many scenes with dialogues without recording the sound, not even a reference sound. Later, during the editing, I had to reconstruct everything; I don't even know how I managed because I didn't have any experience. Therefore, in many fragments of the film, there is not a single sound from the shooting. So between dubbing and other things, it was incredible amounts of work: there were some things said by the actors, who were really young, that in the dubbing process were really hard to understand or to guess. Instead of saying "I'm going to have a snack" they said "I'm going to eat"... so we had to make up the words. Hence, in my experience, although direct sound is marvelous, artificial sound also is. I have the idea that, in the same way as if filming an image, any method is valid for recording sound. The fact is that in that shooting I also went to record the sound of the birds, the forest... lots of the environmental sounds were made by myself while I was calling Joaquim so he could explain to me how that was done. And, as he was explaining things by the phone, I suddenly understood the sound.

This matter about direct or dubbed sound is very interesting because I believe Portuguese cinema to be very Straubian.

It is from a particular moment, when some very good filmmakers started to get fascinated by him, but it wasn't always like this. I remember

watching the first Straub in Lisbon because there was a director of the German Institute who programmed incredible things like some cycles of Straub's work. So we all went to the German Institute to see a type of cinema that none of us had ever seen before. And Straub also came here; it was a very important event for us, with those discussions at the end... It was something never seen before and it was very powerful. I think it was decisive for some people of Portuguese cinema. Personally, and especially because I really like Straub's work, it's going to be hard to say what I'm going to say, but I think if the world was how Straub sees it, I wouldn't be happy. But Straub is granitic, he's like a diamond. I once came out of *Sicilia!* (Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, 1999) very moved thinking that I had never cried in one of his movies. There, it really seems that the diamond shed a tear. It is a very moving film, like these last ones he has made. I think that, suddenly, there is something else there, of a huge loneliness, now that he is without Danièle. They are beautiful.

Do you think there has been some transmission between Oliveira and Straub? Especially in the way both direct the actors: there seems to be some kind of communication between *O Acta da Primavera* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1962) and *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* (Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, 1968). Precisely for what you are saying, for how granitic and diamond-like they both are.

I don't think that transmission has ever existed. Manoel has something very personal, which emanates from the inside. It is not casual that he filmed the spring in that way, with the ceremony, the ritual, the theatre... He says many times that cinema is a filmed theatre. I don't know if it is. I believe cinema is cinema. But he works from the representation. Once, I had a conversation with him for a movie that I made and he told me, as he also says in *A 15ª Pedra* (Rita Azevedo, 2007), that the representation of life is what differentiates us: we have the necessity

to represent our life, there is no other creature on earth with the desire to represent. We have this need to tell, which comes from the Greeks, from oratory and from writing... The need to tell heroic or divine facts, the need to pass on life is something extraordinary and it is where everything comes from. Manoel comes from that direct line: from representation, first comes the oratory, to tell the story. Then comes the representation of the story with actors representing rolls, instead of being just one orator. After, we find the theatre and, later, cinema. I think that for him, one thing is always after the other. And, therefore, his relationship is, first and foremost, with these origins.

I would like for you to talk about *A 15ª Pedra* and, in particular, about the differences in the pronunciation of Portuguese between João Bénard da Costa and Manoel de Oliveira. It seems that while Manoel's diction is much more academic, João's pronunciation is very closed. What did João contribute to you, in this sense? His voice, his body and, specially, how his diction is different to Oliveira's.

João Bénard da Costa's voice is one of those that are *saudades*. His voice and the way he spoke. The pleasure he felt when talking was dazzling. My impression is that João's greatest talent was speaking.

More than writing?

I'm not sure... At least, yes in relation of what he communicated to others. João had two phases: a really closed one, in a corner, with his felt pen, writing with a handwriting that nobody could read, it was like a secret thing. But, then, the happiness with which he spoke to people... I don't know any other person like that. He would come to present a film and, suddenly, there was an explosion of intimacy with the people: he was so close to us that I almost felt as if I was sitting on his lap while he was talking to us. And, he also had another special feature (which is a bit present in the film): he was very warm, as if he was speaking to his grandchildren by the

fireplace or sitting around a table. He would say very important things with the same tone as if he was commenting what there was for dinner or the walk he was going to take... And he had that happiness of putting everything in the same level, everything was together. Manoel, on the other hand, is someone from the North. And, here, we also have to distinguish between Portuguese from the North and Portuguese from the South. Manoel has a very religious, very Jesuit, way of speaking. He sometimes has some difficulties while searching for the word but he is always very precise and, also, very ironic. And both of them understood each other in an extraordinary way. That is why I really liked doing this film: I was present at some of their meetings and I saw them appear to each other with lots of respect and admiration (which is not an easy thing to maintain). They didn't love or related to each other in the sense that they would go together on vacations but they had a really profound esteem for each other, while maintaining their position. Therefore, there was never an intimate relationship between equals. Manoel was twenty years older, he was a man, João was a kid. There was a kind of ceremony in their relationship that was kept intact and had the same tone during the twenty years that I saw them together. And I wanted to capture the relationship between the two of them, how they had maintained their connection, that deep respect which was unbreakable until the end. And that was the idea for the film. On the other hand, I am twenty years younger than João, so there were three steps... And, suddenly, I saw them with that happiness of having found each other. Now that I think about it, I realize that it was as if what they wanted to, above all, was to give value to their friendship. They had to keep it intact, and that's how they did it.

It seems to me that Oliveira represents a kind of pure Gothic when he speaks whereas João Bénard is very Baroque. With all his inflexions, all that he does with his voice, the

tone of his voice... Manoel uses many pure forms. It is really charming to see how they complement each other.

There is an important aspect to consider: João never contradicts Manoel, he never permits himself to question what he says, as a sign of respect. When I did the film, I obviously didn't want to ask questions nor to be part of the scene. So the difficult part of the shooting was to avoid the conversation being only about Manoel's work. This could have been the natural tendency: the big interview of Manoel de Oliveira, the filmmaker. But that wasn't my idea. I wanted to capture the relationship between the two and, so that could happen, I had to suggest them different subjects that would conduct the conversation. That is, for them to talk about paintings, about Japan... so that they wouldn't only talk about Manoel's films. It's something that was more or less accomplished in the film: they tell stories, anecdotes, they talk about cinema, about life... João has that very informal way of speaking, it's as if he was eating at the table and talking with you, you know? On the other hand, that doesn't happen with Manoel. Manoel is always more attentive to what he says but, he also always speaks with humor. I also think that Manoel, while listening to João, is already thinking of what he is going to say next. He is very sharp because, if you notice, what he says next doesn't just add to what was being said. He thinks about what he wants to say afterwards and, that way, he guides the conversation to where he wants it to go. But I just let the whole thing develop for itself, without any planning. And, later, there is something that we cannot forget: they are fed up of talking all their life about the same subjects. However, suddenly, what is interesting in the film is that they end up saying things that they hadn't even foreseen, such as the issue of the *15ª Pedra* or the signs in Dreyer and time. And the other one says "Oh, it's true, I had never thought about that!" •

Translated from Spanish by Alejandra Rosenberg

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Further Remarks on Showing and Telling

Sarah Kozloff

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the endurance of popular prescriptions that stories should “show, don’t tell”. It traces this dogma back to early 20th century literary theorists. Then the essay untangles the presuppositions that underlie this axiom, and refutes them, especially as pertain to the use of voice-over narration in the cinema.

KEYWORDS

Voice-over narration, showing vs. telling, overt narration, covert narration.

In *Invisible Storytellers* (1988) I spent a few pages discussing the source of one of the influential prejudices against voice-over narration: the preference by critics for “showing” over “telling.” Since this dogma still circulates widely, I’d like to return to this subject. The terms “showing” and “telling” have infiltrated numerous fields, thus, these comments will touch on words and images; literary theory and narrative theory; contemporary popular advice concerning creative writing; both documentary and fiction films; and both on-screen dialogue and the main subject at hand –cinematic voice-over narration.

One of the main differences between 19th century novelists such as Tolstoy, Thackeray, and George Eliot, and early 20th century writers is that the former would include exposition and commentary. Take, for instance, the opening line of *Anna Karenina*: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way”. Modernist authors, by contrast, present their stories without such guidance, more “scenically”, as in the first sentence of Hemingway’s *The Big Two-Hearted River*: “The train went on up the track out of sight around one of the hills of burnt timber”. Tempting though it may be to ascribe this change to the birth of the cinema, in actuality the change in narrative technique predates the Lumières; in the 1850s Flaubert famously banished the artist’s voice from his creation, and his follower, Guy de Maupassant, who passed away in 1893, epitomizes this scenic style.

Percy Lubbock, a British author, scholar, and close friend of Henry James, published *The Craft of Fiction* in 1921. In this study he differentiates between two uses of point of view: “In one case the reader faces towards the story-teller and listens to him, in the other he turns towards the story and watches it”. Lubbock favors the second choice: “The scene he evokes is contemporaneous, and there it is, we can see it as well as he can. Certainly he is ‘telling’ us things, but these are things so immediate, so perceptible that the machinery of his telling by which they reach us, is unnoticed; the story appears to tell itself” (1921: 111, 113).

Lubbock’s analysis of formal choices was soon echoed by other critics and hardened into prescription. Ford Madox Ford pronounced that the novelist has “to render and not to tell” (1930: 122). In the inaugural edition of the American literary journal *The Southern Review* in 1935, Ford wrote:

“But already by the age of Flaubert, the novelist had become uneasily aware that if the author is perpetually, with his reflections, distracting his reader’s attention from the story, the story must lose interest. Some one noted that in *Vanity Fair* when Mr. Thackeray had gradually built up a state of breathless interest and Becky Sharp on the eve of Waterloo had seemed almost audibly to breathe and palpitate before your eyes, suddenly the whole illusion went to pieces. You were back in your study before the fire reading a book of made-up stuff” (Ford, 1930: 22-23)

By 1950 a collection of short stories with commentaries, *The House Of Fiction*, advocates “the direct impression of life”. The scholars legislate:

“The author’s legitimate authority lies not in his telling us that the scene is such, that these people did a certain thing, that what they did meant this or that; it lies rather in convincing us that the scene, the characters, the meaning, all move together in a dynamic pattern that we can believe in apart from the author’s personality” (Gordon and Tate, 1950: 621)

Reacting against the critical dogma of the 1950s, the American scholar Wayne Booth published *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961. Booth felt that what had begun as description of authorial choices had morphed into prescriptive dogma that devalued the great 18th and 19th century novelists. Crucially, Booth also raised the

question of ethics, pondering whether hiding the authorial hand or judgment might lead to moral quandaries.

The Rhetoric of Fiction had an immense effect on literary scholars and on the burgeoning field of narrative theory. Gérard Genette noted in 1972 that the followers of Flaubert and Hemingway believe in “making one forget that it is the narrator telling”. However, Genette remarks, “Showing can be only a *way of telling*, and this way consist both *saying about it* as much as one can, and *saying this ‘much’* as little as possible”. Genette’s English translator helpfully includes the original French: “en *dire* le plus possible, et ce plus, *le dire* le moins possible” (1972: 166). In recent decades narratology has replaced “showing” versus “telling” with more precise terminology, such as “overt” versus “covert” narration, or “mimetic” versus “diegetic” narration. In general, however, narrative theorists place no value judgment on these choices, allowing each artist his or her own methods to suit the aims or the text (Rabinowitz, 2005).

But prescriptive advice persists in creative writing classes and in popular discourse. Typing “Show, don’t tell” into Google yields *half a million* hits in 2013. Take, for example, a recent article written to aspiring writers by Noah Lukeman, for the journal *The Writer*. Lukeman, a literary agent and former editor, counsels:

“A writer can stop and tell us everything about a character, but eventually it will become meaningless, just a litany of facts, no better than an encyclopedia or dictionary. It is the writer’s job to show us what his characters are like, not by what he says about them, or about what they say about each other but by their actions” (Lukeman, 1999: 9)

Similarly, the popular blogger Grammar Girl proclaims: “Good writing tends to draw an image in the reader’s mind instead of just telling the reader what to think or believe” (2010).

So this dogma still influences popular perception. Moreover, I believe that privileging covert rather than overt narration lies behind much of filmmakers’ lingering hesitation to use voice-over and critics and viewers knee-jerk harsh judgment of voice-over whenever it is employed. I am the only person I know who prefers the 1982 studio version of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott) with Deckard’s neo-noir voice-over, to the 1993 director’s cut in which Scott removes it. A reviewer on Amazon.com unequivocally decrees that the director’s cut is vastly preferable because it has eliminated “the ludicrous and redundant voice-over narration”.

The prescriptive advocacy of showing over telling is entangled with several endlessly asserted presuppositions about authors, stories, and receivers (literary or cinematic, nonfiction or fiction). Let me try to untangle some of these presuppositions.

Presupposition 1) Narratives should be transparent, keeping their narrator covert because,

Presupposition 2) Narratives must engage the reader/viewer throughout the text, never allowing the audience to focus on the teller or the telling of the tale.

Studying the emotional effect of narratives, the psychologists Melanie Green, Timothy C. Brock, and Geoff Kaufman offer a nice phrase for our immersion in a fictional world: they say that readers are “transported”. They argue, “One key element of an enjoyable media experience is that it takes individuals away from their mundane reality and into a story world” (2004: 311). This metaphor become literal in the policy short that the American theater chain Regal Cinema plays before each feature film, instructing the audience members to turn off their cell phones and keep quiet during the show. The trailer invites viewers to take a ride on a magic, futuristic monorail, a vehicle that is going to take us to fantastical places.

Presumably, if a narrator “tells” us information, becomes overt instead of covert, we will feel rudely knocked off this magic transportation device and all our pleasure in escaping our own humdrum existence will be spoiled.

While Classical Hollywood narrative often –though not always– strives for a seamless transparency, we know that this is only one (influential) style of filmmaking, not the only choice. In Alain Resnais’ *My American Uncle* (*Mon oncle d’Amérique*, 1980) Prof. Henri Laborit’s voice-over narration continually reminds us that the characters are nothing more than lab mice reacting to the stress of their environment. Our engagement in their stories is forcibly disrupted, but we engage with the film on another level: considering the professor’s behaviorist theories, wondering how much they apply to our own lives.

Resnais, of course, belongs to a certain time period in European art cinema, a stretch where filmmakers habitually broke away from linear narratives to explore new narrative devices. However the popularity of *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), *Run Lola Run* (*Lola rennt*, Tom Tykwer, 1998), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), or *Pan’s Labyrinth* (*El laberinto del fauno*, Guillermo del Toro, 2006) demonstrates that experimenting with narrative form –making us focus on narrative discourse just as much as (or more) than the story– still intrigues viewers.

Presupposition 3) Showing is more vivid, expressive, and powerful than telling. In short, telling is boring.

Really? As I detail in *Overhearing Film Dialogue*, one of the unrivaled benefits that speech adds to films is the possibility of scenes of oral storytelling. The clip I often study with my students from the Argentine film *The Official Story* (*La historia oficial*, Luis Puenzo, 1985) is the scene where Ana tells Alicia about her ordeal when she was kidnapped and tortured by the military

junta. The camera focuses in close-ups and two-shots on Ana as she tells her childhood friend about her trauma. Moviegoers see the effect of the story on Alicia: how Alicia moves from drunken silliness, to empathy and horror, to resisting the full ramifications of Ana’s story.

By the same token, none of Captain Quint’s actions in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), and none of Spielberg’s shots of him, come close to revealing his character as the scene when he tells the story of what happened to him during WWII on the *U. S. S. Indianapolis*. During this storytelling scene, *nothing happens* visually, all of the action lies in the words:

“Japanese submarine slammed two torpedoes into her side, Chief. We was comin’ back from the island of Tinian to Leyte . . . just delivered the bomb. The Hiroshima bomb. Eleven hundred men went into the water. Vessel went down in 12 minutes. Didn’t see the first shark for about a half an hour. Tiger. 13-footer. You know, you know that when you’re in the water, Chief? You tell by looking from the dorsal to the tail.

What we didn’t know was our bomb mission had been so secret, no distress signal had been sent. They didn’t even list us overdue for a week.

Very first light, Chief, sharks come cruisin’, so we formed ourselves into tight groups. You know, [*music starts*] it was kinda like old squares in the battle like you see in the calendar named “The Battle of Waterloo” and the idea was: shark comes to the nearest man, that man he starts poundin’ and hollerin’ and screamin’ and sometimes the shark go away . . . sometimes he wouldn’t go away. Sometimes that shark he looks right into ya. Right into your eyes. You know, the thing about a shark. . . he’s

got lifeless eyes. Black eyes. Like a doll's eyes. When he comes at ya, doesn't seem to be living . . . until he bites ya, and those black eyes roll over white and then . . . ah then you hear that terrible high-pitched screamin'. The ocean turns red, and despite all the poundin' and the hollerin', they all come in and they . . . rip you to pieces.

Know by the end of that first dawn, lost a hundred men. I don't know how many sharks, maybe a thousand. I know how many men; they averaged six an hour. On Thursday morning, Chief, I bumped into a friend of mine, Herbie Robinson from Cleveland. Baseball player. Boatswain's mate. I thought he was asleep. I reached over to wake him up. He bobbed up and down in the water just like a kinda top. Upended. Well, he'd been bitten in half below the waist.

Noon, the fifth day, Mr. Hooper, a Lockheed Ventura saw us. He swung in low and he saw us . . . he was a young pilot, a lot younger than Mr. Hooper. Anyway, he saw us and he come in low and three hours later a big fat PBY comes down and start to pick us up. You know that was the time I was most frightened . . . waitin' for my turn. I'll never put on a lifejacket again.

So, eleven hundred men went in the water; 316 men come out and the sharks took the rest: June the 29th, 1945. Anyway, we delivered the bomb"

Quint's story mixes vivid, visual detail (sharks have black, doll's eyes; Herbie Robinson bobbed in the water like a top); expository information (the mission was so secret that no distress symbol had been sent); references to the on-screen listeners (the pilot was younger than Mr. Hooper); and revelation of the storyteller's

feelings (Quint was most frightened waiting for his turn to be rescued). And while Robert Shaw is telling the story, the camera shows his face, and the faces of those listening to him. Viewers study this beaten face with its embarrassed half-smile while he tells this horrifying tale. We don't need to see the sharks in the water; we see them more vividly in our minds' eye than any special effects team could replicate.

Far from being less vivid than pictures, words can—in fact—be far *more* specific. Images, unanchored by identifying words, float away. Visitors to a photography exhibit always read the captions on the walls; only by incorporating the information as to date and place do we feel that we can process the pictures. Filmmakers habitually shoot wherever their budgets allow because they know that Canadian pastures can substitute for the Great Plains, Vancouver can be New York, or The Philippines can become Vietnam, just through a verbal mention.

The opening of *Amélie (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain)*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) illustrates words' ability to be more precise than images:

"On September 3rd 1973, at 6:28 p.m. and 32 seconds, a bluebottle fly capable of 14,670 wing beats a minute landed on Rue St. Vincent, Montmartre. At the same moment, on a restaurant terrace nearby, the wind magically made two glasses dance unseen on a tablecloth. Meanwhile, in a 5th-floor flat, 28 Avenue Trudaine, Paris 9, returning from his best friend's funeral, Eugène Colère erased his name from his address book. At the same moment, a sperm with one X chromosome, belonging to Raphael Poulain, made a dash for an egg in his wife Amandine. Nine months later, Amélie Poulain was born"

The images show a fly; two glasses on a white tablecloth that is fluttering in the wind; a

sighing man erasing a name in an address book; and outdated filmstrips of sperm; a pregnant woman; and a baby being born. However, all the specific, expressive details that anchor the imprecise visuals –the date, the places, these events’ simultaneity, how fast the fly’s wings move, the fact that the man is returning from a funeral of his best friend, that the baby is the Amélie of the film’s title– come from the voice-over narration. The voice-over establishes the film’s wry irony through its postmodern bricolage of scientific arcana, insight into emotional states, and self-consciousness. In terms of artistry, while the shot shows us the table and the glasses, only the voice-over is able to transmute that moment into a simile of the glasses dancing unseen by anyone in the fictional world, but noticed by the narrator.

Presupposition 4) Showing is more subtle than telling. Telling is less artistic because it is too crude, too bald.

I’m not convinced that subtlety is the apotheosis of all art. Surely we treasure some artistic works for their clarity and explicitness: *The Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potiemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), for instance, is hardly subtle, nor Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), Costa-Gavras’ *Z* (1969), or Hooper’s *Les Misérables* (2012). Explicit voice-over narration doesn’t automatically deserve scorn; sometimes such straightforward rhetoric effectively connects the viewers to the material or characters.

Secondly, as *Invisible Storytellers* took pains to illustrate, as a cinematic tool voice-over narration can indeed be ambiguous, ironic, and bewitching. As soon as filmmakers add a narration track they create congruency and/or conflict with the visual track. How are we supposed to understand the very flat commentary of Buñuel’s *Land Without Bread* (*Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan*, 1933)? Why does William Wyler use two different narrators for *The Memphis Belle* (1945)? How reliable is Henry Hill (Ray Liotta) as the first-person narrator of Scorsese’s *Goodfellas* (1990)?

In the opening of *Two or Three Things that I Know about Her* (*2 ou 3 choses je sais d’elle*, 1967) Godard illustrates that even seemingly “redundant” voice-over is anything but. Over a shot of an attractive young woman on an apartment balcony he whispers:

“She is Marina Vlady. She is an actress. She’s wearing a midnight-blue sweater with two yellow stripes. She is of the Russian origin. She has dark chestnut or light brown hair. I’m not sure which”.

After Vlady speaks directly to the camera, quoting Brecht, Godard repeats this information with slight changes:

“She is Juliette Janson. She lives here. She’s wearing a midnight-blue sweater with two yellow stripes. She has dark chestnut or light brown hair. I’m not sure which. She’s of Russian origin”.

What are we to make of these whispers? The crucial difference between these two introductions is that Godard is moving us from the actress to the character, but our suspension of disbelief in the “reality” of Juliette is forever compromised. Even more compromised is our belief in the omniscience of the narrator; he can’t even decide what color her hair is. But most importantly, in this opening moviegoers become totally unsettled as to our own competence in decoding a text: after the first introduction, Vlady turns her head, and the voice-over whispers: “Now she turns her head to the right, but that means nothing”. After the second introduction, Juliette also turns her head, and Godard tells us, “Now she turns her head to the left, but that means nothing”. The colors of her sweater and hair (which we can see for ourselves) matter so that he mentions them twice, but we are explicitly told that her movements are meaningless. Which details in a film are significant and which aren’t? This redundant voice-over has immediately put our customary viewing habits up for grabs.

Less radical, but equally intriguing, the voice-over narrator of Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* (1994) works with the camera to comment on the mores of the wealthy upper class New Yorkers of the 1870s. For example, while visiting Mrs. Manson Mingott's house the narrator placidly remarks:

“For now, she [Mrs. Mingott] was content simply for life and fashion to flow northwards to her door and to anticipate eagerly the union of Newland Archer with her grand-daughter, May. In them, two of New York's best families would finally and momentarily be joined”

Meanwhile, the camera wanders up the staircase surveying the paintings hung there, ending on a picture of two savage Indians scalping a white woman. Smug, self-satisfied, immensely wealthy and so over-weight that she can barely move, Mrs. Mingott and her set's domination have been built on –or still entail?– a rapacious violence, a violence that they secretly relish.

Jean-Luc Godard, Terrence Malick, Martin Scorsese and others habitually enrich their films with voice-over speech, adding extra dimensions. But intriguing voice-over is not confined to respected high art auteurs. In another venue (2012) I examined a spate of contemporary British and American romantic comedies, including *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), *High Fidelity* (Stephen Fears, 2000), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), *About a Boy* (Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz, 2002), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004), *Hitch* (Andy Tennant, 2005), *Waitress* (Adrienne Shelly, 2007) and *500 Days of Summer* (Marc Webb, 2009). All of these enhance their stories by incorporating voice-over narration –first person or third– sometimes to forge a more intimate connection between filmgoer and character and sometimes ironically.

Presupposition 5) Showing allows for more ambiguity and involvement than telling, thus–

Presupposition 6) Showing is more democratic, while telling is more autocratic.

I'm not at all sure that cinematic showing –i.e. presenting action without expository captions or voice-over– necessarily entails ambiguity. As Tom Gunning carefully argues in “Narrative Discourse and the Narrator System”, everything that is carefully placed in front of the camera, just as carefully photographed in a certain way, and deliberated edited into the final cut serves to narrate information to the viewer. Character X's face (so carefully lit, and using all the actress's skill) narrates that her feelings were hurt by the comment of Character Y. Character Z's close-up indicates that he is pondering his next move, or remembering something that happened earlier. Character A's POV shot shows that he notices that his antagonists are cutting off his escape route. From an omniscient bird's eye view, we the viewers see what the characters don't see: that the monstrous wave/runaway train/prehistoric monster is just about to descend upon the unsuspecting innocents. In every case the film conveys narrative information just as surely as if a chatty literary narrator spoke aloud. The clarity of the Hollywood style is why David Bordwell describes it as an “excessively obvious” cinema.

For example, when, at the end of *High Noon* (Fred Zinemann, 1952), Will Kane (Gary Cooper) throws his sheriff's badge down in the dust in disgust, viewers understand: removing badge = renouncing position; throwing in dust = disgust at the townspeople's cowardice and refusal to help him fight the Frank Miller gang. Viewers really don't have the choice to idly entertain alternate explanations, such as that the badge pin was sticking into Will's skin, or that he still loves the people of Hadleyville.

And this sort of obvious connect-the-dots visual narration occurs in other national cinemas too: in *Strike* (*Stachka*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) when Eisenstein cuts from police killing workers to an ox being slaughtered viewers are not free

to interpret this montage as showing the factory owner preparing a bountiful feast for his cherished employees.

Moreover, despite André Bazin's arguments about how in contrast to editing, deep focus/deep space allow for democracy and ambiguity, even shots manifesting deep focus guide viewers to the conclusion that the filmmakers desire. Take, for instance, the famous shot from *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) showing that Susan Alexander Kane has tried to commit suicide. No narrator says aloud: "Susan tried to kill herself", but viewers are hardly free to ponder other possibilities, such as that Susan might be drunk, sick, or just ignoring Kane at the door. Viewers have no choice but to add up the visual elements: glass + spoon + medicine bottle + Susan in darkness with labored breathing + unresponsiveness to loud calling and door knocking = suicide attempt.

Even if showing sometimes *maybe* less directive than overt narration in conveying expository information or making commentary on events (many shots and scenes in Antonioni's *L'avventura* [1960] don't carry the narrative forward but instead create ambiguity or dwell on the sensuous appeal of the physical world), is ambiguity always and in every instance a virtue? Stanley Kubrick forcefully asserts, "The essence of dramatic form is to let an idea come over people without its being plainly stated. When you say something directly, it is simply not as potent as it is when you allow people to discover for themselves" (Kubrick in Schickel, 2001: 160). But Kubrick and others offer no proof of this common presupposition. Certainly in Kubrick's case his penchant towards ambiguity has led to his high esteem in art cinema circles, but equal misgivings about the ethics of films such as *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).

Since the rise of direct cinema in documentary many non-fiction filmmakers have felt that they need to withhold the research they have conducted or their own judgments. Hundreds of documentaries include only interviews, archival footage, location sound, and B roll. Yet as theorists

such as Bill Nichols have demonstrated, all of these choices add up to convey the film's ideology just as surely as any narration might. If we are judging showing versus telling on the basis of ethics and ideology one could easily make the argument that hiding one's opinions is less ethical than stating them directly. Is pretending to objectivity more ethical than owning one's stance?

The obverse of democratic is "autocratic." Certainly the narrators of nineteenth-century novels inserted explicit social commentary into their stories. Overt narration now carries an autocratic, authoritarian taint. Many critics criticize narrators who address the reader or the viewer directly as "telling us what to think". Richard Leacock, a major documentarian of the direct cinema movement active in the 1960s once told an interviewer: "The moment I sense that I'm being told the answer I start rejecting".

Rejecting voice-over has thus become entangled with revolt against Victorian certainties; rejecting this cinematic technique is somehow now tied in with modernist and post-modernist rejection of master narratives such as faith in progress, respect for authority, belief in religion. In many minds all narrative commentary connotes either a hectoring schoolmarm or a pompous "voice of God", both of whom are tyrannical despots trying to restrict viewers' freedom.

The continued use of the term "voice of God" merits two comments. First, typifying voice-over narrators as godly and omniscient often ignores the evidence of the actual films. In the 1930s, Westbrook Van Voorhis, the narrator of the *March of Time* newsreel, spoke with great authority, brooking no demur: nowadays his commentary sounds grating if not laughably preposterous. But many of the narrators of World War II documentaries who are now dismissed for their alleged pomposity and omniscience in actuality were much more tentative, measured, and ironic than is generally remembered. Charles Woolf sensitively analyzes *The Spanish Earth* (Joris Ivens, 1937) and *The Battle of Midway*

(John Ford, 1942). *Diary for Timothy* (Humphrey Jennings, 1945) uses multiple, quiet voices. Even *Prelude to War* (Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak, 1942), the American propaganda film that is part of the *Why We Fight* (1942-1945) series produced by Frank Capra, employs a narrative track (spoken by Walter Huston in a quiet, rather scratchy voice), that is more deadpan and ironic than godly.

The resistance to *telling*, to an omniscient narrator (or any narrator) seems part of the post-modern rejection of “god”: that is, all claims of authority and omniscience.

I had hoped that examples of the complexity and variety of voice-over –*How Green Was My Valley* (John Ford, 1941), *The Naked City* (Jules Dassin, 1948), *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Makiewicz, 1950), and *Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, 1975)– might prompt a re-evaluation of this rhetorical device. However, widespread axioms, deeply imbricated with the sweep of history and culture, are not easily dislodged.

Nonetheless, I am cheered by the fact that some contemporary popular discourse demonstrates a more nuanced appreciation for narration than the command, “show, don’t tell”, alone would indicate. For example, the title of a contemporary article in the British newspaper *The Telegraph*, “Do Voice-Overs Ruin Films?”, would lead one to believe that the writer, Anne Billson, disdains voice-over. She does, indeed, despise its use in Luhrmann’s *The Great Gatsby* (2013) and *Blade Runner*, but the bulk of her piece presents an appreciation of how much voice-over adds to other films, such as the noirs of the forties or *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979).

When I wrote *Invisible Storytellers*, home video had just been invented. To see many of the films discussed I had to travel to archives to screen 16 mm prints on flatbed editing machines. The explosion in availability now makes international film history available worldwide at the click of one’s mouse. Case by case analysis, rather than axiomatic dismissal and asserted presuppositions may gradually win out. Time will tell. •

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Ars poetica. The Filmmaker's Voice.

Gonzalo de Lucas

ABSTRACT

The first part of the article compares the political cinema of Vertov, Godard and Marker, through a critique of the ideological power that sound and the word have had on the image. It goes on to suggest a series of associations between films in which the filmmaker's voice (Mekas, Cocteau, Van der Keuken, Rouch, etc) is linked to the act of creating, the uncertainty of the process, the essay that is akin to the sketch or retrospective meditations and writings in the first person. Through the essayistic voice it develops the possibility of analysing what was invisible or went unnoticed through editing, criticism through revision: the filmmaker can emerge from himself, objectivise himself by looking at what the material reveals to him about his own ideology or psychology inscribed unconsciously onto the film, or by examining the process itself. Unlike written analysis, this essayistic conception of the relationship between word and image moves in the same direction as cinema itself; from the physical matter to the idea, in contrast to figurative arts characterised by the reverse journey.

KEYWORDS

Filmmaker's voice, Essay-film, Editing, Image / cliché, Sound and word, Political cinema, Interruption, Creative process, Principle of not knowing.

1. THE VOLUME TOO HIGH. VERTOV / GODARD / MARKER

Dziga Vertov conceived *Enthusiasm: Symphony of Donbass* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa*, 1930) as a search for synchronising the sound of the cinematographic form and the Bolshevik revolution. The film opens with the images of a young woman who, after putting on headphones, wants to tune into a new sound: the sound of revolution and a new world. Initially this is a faint sound that can barely be captured from its distant wavelength, meaning that the film will be an approximation of this sound, of this symphony that the film has to *work on* and for which Vertov and his team embarked on the “assault of the sounds of Donbass [...] totally deprived of the laboratory and installations, without any chance of hearing what had been recorded and to monitor our work and the work of the equipment. In conditions that meant that the exceptional nervous tension of the members of the group was accompanied by work that is not only cerebral but also muscular [...] we ended up with the immobility of the sound-recording equipment and, *for the first time in the world*, we fixed in a documentary style the main sounds of an industrial region (sounds of mines, factories, trains” (Vertov, 1974: 250-251).

In the first part of the film, before we are hit by the barrage of new sounds of industrialisation, Vertov creates a series of disjunctures between the images and sounds of the immobile and decadent pre-socialist society –drunkards, worshippers, a society entrenched in the old forms–, together with the images and sounds of the revolution – the collective and industrialisation– which collide with this paralysed world until they make it shake and crumble (“the fight against religion is the fight towards a new life”).

This is a montage of the four forms (old sound, old image, new sound, new image), revealing different relationships and combinations between them. Eventually, the montage shows how the old way has been formally superseded

by the industrialised and socialist world, with substituted symbols and forms, until the factory sirens synchronise with the new sounds, such as the singing of the International.

For years, people believed in this symphony and in its cinematographic and political truth. Nevertheless, in the mid 1970s, in the aftermath the student revolts had petered out and following the Maoist years, Godard decided to review his era with the Dziga Vertov Group by criticising himself for “turning the volume up too high”. This also indirectly involved a critical essay on the ideological relationship between image and sound in Vertov’s work. In *Here and Elsewhere* (*Ici et ailleurs*, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, 1975) Godard picked up the images he had shot with Jean-Pierre Gorin in Palestine (*ailleurs/elsewhere*) in 1970, and related them to the current situation of French society in 1975 (*ici/here*) in order to see what there would be between them (*et/and*). For the purpose of this critical research, Godard decided to use his voice –the first person– and the dialogue with his partner, Anne-Marie Miéville, to see what there would be between them, through the production of the film itself.

Following his desire to immerse himself in a collective, to relinquish the ego, which had characterised his practice with the Dziga Vertov Group during the preceding years, Godard returned to personal experience which he encapsulated by inscribing the voice and a dialogue between a couple as material for the memory –the history of cinema and his history as a filmmaker, which he encapsulated with his voice in order to review it through his companion’s answers. The domestic space or studio was to be the place to work with the tools of cinema, to free the images from their servitude to the text and discourse by modulating the voice as an instrument for interpreting an emotion or an idea.

A central motif in *Here and Elsewhere*, in the part looking at society in 1975, is a domestic scene showing a French family

in front of a television set. Two sounds are contrasted in this space: the sound of the family, with their real problems, and the sound of the TV, which eventually silences or drowns out the voices of the family –the viewers. In one of the scenes, the woman asks her family to “turn the sound down” and then Godard’s voice says, while showing images of a man playing pin-ball and a cleaning woman turning up the radio: “Turn the volume up. How does it actually happen? Sometimes like this. And sometimes like that too. Or like this”. With an educational approach, Godard, who had spent years in hospital following a motorcycle accident, examines the basic elements of image and sound with the aim of once again starting from scratch with the cinematic alphabet. This gave him the idea of showing the VU indicator and the recording techniques: the mechanics of the process.

However, Godard not only visualises the sound, but also finds the conceptual and dramatized reflection in technique by showing the contrast –the bad relationship– between the needle registering the sound of the family and the needle showing the sound of the television which drowns out the family’s voices: “Well, let’s break up one of these movements. And let’s look slowly. We see that there isn’t a single movement, but two movements. There are two movements of sound, one moving in relation to the other. And at times of a lack of imagination and panic there is always one that seizes power. For instance here, the noise of the school and the noise of the family comes first. Next comes the noise that drowns out the noise of the family and the school. There is always a movement at a point in time when a sound seizes power from the others. A point in time when this sound almost desperately searches to hang on to this power. How has this sound been able to seize power?”. At the end of this scene, we hear fragments of a fiery speech by Hitler while the needle hits the red area in a dynamic synchronisation with the rises in pitch in his voice.

In 1991, in a conversation with the filmmaker Artavazd Pelechian, Godard pointed out that: “The technology of the talkies arrived at the same time as the rise of fascism in Europe, which was also the time when the speaker had arrived. Hitler was a great speaker, and so were Mussolini, Churchill, de Gaulle and Stalin. The talkie was the triumph of the theatrical scenario over the visual language that you have been speaking about, the language that existed before the curse of Babel” (Godard in Aidelman and De Lucas, 2010: 283).

From the mid 1970s, the idea that the use of sound and the word had been used to obliterate the visible, to stop us from seeing and to impose the text over the image, would be a recurring theme for Godard in his observations on Film History. He began these reflections in *Here and Elsewhere* in a self-critical sense by reviewing his own political works and the forms of political cinema: “We did what many others were doing. We made images and we turned the volume up too high. With any image: Vietnam. Always the same sound, always too loud, Prague, Montevideo, May ’68 in France, Italy, Chinese Cultural Revolution, strikes in Poland, torture in Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Chile, Palestine. The sound so loud that it ended up drowning out the voice that it wanted to get out of the image”.

This “sound so loud” involves, by extension, a criticism of the way Vertov edited sound. In *Enthusiasm: Symphony of Donbass* the images of the mines and factories filmed by Vertov, appear together with the sound of chants and slogans, giving rise to a stylisation that also tampered with the visible and was an error of political interpretation: the real working conditions in the factories were being concealed and by turning the volume up too high the image became a prisoner of the sound. Moreover, what was specific, together with cinema’s characteristic ability to make distinctions was lost, and from then on all left-wing movements would join together in the same sound, the same song or discourse like an opaque verbal filter that prevented the diversity of the images of the different realities from being seen.

This is why Godard broached ways of making the voice present without the word being repressive or the meaning of the image imposing itself. In order to do so, he found room for the word of the other, accepting his admonishment. Just after their reflections on revolutionary sounds, Godard and Miéville show a shot of a child filmed in Palestine in 1970. As in other parts of *Here and Elsewhere*, the relationship between them, the dialogue, Miéville's voice, intervenes to critically analyse Godard's previous work:

“Godard: Among the ruins of the city of Al Karamé a little girl from Al Fatah recites a poem by Mahmud Darwish, “I will resist”. Miéville: Listen, first you need to talk about the set and the actor on this set. Or rather about the theatre. Where does this theatre come from? It comes from 1789, from the French Revolution and the liking of the members of the 1789 Convention for grandiose gestures and for shouting out their claims in public. This little girl is putting on theatre for the Palestinian Revolution, of course. She is innocent but maybe this way of doing theatre is less so”.

Here, the word doesn't impose itself on the image in order to conceal it. In fact quite the reverse is true: it reveals the visual language compared with the theatre script. Later in the film, Anne-Marie Miéville makes another political criticism of Godard concerning the shot of a girl playing the part of a pro-Palestinian student, in which the filmmaker conceals where he's standing by using a reverse shot.

“Godard: In Beirut, a pregnant woman is delighted to be able to give her child to the Revolution.

1. In this way, the theatrical setting in Al Karamé is connected with the TV screen that drowned out the noise of the family. In an interview about *Number Two* (*Numéro deux*, 1975), Godard said: “If the image makes you think about you and your boyfriend, I think it's a

Miéville: That's not the most interesting thing about this shot. This is. (*Black screen*). Godard's voice: *Can you say it again? Put... your head up a bit more. That's it. (We see the image of the girl again)*. Miéville: The first thing I have to say. We always see the person being directed not the director. We never see the person in charge who is giving the orders. Godard's voice: *One last time. Stretch your... that's it*. Miéville: Something else isn't working. You've chosen a young intellectual who sympathises with the Palestinian cause who isn't pregnant but who agrees to play this role. And what's more she's young and beautiful, and you keep quiet about this. But this kind of secret soon leads to fascism”.

The relationship of power in the image is shown through Godard's voice giving orders to the girl, who doesn't reply, between the shots; the recorded sound (on a black screen) counteracts the off-screen space –understood here not as an imaginative opening but as an elision of the true relationship or the story of the shot: the one between the filmmaker behind the camera and the girl acting in front of it for him. It is as if Godard was willing to put his images on trial and the sound was the prosecuting evidence, the hidden evidence that was needed to reveal its nature. In this way, Godard's voice emerges to explain the reality of the image: the *mise en scène*, the manipulation, the ideology the filmmaker brings into play, in spite of himself. Hence Godard's need to create a feeling of otherness, of the other, of exchange through dialogue, in this film¹: there are no images without otherness, as Daney would say (2004: 269).

good piece of work. [...] It's a film to think about the home rather in terms of a factory and that's all. It's so that the people can talk, something I'm not sure about, and talk to each other a little. Whether they fight or not, the purpose will have been achieved, if there is a

Chris Marker's *The Last Bolshevik* (*Le Tombeau d'Alexandre*, Chris Marker, 1992) is another personal approach to and critical review of Vertov and Soviet cinema, this time formulated in a more introspective, elegiac way. After making countless political films in socialist countries –in the Soviet Union, China and Cuba– and, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Marker establishes a dialogue with a recently deceased former comrade, the filmmaker Aleksandr Medvedkin. The film, like Godard and Miéville's, is as much a permanent review as it is a rediscovery of the forms of Soviet cinema. Following the wonderful experience of Medvedkin's film train, a laboratory of new forms and an educational project for learning the alphabet of cinema rolled into one (as with Vertov and Godard himself), Marker eventually finds some of the films that were thought lost: «In the end, Kolia discovered nine films from the train. I only hope the viewer's heart will skip a beat in the same way as mine did in the editing suite when I saw the shots you had spoken to us about so much. Nobody had seen them since 1932. What I saw wasn't an archivist's excitement, nobody had shown them. In the 1930s, reality was made up, fabricated, staged, made edifying. Even Vertov no longer believed in life as it was. And you filmed the discussions between workers armed with your fine socialist conscience but without ever tampering with the image. According to your diary, the result was overwhelming: absenteeism, bureaucratic disorder, thefts from one workshop and another. It would have been a tall order to ask the reality of the time to be the paradigm of workers' democracy you were hoping for. At least, the accused replied. It wasn't time for confessions yet. And during that time of triumphalist slogans the final intertitle sounded melancholic: "Locomotive mechanics, where is your commitment?"

purpose, when people begin discussing their problems, something specific about them, be it work, salary, etc. because the film has helped them". (Godard in Aidelman and De Lucas, 2010: 170). Godard is already criticising cinema's disconnection from the real problems of the viewer at the time, or the weakening of its capacity to

This film is a paradigmatic example of the history of cinema made from cinema, of the image as a trace or document of what couldn't be seen and would be lost in the pages of books. In the end, it is the raw materials –in this case the entombed films, blinded by official history– that show, and even highlight what is real beneath the texts about the history of cinema, the slogans, the discourses and stylised propaganda images; beneath the beautiful images of the revolutionary progress of the time there was one crude and harsh reality of unmotivated workers on the Stalinist kolkhozes; with Vertov, this was indelible.

2. THE PRINCIPLE OF NOT KNOWING

In their respective essays, Godard and Marker make a materialist criticism of cinema in which the past (the preceding images of film history and their own films) makes its presence felt through the voice, the filmmaker's word as a means of reviewing –and exploring in greater depth through editing– critical analysis and *ars poetica*. Here the word is understood as a cinematographic subject –no matter how much the cliché persists about the fact that it is less cinematographic than the image– an appropriate tool for an essay or reflection in the first person about practice itself and creative doubts –in order to share the process– and at the same time a poeticised way of looking back on the experience, in the sense highlighted by José Ángel Valente: "What the scientist tries to fix in the experience is precisely what is repeatable and fleeting about it [...] experience can be known by its particular uniqueness. The poet isn't interested in what the experience can reveal as a constant that is subject to laws, but rather in its unique, ungovernable character; namely, what is

have an effect on the viewer's life and even make them reconsider it. In this regard, the dialogue with Anne-Marie Miéville is an exemplary exercise in this type of questioning, with the conviction that ideology must go through personal experience, which becomes political in the end.

unrepeatable and fleeting about it. (...) Because the experience as a *given element*, as raw data, isn't known immediately. Or, put another way, something always remains concealed or hidden in immediate experience. Man, who is subject to the complex synthesis of experience, remains enveloped by it. Experience is tumultuous, very rich, and at its height, greater than the person at its core. To a great extent, to a very great extent, it goes beyond his or her awareness. It's a well known fact that the great (happy or terrible) events in life occur, it is often said, 'almost without us realising'. Poetry operates precisely on this vast field of experienced yet unknown reality. This is why all poetry is, above all, a *major realisation*" (Valente, 1995: 67-68).

This temporary approximation of one's own experience takes on a personal sense for filmmakers in the editing suite, when they are confronted with the things they didn't notice when they were filming, the things that escape and overwhelm them; and not in order to fill in this knowledge, or make it complete, but to explore this area of uncertainty in greater depth. At the beginning of *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (Jonas Mekas, 2000), Mekas' voice makes us share in the creative principle behind his film: "I have never been able, really, to figure out where my life begins and where it ends. I have never, never been able to figure it all out, what it's all about, what it all means. So when I began now to put all these rolls of film together, to string them together, the first idea was to keep them chronological. But then I gave up and I just began splicing them together by chance the way that I found them on the shelf. Because I really don't know where any piece of my life really belongs, so let it be. Let it go. Just by pure chance, disorder. There is some current, some kind of order in it, order of its own, which I do not really understand same as I never understood life around me: the real life, as they say. Or the real people. I never understood them. I still do not understand them. And I do not really want to understand them".

The voice thus draws nearer to one of the mysteries of the image, this unsaid knowledge that Godard alluded to in his criticism of the text –the photo caption, the caption, the voice over– subjugating the image. Here we should make the distinction between the image and the cliché, between the real and the poeticised image, the one that remains to be seen or made, and the cliché, the previously seen or prefabricated image. In another part of the film, Mekas says: "without knowing it, unconsciously, we all carry inside us, in some deep place, some images of paradise". And he adds: "I have to film the snow. How much snow is there in New York? But you'll see a lot of snow in my movies. Snow is like the mud in Lourdes. Why, whenever they paint paradise, is it always full of exotic trees and nothing else? No, my paradise is full of snow!". Mekas' statement involves a search for this internal image which it is so hard to see. If someone asks us about paradise, the most usual thing would be to see it through a pre-made, canonised image, the exotic landscape, the cliché. Can we find a characteristic interior image of paradise, like the one in the snow? This is certainly an image that is initially unconscious, unknown, unexpected and longed-for; these are the creative principles of the essayistic voice, embedded in doubt and searching.

This conception of the poetic experience concerns the image and the word. In a scene from *Sunless (Sans soleil, 1982)*, Marker makes a cinematic interpretation of or creates a correspondence with Basho's haiku: "The willow sees the heron's image upside down". Basho's poem contains an image the reader has to visualise or compose in their head in order to give it its fullest meaning. However, cinema, for its part, can depict this poetic or interior and unmade image: Marker shows the image of a willow followed by another of the reflection of the tree in the water: in other words, the willow sees the heron upside down because it is viewing its own reflection (upside down) in the water. In the poem, the word means taking ourselves to the willow's viewpoint, to its eyes, so to speak, while, in Marker's film, we move to or are placed behind the eyes of the poet who is looking at this landscape.

The filmmaker's voice (in the films of Cocteau, Godard, Mekas, Van der Keuken, Pasolini, Welles, Rouch, Robert Frank, Farocki, Perlov, etc.) is thus linked to the search for the poetic image –the as-yet-unseen, unthought-of image– to the gesture of creation and the uncertainty of the process, to the essay that is close to a sketch, rough draught or retrospective meditation and writings in the first person, like a letter or a diary. By associating and comparing these films or essayistic fragments, we find an inner story of cinema, which fluctuates between an aesthetic treatise and a critical interpretation. As a whole, and in their variety, they show us how filmmakers address the issues of their medium from their own practice: how to film a face; what we find out about ourselves in an image; how to shift from one shot to another; and how to develop a film project.

These uses of the voice are an integral part of essay-films and feature occasionally in fiction and documentary films, as interruptions that specify the nature of the process and the creative first person. They are often like a rough draft; they are notes and creative searches for an as-yet-unmade film, not worked out on paper or with a script but from the experience of cinema –the encounter with the places, the review of the images– just like in Pasolini's *appunti* or some of Godard's *scénarios*. These are sometimes interventions in a narrative film that have been generated from the cinematographic desire to the imagined film, like Glauber Rocha in *The Age of the Earth (A Idade da Terra, 1980)* –“The day Pasolini, the great Italian poet was murdered, I thought about filming the life of Christ in the Third World”– or even Abderrahmane Sissako in *Life on Earth (La vie sur terre, 1998)* –“I'll try to film this desire, to be with you, to be in Sokolo. Far from my life here and its crazy pressing needs”.

The filmmaker's voice is often confessional and shows and shares the dynamics of the process, the other story that films are wont to hide: the story of the film being made and thought out, as is usually the case with Jean Rouch and his

participative sense of cinema. At the start of *The Human Pyramid (La pyramide humaine, 1959)* he says “The film we have made, instead of reflecting reality, creates another reality. The story never happened; it was constructed during filming, the actors invented their own reactions and dialogues. Spontaneous improvisation is the only rule of the game”.

The main common element is the opening up to what has been overlooked, to what the material cinema produces (in view of its technical properties) beyond our control. As with Godard, who laid himself open to questioning his ideology and practice when he reviewed the shots he had filmed in Palestine, these fragments show us hesitations or searches for possible films, doubt as the driving force behind creative thought that is aware of creative gestures. At the beginning of *La villa Santo-Sospir (1953)* Cocteau states that “One day, we will regret so much accuracy and artists will try to create chance accidents deliberately. Kodachrome film changes colours of its own accord, in the most unexpected way. To a certain extent, it creates. We have to accept this as if it were a painter's interpretation and accept the surprises. It doesn't show what I want, but what the camera and the chemical baths want. It's another world where it's essential to forget the one we live in”.

There is therefore a primordial recognition of not knowing in the essayistic voice: essays in order to see something that isn't seen, something that only the camera can show. To quote Rivette: “the film knows more than I do. When I see it again, there are certain things that I never see in the same way and others that I think I discover or lose from sight, that disappear: a film is always wiser than its 'maker'. This is what is exciting during the edit: to forget what we know and discover what we don't know” (Cohn, 1969: 34).

Cinema explores in greater depth the fact that we can't see things properly, or see them, from our shared experience, in a fragmented way, askew and focused by our own subjective

projections –desires, fears– according to the restrictions of only seeing the exterior or the appearance of the person filmed, in order to guess at the interior or the thought. As the lover in *A Married Woman* (*Une femme mariée*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1964) says: “We kiss somebody, we caress them, but in the end we remain on the outside, like a house we never enter”. Cinema generates an act of perceptive knowledge when, through the camera, it captures a process of change, the shift of one image to another on a face, the revelation of something hitherto unseen. If there is no otherness or distinction from the other in the cliché –for instance, in the way the media make the Palestinians into the “Arab”, without the viewer being able to distinguish or specify their individual characteristics– in the image there is a real exchange between what is looking and what is being looked at. A bond or type of intimacy is thus established that acts as a linking thread or undercurrent.

In a particularly emotive scene from *Diary* (1973-83), David Perlov has to react to the sentimental confession and tears of his daughter, in an intimate setting that will show, through the camera, something the father didn’t know about her: “Yael has also returned from Europe. She has returned from what she calls *an adventure*. I can see her eyes flash. Anxiety, as if she were expecting a phone call. Something’s on her mind. I pick up words here and there, and I ask: ‘Would you say it to the camera?’ She replies: ‘Seeing as it’s you, I don’t mind’. Yael has become a young woman, and at this moment, as a father and filmmaker, I feel I am growing with her in this diary”. Later on, his voice is intercut with his daughter’s: “I could listen to her for hours, but it’s as if she weren’t talking to me or anybody else, as if she were engaged in a dialogue with life itself, with existence. There’s not much else I can do, apart from leave my camera running. My family is turning into my diary [...] For the first time, I reveal something profound in my family that I was unaware of. Nevertheless, the simpler it is, the purer it is. [...] I attempt a few words, but I feel they lack meaning”.

The filmmaker’s voice observes a transformation –“Yael has become a young woman”– which also affects the person behind the camera –“as a father and filmmaker, I feel I am growing with her in this diary”–, and takes on board the fallibility of his knowledge while he feels the urge to hold the shot, to reveal something in it or to move onto the next. Robert Frank says at the start of *Conversations in Vermont* (1969): “This film may be about learning to grow. About the past and present. It’s a kind of family album. I don’t know... it’s about...”. In these cases, the image is compared to an ellipsis and interruption. In *The Lion Hunters* (*La chasse au Lion à l’arc*, 1958-65), Jean Rouch stops his camera when a herder is bitten in the leg by a wounded lion he has rashly approached: “And suddenly a catastrophe happens. The lion, in its trap, attacks a Peul herder. I stop filming but the tape recorder keeps recording...”. The image on the screen is interrupted –we see a few stills resembling ochre traces of earth – but not the images conjured up in our minds by the sound– the victim’s cries, the roar of the lions, the noise of the hunters –this “keeping recording” that may describe the secret of chance and cinematographic shot: the material of cinema always captures something more; it always continues or extends beyond the time the filmmaker stops, even to question his actions– in this case the morality that led Rouch to stop filming the most dramatic sequence in his film.

The soundtrack, compared to the image track, is like a gesture with the left hand that we can’t control while we are thinking about the right, that part of the body that doesn’t adhere to what we thought we were showing. And the voice and the sounds don’t appear afterwards in Rouch’s editing in order to add what is missing in the scene or to fill the visual void; they do so precisely to document those other kinds of interior images, that have nothing to do with the epic and the characteristic narrative adventure of the hunters: the images of the interruption, the paralysing doubt, the fallible and incomplete gesture that being in front of a real event with a camera entails. It is as though, here, instead of

the action, we saw subjectivity cross-cut by doubt at full tilt, the nervous thought that blocks and stops the body, with the reverse or the outburst of morality that paralyses and prevents us from taking a step forward, and the sound was the recording that returns from –and isn't erased from– that life we let pass us by and cannot grasp. The one that embeds itself in our body and we can't get rid of: and what if...?

However, if in life we have to “act” in a play that is always live, without rehearsals or the possibility of stopping the “scenes” if we make a mistake, through editing we can pause, slow down, see and see over again, and even discover blunders and foibles in the images of our lives. The essayistic voice thus contrasts two temporalities of cinema: the present of the filmed image and the present of the editing. Knowledge is generated through the coexistence of these two times, with the possibility of analysis by editing what went unnoticed, criticism through revision: the filmmaker can emerge from himself, objectivise himself by looking at what the material reveals to him about his own ideology or psychology inscribed unconsciously onto the film, or by examining the process itself. Unlike written analysis, this essayistic conception of the relationship between word and image moves in the same direction as cinema itself; from the physical matter to the idea, in contrast to figurative arts characterised by the reverse journey. Hence their approach to the aesthetic treatise, *ars poetica*, in which the filmmakers themselves are the narrators.

This is why the editing suite, on the same level as the typewriter, either appears on screen –as with Godard, Welles, Mekas and Farocki– or doesn't. It occupies the place of the writing desk, of at times melancholic meditation, or of the doubtful and intuitive work of cutting, the transition between one shot and another, or stopping in the interval. Towards the end of *Herman Slobbe/Blind Child 2* (*Herman Slobbe/Blind kind 2* 1966), Johan Van der Keuken stops the film he is making about the blind child –the interior of the film as an organism, a collapsed

body– in fact, he shows us the celluloid film getting jammed inside the camera –to refer to his own work juxtaposed with historic facts, the story with History: “On 29th June, the Americans bombed Hanoi. Now we're leaving Herman. I'm going to Spain to shoot a new film”.

In *Videograms of a Revolution* (*Videogramme einer Revolution*, Harun Farocki, Andrei Ujica, 1992), the televised broadcast of a speech by Ceausescu is interrupted by a red screen, a break in transmission that takes place exactly at the same time as the beginning of the revolution that was to overthrow the dictatorship. Farocki asks “Was this disturbance, this interruption the sign of a revolt?” as he returns to the images in *Interface* (*Schnittstelle*, 1995). Vertov resolved this political shift –the change from one ideology to another, from one form to another– from aesthetic culmination or transcendence, but here the essay stops at the interstices in order to analyse it: this empty space of images of power, where a political system teeters on the brink because of a revolution, that still uncertain moment when we don't know which system will win or what is going to happen.

At the end of *Sans soleil*, Chris Marker returns to the shots of children in a field in Iceland he had shown at the start of the film (“He said that for him it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images, but it never worked”). This time, however, he had edited them in a different way: “And that's where my three children of Iceland came and grafted themselves in. I picked up the whole shot again, adding the somewhat hazy end, the frame trembling under the force of the wind beating us down on the cliff: everything I had cut in order to tidy up, and that said better than all the rest what I saw in that moment, why I held it at arm's length, at zoom's length, until its last twenty-fourth of a second”.

With this confession, Marker seems to point out that the expression of happiness he felt when he saw those children –the problem

of the filmmaker with which he opens the film: precisely how to express this happiness, how to convey it— couldn't be restored through editing, conceived conceptually or intellectually, but by cutting the very material of the scene; cinema thought about from the hand, by setting out the experience of the process and the gesture, showing what was thought surplus to requirements or an extension, the added uncertainty that makes the shoot longer, the thing that tends to be refined or cleaned up afterwards. And what do these images show that good technique would discard? While Marker initially cut the images to make the edit "sharper", now he sees in this supposed defect – haziness, the trembling frame— a supplement to experience, the body, the presence; here we see that the wind is shared by the children and the filmmaker with his camera, and that it is the film itself that trembles in an attempt to prolong this moment of happiness and not lose it from sight.

In the fevered search for vitality, for the energy of something real that is happening in front of the camera, Pasolini also questioned the correct and finished form that had been decided beforehand, showing that the filmmaker had to review the position he was filming from, without remaining in a safe or unchangeable position. This questioning became the subject and overriding concern of his filmed *appunti* or notes: *A Visit to Palestine* (*Sopralluoghi in Palestina*, 1964); *Notes for a Film about India* (*Appunti per un film sull'India*, 1968); *Notes for an African Orestes* (*Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana*, 1970). On many occasions, these films involve a decision to reject. In *A Visit to Palestine* Pasolini says "There's not much to be said about these images. They speak for themselves. It was an adventure, a break in the journey rather than an investigation. Because, as you can see, all this material is unusable. These are the same faces we saw in the Druze villages: sweet, pretty, cheerful, perhaps a little gloomy, funereal, with a wild sweetness, completely pre-Christian. The words of Christ didn't pass this way, far from it. The images are fantastic. And they may be faithful to the image we have when we think of the Jews crossing the desert". In spite

of the aesthetic beauty of the images, Pasolini rejects them in favour of the realism he wanted to use in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which he couldn't find in Palestine.

These meditative, lyrical films were produced at the same time as Pasolini's somewhat dry articles about the semiotics of cinema in the 1960s. They are, nevertheless, the positive expression of this language, its sensitive outpouring: fleeting notes on trips and impressions of life made with the purpose of filming in order to see, to better imagine stories and to discover new faces and locations. This is why, despite the fact that they are approached as notes or notebooks, they are opposed to any abstract or conceptual theory about cinema and become the practice of cinema from the material itself, from the palpable, the sensitive, without jargon or technical terminology, but just through signs and specific details about the experience.

While Pasolini's contact with Friulian farmworkers had led him to relinquish his early aesthetic, hermetic and intellectual poetry when he found or rediscovered his love for reality, cinema led him to "embrace life to the full. To appropriate it, to live it by recreating it. Cinema enabled me to keep in contact with reality, a physical, carnal, I would venture to say even sensual contact".

After making a number of rather dry, politicised films, Johan Van der Keuken felt like making a summer film about family ties. The film ended up being a reflection on photography, the past and the cinematographic purpose of giving life to the immobile, of being present. Johan van der Keuken says in *Filmmaker's Holidays* (*Vakantie van de filmer*, 1974) "The French critic André Bazin once stated that film is the only medium that can show the passage from life to death. I filmed that passage several times, but nothing could be learned from it: nothing happened. It is more difficult to show the passage from death to life, because you have to make that passage, otherwise nothing happens". In this scene Van

der Keuken shows a sequence of shots of an animal having its throat cut –this passage from life to death in which nothing happens– to later quantify the mystery and origin of cinema, of the advent of life and its creation through cinema, in the images of his children bathing in the river.

The filmmaker's practice seems to contradict the canonical written theory, or raise the possibility of another search: of cinema as a supplement to vision and time, to life and energy, that must generate movement and duration in the fixed

(photography) and wind in the shadow. A change of state as well as the change of an idea through the passage from the written, disembodied or abstracted theory of its object –in this case Bazin's theory– to another experimental theory which, from the creative gesture, bases itself on the visible reality and the encounter with reality –“I filmed the passage from life to death several times, but nothing could be learned from it”– in order to think and say cinema in another way. •

Translated from Spanish by Mark Waudby

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Voices at the Altar of Mourning: Challenges, Affliction

Alfonso Crespo

ABSTRACT

The advent of sound, in addition to identifying cinema's first loss –the silent film– entailed the emergence of the voice, whose disjunctive and contrapuntal possibilities in relation to the flow of images would not take long to be buried in favour of a synchronous cinema and the convention of shot/reverse shot as the perfected visual translation of dialogue exchange (voices embodied by the physical presence of the stars). The split between two tracks has nevertheless been exploited by some of the most important filmmakers throughout film history, who saw in the combat between words and images a way of being faithful, in a different sense, to cinema's main mission: to make the invisible visible through the observable. Thus, filmmakers like Straub/Huillet, Duras, Lanzmann, Eustache and Friedl chose to work on presenting the word cast into the air as a penetrating source of images of the real; images that conceal occurrences that the off-camera voices or voice-overs attract and draw to the surface. This violent and optimistic type of cinema is what Jean Narboni associated with a thankless yet joyful task in contrast with the makers of necrophiliac cinema like Resnais. This division of positions in relation to the melancholy of the sound era can be explored to analyse various cases of the use of the voice-over as a fiction stimulator in contemporary cinema. Under the influence of Straubian pedagogy, the films of Rousseau, Fitoussi or Rey could be cited. Within the spectral group, with their passion for spectres but also for the survival of memory in a fantastic style are contemporary Portuguese filmmakers like Miguel Gomes, João Pedro Rodrigues and Rita Azevedo Gomes. Half way between these two groups, reaping post-modern rewards from both ethical-aesthetic approaches, we could locate the films of Ben Rivers.

KEYWORDS

Sound films, joyful mourning, voice-over, Jean Marie Straub/Danièle Huillet, Marguerite Duras, Gerhard B. Friedl, Jean-Charles Fitoussi, Jean-Claude Rousseau, contemporary Portuguese cinema, Ben Rivers.

Cinema, as both Daney¹ and Rivette² could corroborate, always has to wrestle with the cumulative erosion of innocence and potency. Always a little less innocent, always a little less potent. There is no way back; there is no door, Thomas Wolfe would say; we can't go home again, Nicholas Ray would tell us. With the arrival of sound, the first loss was identified: "silent film", along with the burial of the first utopias associated with the invention of the machine, the ones that modern filmmakers later attempted to revive once the conventions of the "talkie" had already imposed the law of survival of the fittest. Too late, as is well-known, because those who believed they were next were actually last. As Rancière suggests (2011: 42-43), the build-up of banality that sound brought with it and the evident betrayal of cinema's original mission –to show and relate phenomena– fed Godard's redemptive grieving in his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), where, in the style of Cocteau, he attempts a return, a rewind, in order to imagine retrospectively a different scenario from so much squandered fascination, now that the tension of the time when it was thought that cinema would transform the world is long gone, bringing ruins back to life, making "Vertov with icons extracted from Hitchcock, Lang, Eisenstein or Rossellini." And if the achronological feat of wistful restitution that is *Histoire(s)* is possible and proves so powerful it is because Godard, who in his day turned the camera frame into a blackboard and even negated himself in it, to give free rein to the rivalry between visual track and audio track, knows the secret that the advent of sound brought with it, a secret subsequently concealed behind the wearying rally of shot-reverse shot and dialogue responses: the emergence of the voice and the disjunctive synthesis that it could provoke with the parade of images. This was the gift that was given in exchange for the irremediable loss, a Meccano kit without instructions whose seller claimed that other means could be used to recreate the

mystery of hallucination of life and the glimpse of the invisible through the observable. In this *ersatz* product more than a few hopes have been placed, and there have been many, including many prominent figures who, since the dawn of sound and its contrapuntal theories, have suggested that it was there, in the possibilities opened up by asynchrony and the aimless freedom of words and images, where we could find the true specificity of cinema, its power as a producer of meaning and a stimulator of imaginaries.

At its core, even in its most anti-natural and forced application (i.e., the use of synchrony), the combined presence in film of images and voices –of reflections seen and words heard– introduced the ghost of a non-relationship from the outset. Thus, for example, it was theorists like Balázs – for whom there was a chasm rather than a break in continuity between silent and sound film, if they weren't in fact two different art forms (1945: 241)– who celebrated the use of the voice-over/off as a strategy that could give the image back at least a shadow of the autonomy it had enjoyed in the silent film era, as this should not have been compromised by the narrative intelligibility that had now fallen upon the word. Spectators could thus once again lose themselves in the images. But this aperture, this interstice between soundtrack and visual track would be explored in depth by only a few, a select and elusive sect, it might be said, the only ones who have given meaning to the expression "audiovisual", those who located sound and image on either side of a chasm. I refer here to stellar moments in film history, with repercussions on the history of ideas and thought. Thus, when Deleuze (1985: 159-190) proposed an approach to cinema that pondered over the irreconcilable dualism on which, according to Foucault, all knowledge is based (the gulf between the visible and the expressible, absolute heterogeneity: to see is not to speak; to speak is not to see), he took a position somewhere between Kant (the fracturing

1. For example, in Serge Daney: *Itinéraire d'un 'ciné-fils'* (Pierre-André Boutang, Dominique Rabourdin, 1992).

2. In conversation with Daney himself, in *Jacques Rivette. Le veilleur* (Claire Denis, Serge Daney, 1990).

of the *cogito*) and Blanchot (a poetics of the limit: to speak the silence; to see what cannot be seen) to better penetrate those examples of modern audiovisual cinema that might shed a little light on and help to conceive of that ineffable type of relationship that is the non-relationship. It was without doubt one of the French philosopher's great digressions and conceptualisations, the description of that kind of sound film that broke with the poetics of off-screen space, where the non-seen still belonged to the visual, and established something else: a combat where "the word tells a story that is not seen [and] the visual image shows places that do not have or no longer have a story" (Deleuze, 1985: 186). It is a poetics of the emergence of the happening; one buried, covered, and drawn out from below by the word. "Beneath the earth, I shall capture the dead (Straub). Beneath the dance, I shall capture the other dance (Duras)" (Deleuze, 1985: 188). Deleuze spoke of the cinema of disjunction between the visual and the sonic –which provides an aerial word and a subterranean vision– and analysed films like *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), *Fortini/Cani* (Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, 1977), *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975) and *Les photos d'Alix* (Jean Estuache, 1980). And if his digression, as I suggested above, sought, with greater or lesser success, to clarify Foucault's epistemology, in the end, if it established anything, it was, curiously, the reversibility of the passage, since from Foucault himself came the illumination that aided a clearer reflection on that type of film that showed by silencing and revealed by blinding, when he identified the series of crosslinks between figure and text: "attacks launched by one against the other, arrows shot at the enemy target, enterprises of subversion and destruction, lance blows and wounds, a battle" (Foucault, 1973: 26). What was identified, then, was a certain kind of violence, a warlike conflict between two forces that linked filmmakers like Lanzmann, Straub/Huillet, Duras and Eustache and in which the leading role was given to a voice-over at war with the flow of images. And the sensation provoked by these examples, as Deleuze wisely noted, was that if the two sides touched, everything died.

This radical dualism –its proudly two-sided nature– was the source of stern and terrifying pedagogies (from Isou's cinematographic lettrism to collective experiences such as those of the Dziga Vertov Group) which, turning their back on synchronies, charged against the representative function of cinema and its search for truth in the concordance between the spoken and the seen alone; ultimately, cinema was threatened, and it was a threat of dismantling, destruction and recommencement. There are many examples; this is what was suggested in *La femme du Gange* (Marguerite Duras, 1974), where the film of the voices and the film of the vision unfolded in parallel, opening with the ironic and agonising voice of Duras herself –the mermaid's voice that calls cinema to its perdition (Chion, 1984: 125)– explaining absence of isomorphism as a kind of self-protection and at the same time encouraging the spectator's contempt (the aim was to overcome cinema's heritage and test how far it could go (Duras, 1980: 145)). It is also evident, much later, in the stunning work of the Austrian filmmaker Gerhard B. Friedl, with films like *Knittelfeld – Stadt ohne Geschichte* (1997) and, especially, *Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen?* (2004). Where Duras rehearsed destruction, Friedl injected the seeds of disintegration, a bloodletting whereby the tracks acquired an unpredictable, accidental fluidity, at times outlining minor and deceptive agreements: the word journeying from its original silence, the image marching reluctantly on its way to black, as if seduced by the rhythmic opaqueness that speckles any projection. Playing with the wet dream of television (which is the same as it always was: the pretence of informing without explaining anything, merely by vomiting words over inconsequential pan shots), Friedl associated the social crisis of capital and of representation in a visionary diptych that ultimately declared that there was nothing to see in modern economies, and nothing to hear in the voices that claimed the power to clarify them and reveal the vast web of global connections that sustain them. Further examples could be described of this cinema of buried happenings and words flying on the air, of the visible concealed in the invisible that is

drawn out by a *mise en scene* of word and voice that thus strips away “the silence from texts and the deceit of the bodies that pretend to embody them” (Rancière, 1996: 43). But what needs to be underlined is that this is where the great utopia of sound is encoded, marginal, secretive and severe perhaps, represented over time by a film corpus that redirected the wistfulness associated with the birth of the two tracks towards a horizon of violent optimism. It is this utopia that blinds, burns and silences what we should not forget when conceiving of an audiovisual cinema, as it overshadows any work that seeks its ethical and aesthetic position on the basis of the erotic connection between visibilities and utterances, especially when the latter are introduced by voices and sounds which, overshadowing the image and its out-of-frame, abandon a clearly defined position in relation to it.

The utopian force of disjunctive cinema is thus intimately related to the loss of innocence brought –and, of course, voiced– by the sound film, as the history of sound films is the history of a monomaniacal hunt associated with the thresholds of rupture, the unveilings and emergence of the film beneath the film. Thus, even in the earliest days of sound, as Chion (1984: 43-53) explains in his analysis of *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (*Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, Fritz Lang, 1932), signs of the particular otherworldliness of cinema began to build up once again with the exchange of captions and dissolves for voices and words: the inference that behind the acousmetre –the neologism coined by the author by combining “acousmatique” and “être” to refer to the bodiless voices that narrate, announce and arouse the evocation of the past in films– was hidden the acousmachine (the slate disc whirling on its own); that the acousmatic, in short, was the antechamber or the sign of the automatic. And Chion, in an inspired work, explored the tensions introduced by this malevolent and unfathomable voice behind which lay protagonists who, in this process of searching, would come close to self-awareness, almost to suspect their status as shadows, simulacra and

projections. The spectator, as in the early days, could more easily deconstruct the hallucinatory oxymoron of cinema, that funereal life now filled with spellbinding voices that seemed to herald a perdition: “When it is not the voice of the dead man, the voice-over of the narrator is usually that of one almost dead, one who has reached the end of his life and is merely awaiting death” (Chion, 1984: 55). The acousmatic voice and the sounds that tinged and seduced the image from an ineffable point off camera continued with the narrative task but in doing so they exposed the artificiality of the project itself, which they injected with a playful virtuality: voices without endorsement, impostors, undefined, from the hereafter or previously registered, the voices of the machine; mannerism and the decline of the genres and the modern experience would only make the fragilities and suspicions all the more acute. It is this situation that Jean Narboni appears to be referring to in a significant article on *Fortini/Cani*, when he attempts to define what differentiates the practice of the Straub/Huillet pairing from that of Resnais: “[...] we find in Resnais’ work (except, perhaps, for the admirable *Muriel* [*Muriel ou Le temps d’un retour*, 1963]) all of the elements which, according to Freud, structure the obsessive machine: ‘Animism, magic and witchcraft, the omnipotence of thoughts, man’s attitude to death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex...’ (in *The Uncanny*). Hence the dread that it exudes and arouses (taken to its most extreme level in *Providence* [1977]). In Straub, on the other hand, in spite of the harshness or the horror of the topics addressed, there is a kind of profound joy. The thankless work of mourning has nothing to do with passion for the corpse: the first is *joyful*, the second is not” (Narboni, 1997: 14). Mourning or passion for the corpse, profound joy or dread. This specific bipolarity is what breaks away from sound and from its *thanatic* supplement (and what underlies the utopian drift concealed in the work on the non-relationship between tracks is a certain movement against the grain), and it might well be a useful framework of concepts for evaluating the different uses of the voice-over in the contemporary fiction

film, a resource as hackneyed as any other but one that has constituted a field of experimentation for filmmakers who have created works with ideas bigger than their budgets.

It might be interesting to begin with some of those filmmakers who have been exposed to the *Straubian pedagogy*, i.e., the work of filming between gaps and absences, on the basis of a forgetting, of an assumed loss, according to which nothing pre-exists the shots, and everything must be assembled on their basis. With films that are as conscientiously produced as they are sacrificed to random fate, the work of Straub/Huillet was and is one of the present and of impurity, where everything exists on a level playing field as long as it is translated by the machines brought together for the task. Everything counts in it, as Narboni suggests, and therefore any question as to the hierarchy of images and sounds is of no significance (a pedagogy that is also *Godardian*). A cinematic ally would be Jean-Claude Rousseau, who adopts these teachings to delve in his own way into a cinema of sensuality that focuses on the desire for fiction, the faith in those precise, beautiful constellations that can be formed by the constitutive components of filmmaking, which for him are the image as vision –dense lighting aided by a deliberate *Lumièresque* contrast– and sounds and voices as sources of resonance, which modify and magnify. The manifesto-film in this sense might be *La vallée close* (Jean-Claude Rousseau, 1995), that polysemic closed space where heterogeneous and even antithetical elements demonstrate the potentiality of their interactions: here the bowshots, the combats, the accidents between visual and sound tracks give rise gradually to an amorous encounter, while the geography lesson that dominated the out-of-frame and structured the film's beginning loses its hegemony and, as Rousseau himself would corroborate (Neyrat and Rousseau, 2008), disintegrates into a heap of distractions and floating voices, visual and sonic wanderings that reveal the nature of the experiment: the film of a bad student who abandons the lesson and, like the child in *Rentrée des classes* (Jacques

Rozier, 1956), goes off into the woods, his senses aroused. In Rousseau there is a poetics of space that places the inside in confrontation with the outside, the closed room with the open sky, the school with the street, the voice within with the calls from without. This interlinking of stimuli is a feature of Rousseau's films like *Les antiquités de Rome* (1991), *De son appartement* (2007) and, in a register more in keeping with my exploration here, *Série Noire* (2009), where the filmmaker occupies the in-between space: looking through the window, between the house and the parking lot, out of our sight, and also out of sight of the person calling him on the phone, but nevertheless present, observing and possibly delirious. It is once again the right, prodigious shot, a shot that facilitates everything, in this case an omen, an augury of fiction on the fixed frame fed by the depths of voices and sound tracks. The autonomy between sound and vision, their short circuits and hints of synchrony, make the out-of-frame an out-of-film as well, and at the same time the answered prayer (the appearance of the car with all its cinematographic metaphors) excites all the molecules that Rousseau had put into combat over the precise, neutral shot. Patience and chance, the search and the unpredictable turn the clashes into convergences, and thus the frictions between the horizontal and the vertical increase in intensity, infected by the lack of rigidity of the approach.

Another filmmaker following the tradition of profound joy might be Jean-Charles Fitoussi, whose *Les jours où je n'existe pas* (2002) seeks to balance the pleasure of the narration with that of the visuals by means of a stitch work conceived and executed to turn the ontological absolutes of film into material for fiction. And it is the opening voice –but especially the voice-over– that conveys Antoine's story that in turn translates the delicate passages between camera shots and words into another language. While the story is told of the man who exists only every other day, the images –still frames separated by the nocturnal intermittence of the shutter– are possessed by a solemnity that infuses them with a quality of self-

sufficiency. As they brush up against the words and confront each other, these images create in each change of shot an interstice that tinges the visible with mystery. Once again, then, we find indeterminacy; the gaps, the ellipses, and on them the serious game of the story that has its core in a Raúl Ruiz-styled conversation between an adult-child and a child-adult that conceives a world: cinema, like the protagonist, is overwhelmed by the dark side of time, the pure virtuality of matter without memory, the urban documentary that storms the film, taking advantage of Antoine's absence, and speaks to us of the time before the centre of indeterminacy, before the point of view: they are the images for nobody—light for nobody—of which Deleuze would speak, following Bergson³. Against this, Fituossi opposes the near-life of cinema (which is also the half-life of the cinephile, who always leaves the other half facing the screen) and its titanic effort to fragment and parcel up time, which escapes through the cracks between visions and voices. It is the arduous and painstaking work of the resistance fighter—not all that far from kindred spirits like Straub or Costa, and thus close to the invocation of the classic embers—that breaks the synchrony with life and movement and scans headlands and heights: a cinema of searching for presences that can be crucibles of temporality. The oral transmission of Antoine's story leads ultimately to an empty shot—but one that is still viewed—in a primeval virgin landscape where everything begins again. It is an art of resonance: the story here, paired with the music, is that which, as Jean-Luc Nancy writes (following Lacoue-Labarthe), had already begun and echoes still (2012: 179-180). It is the *unending* and *unbeginning* of great fiction, which besieges the music in the form of refrains, repetitions, variations and retransmissions.

A final combatant on this front might be Nicolas Rey. Subterranean relationships, faith in

machines and a predisposition for twists of fate that inject ineffable additions into the fictive effort also structure his recent film *anders, Molussien* (2012). The outdated 16-mm reels exacerbate the ultimate ignorance as to what is being filmed (more still if, as is the case here, gadgets are constructed to steal the shots from reality, and then the order of the reels is left to the mercy of the projectionist): ordinary landscapes cut across with strangeness. The utopian scheme is repeated: *Arte Povera* to better penetrate the visible and get to what lies beneath, to what was always there. Of course, the question of faith is repeated: Günther Anders' anti-fascist novel about the imaginary dictatorial Molussia, which Rey cannot read because he doesn't know German, is where the filmmaker has placed his hope. To speak this text read by so few, to make it heard through a complicit voice, feels like something necessary and important, and it is from this fragile out-of-frame—shared with noises and other sound incidents—that picks up the conversations of the prisoners in the catacomb from where the shots will be fired, from where the combat will be established with the simple shots of urban, natural and industrial landscapes where Fascism once lurked, now transformed. Also positioned against the dictatorship of synchrony and even against conventional editing techniques is his earlier work *Les Soviets plus l'électricité* (2002), a stirring clash between the avant-garde and the European essayistic tradition, whose place of enunciation lies somewhere between Mekas and Marker (Blümlinger, 2006: 45). In this film-journey where, as Boris Lehman points out⁴, Rey becomes a voluntary prisoner on the road to Siberia, images and voice once again celebrate their immodest independence, competing, clashing swords: on one side, the voice of Rey himself, captured by a Dictaphone where he records his reflections, digressions and descriptions of what we do not see; on the other side, the images, shot at nine frames per second,

3. For an exploration of these concepts, see the chapters "La ceroidad y los signos de la imagen-percepción" and "Paréntesis sobre cine experimental. Kurosawa y la acción". In: DELEUZE, Gilles (1982/83): *Los signos del movimiento*

y el tiempo. Cine II. Cactus, Buenos Aires, 2011.

4. An article on Rey's film published on the filmmaker's website.

enigmatic souvenirs which, not circumscribed by the word, complete and contrast their meanings as they shake the spectator with a sensory and imaginary overload. Rey re-establishes a disorder, adding new machines and reconfiguring the old ones, re-appropriating the reflection of freedom of that cinema that once sounded revolutionary and that now fights depression with beauty's remains and dialectic essays based on the poetics and the politics of the non-relationship.

After utopia, I should speak at least minimally of the ghosts, of that type of mourning in which Narboni detected passion for the corpse. In the cinema wounded by melancholy, the rivalry between tracks has been replaced by less traumatic frictions, in essence by a system of relays. And if the interval between movements bears any obvious hallmark it is that of demiurgic post-production: images make explicit the work that domesticated them, appearing as something already seen by another (hence, perhaps, the unspeakable sadness), and the voice, which commands, as something that colours them, puts them in perspective, changes their signification and proves their malleability. There are models that induce euphoria, such as *Moi, un noir* (Jean Rouch, 1958), and others that are openly comic, like *The Girl Chewing Gum* (John Smith, 1976), or warm-hearted, like *Langsammer Sommer* (John Cook, 1976), but in none is it hidden that they deal with reflections, not presences. The change is from the otherworld glimpsed to the otherworld summoned; from the relationships of incommensurability between tracks in the resolution to turn the fragile and transitory nature of cinema, its status as an embalming kit of lights and shadows, into the site of a narrative reconquest whose *raison d'être* is the disassociation of voice and body, a source of alienation and of the fantastic, as was evident to Jean-Louis Leutrat, who offers the semantic field of this corpus (1995): the last days, prophetic and spectral

time, confinement, redundancy, loop, repetition. It is the purest desire of fiction, which in reality shrouds a death rattle, which tends to structure the blueprint for a voice-cinema –embodied in an acousmetre with full powers or not– that absorbs the spectator and directs the gaze upon the visual flow. And the more severe the prison for viewing and images, the more obtuse will be their meaning by the time the voice is interrupted or silenced. A wealth of examples in this sense can be found in recent Portuguese films, painstakingly studied by Glòria Salvadó precisely under these precepts of invocation of the past and emergence of spectres⁶: cracked tales re-appropriated through the dialectics of editing –with those of voice/image in a privileged position– that tinge the reality with fantastic elements, with vestiges that operate from an achronological perspective and offer an imaginary intensification of memory: a few cases that could be cited briefly are *Tabu* (2012) and *Redemption* (2013) by Miguel Gomes, in which the voice revises, embellishes, creates or invents memories over images in a process of emancipation, whether for photogenic beauty or from an overdose of *punctum*; another is *A última vez que vi Macau* (João Pedro Rodrigues and João Rui Guerra da Mata, 2012), a veritable handbook for the acousmatic voice as primal force and floating residue: entranced voices that inhabit a Macao of sentimental ruins and cinematic dreams where everything seems to have already happened and all that remain are their arabesques on the air (voices that still converse in the present and govern the noir plot; voices of the protagonists, who wander close to Resnais or Mizoguchi, obsessed with fetishes, with nothing to communicate beyond the ashes and failure of past experiences). This hurried glance at Portuguese film could be closed by Rita Azevedo Gomes and her *A vingança de uma mulher* (2012), a film articulated from off-camera by idle, trapped actors whose voices, in relay, invite us into the sumptuous and contrived melodrama (the L'Herbier-Resnais-Ruiz axis)

6. Especially the introduction (“Imatge i història”) and the chapters “Empremtes de la història” and “Evocació de fantasmès” in: SALVADÓ CORRETGER, Glòria: *Espectres*

del cinema portuguès contemporani. Història i fantasma en les imatges. Leonard Muntaner/Instituto Camões, Palma de Mallorca, 2012.

where the word is a weapon that seeks to tell all; a missile that bounces off mirrors, capable only of evoking and showing the torments of the past. Once again there is the feeling that in these lives/films real life is missing, as we hear in one of her masterpieces, *O som da terra a tremer* (1990), the story of a hapless writer, allergic to travel, who seeks a discipline for his writing while the images seem to express a longing for escape, improvisation, an asynchronous flight that would set them free in his voice.

I will conclude with the observation that in the tomb-cinema, the experience of a growing tension between voices and visions fuels the idea of a dialogue between mourning processions, one optimistic and the other agonising. An intermediate figure for considering this exchange might be Ben

Rivers and his imaginary ethnography. An heir to the tradition of Werner Herzog (*Fata Morgana*, 1969), Rivers' cosmogonic impulse suspends his films between precisions and imprecisions: their inhuman hallmark is exploited, as Epstein noted, in that the machines of cinema vest sights and sounds with a material overload that goes beyond narrative intentions and subjects them to a transcendental ambiguity. Thus, in Rivers' films like *Astika* (2006), *Ah, Liberty* (2008), *Two Years at Sea* (2011) and *Slow Action* (2011), the voices resemble psychophonies and the images resemble a historical excess or a futuristic delirium. And not even the synchrony between tracks, when it occurs, can calm or naturalise the uncertain discords. •

Translated from Spanish by Martin Boyd

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Siren Song: the Narrating Voice in Two Films by Raúl Ruiz

David Heinemann

ABSTRACT

In two documentary-inflected fiction films, *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* (*L'Hypothèse du tableau volé*, 1979) and the less known short, *Ice Stories* (*Histoires de glace*, 1987), Raúl Ruiz employs oral narration, both on screen and in voice-over, to lead the viewer into labyrinthine narratives that recall in their baroque complexity the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges. While Borges grounds his stories in the real world through referencing historical times, people and places, and often uses an academic style and form to bestow an air of seriousness and rigour to his conceptual flights of fancy, Ruiz counterpoints the fantastic nature of his stories with documentary devices and images. Combined with articulate and persuasive oral narration, Ruiz creates a unique and mysterious world that marries the real with the fantastic to unsettling effect. This paper explores how Ruiz uses specifically cinematic approaches, such as unusual voice-image juxtapositions and multiple oral narrators to challenge, like Borges before him, accepted notions of time, causality and identity, and how he incorporates other art forms, such as paintings, photographs and the *tableau vivant*, to interrogate the boundaries of filmic form and style.

KEYWORDS

Baroque, Borges, Deleuze, Documentary, Klossowski, Ruiz, *Tableau vivant*, Voice-over.

In cinema, oral narration informs. It also seduces. The timbre of the voice and the often confessional nature of this intimate form of address together possess “the irrational power” –to quote André Bazin, who here describes photography– “to bear away our faith” (1967: 14). Similar to the photographic image, oral narration, and voice-over in particular, appears to have a privileged connection to filmic and, especially in the case of the documentary, profilmic reality. However, as numerous films demonstrate, from *Land Without Bread* (*Las Hurdes, tierra sin pan*, Luís Buñuel, 1933) through a body of *films noirs* to *Badlands* (Terrence Malick, 1973) and beyond, we embrace it at our interpretative peril. Though the voice may express the views of an authority (relaying personal experience or expert knowledge), it represents a point of view that is likely to be as limited, skewed or misleading as any conveyed through dialogue or image. The unreliable narrator, whether ill-informed, deluded, capricious or malicious, was a staple in the novel long before the coming of the sound film. But when employed in film, where the voice is not mediated by the written word but linked in a variety of ways to the indexical image, its power to convince is multiplied. As a cinematic device the narrating voice is thus well-suited to films which, in the pursuit of metaphysical or epistemological investigations, question received ideas about the nature of reality and human identity, and interrogate how we come to know ourselves and the world. Here the guiding voice can function as a siren song¹, luring viewers into uncharted philosophical waters and shipwrecking habitual views of time, causality, identity, and cinematic form.

1. I am indebted to Serge Daney for this trope. In the *Cahiers du Cinéma* special issue on Ruiz, he notes: “I hold certain voice-overs in the films of Raoul Ruiz to be the most beautiful in contemporary cinema. . . . We know that when the understanding of a film appears to depend upon voice-over, we accord it our utter and foolish trust. Voice-over is cinema’s siren song. Its grain can drive us mad, its seductiveness is immense. But at the end of the day, it’s not there to speak the truth, but to *represent*” (own translation) (1983: 24, emphasis in the original).

The prolific Chilean-born director, Raúl Ruiz, who made the majority of his over 100 films in France, endeavours in his work to challenge assumptions about reality –filmic and profilmic– through destabilising our customary relationship to the cinematic voice and image, and their relationship to each other. With a baroque and at times surrealist sensibility, comparable in literature to that of the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, Ruiz aims to proliferate meanings rather than delimit them, to disperse character and place rather than particularise them –in short, according to Ruiz himself, to foster “a space of uncertainty and polysemia” (2005: 121). Adapting Walter Benjamin’s concept of the optical unconscious² Ruiz demonstrates, in his films and theoretical writings, how visual signs draw on, and generate other signs³. Exploited by a director who wishes to open up interpretative spaces, this excessive multiplication of signs leads to “a non-totalisable infinity of irreconcilable points of view” (Goddard, 2013: 6). Ruiz describes this passage into the photographic unconscious as an entry into a hypnotic or dream state:

“Now it appears that the images are taking off from the airport of ourselves, and flying toward the film we are seeing. Suddenly we *are* all the characters of the film, all the objects, all the scenery. And we experience these invisible connections with just as much intensity as the visible segment” (Ruiz, 2005: 119)

But the voice, too, is a representation, in its timbre and intonation as much as in the verbal

2. In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” Benjamin observes: “The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (1999: 230).

3. According to Ruiz, it is “plausible that every image is but the image of an image, that it is translatable through all possible codes, and that this process can only culminate in new codes generating new images, themselves generative and attractive” (Ruiz 2005: 53).

message it conveys, and like images can be used to lull viewers into a hypnotic state and initiate them into a labyrinthine world of possible realities. Ruiz uses voice-over narration as well as on-screen narration –or ‘textual speech’ as Michel Chion designates it– to do just this.

Two of Ruiz’s most radical experiments with the power of cinema to alter the viewer’s conception of reality depend upon oral narration; indeed, each of them in their own way deconstructs the very notion of this cinematic device: *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* (*L’Hypothèse du tableau volé*, 1979), and the 30-minute *Ice Stories* (*Histoires de glace*, 1987). While the former began as a documentary about the French writer and artist Pierre Klossowski, the latter marked Ruiz’s contribution to the three-part omnibus *Icebreaker* (*Brise-glace*, 1987), commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Film Institute with the ostensible objective of documenting the activities of the Swedish ship. The other two contributions were directed by Titte Törnroth and Jean Rouch. Although both *Hypothesis* and *Ice Stories* have their genesis in documentary and make liberal use of documentary devices, such as testimony, expository narration, and unstaged cinematography, both ultimately subvert the form to the degree that they must finally be classed as fiction. In employing a documentary inspired approach, however, Ruiz exploits the generally held conviction that documentary adheres closer to reality than fiction film, with the privileged relationship to truth that that brings, and thereby makes a more forceful challenge to our everyday perception of and relationship to the world. This strategy of mixing the real with the fictional was also employed by Borges in his short stories. To convince the reader of the seriousness, if not the veracity, of the narrator’s improbable claims, he employs non-fiction devices, such as bibliographic references and footnotes (‘Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*’ provides a good example), as well

as references within the fictional story to historical figures who appear to endorse the fantastic events recounted, as in ‘Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius’ where Bertrand Russell, Schopenhauer, Hume and Berkeley are cited. Indeed, Borges went so far as to refer in his non-fiction writings to books that did not exist but were his own fabrications, a strategy employed by Klossowski and, in turn, Ruiz.

In *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* an art collector discusses his collection of six paintings by the 19th century artist Frédéric Tonnerre, and attempts to demonstrate that the paintings are linked by their narratives, formal devices and symbols, and constitute a series that reveals a secret meaning, a meaning that created such a scandal in 19th century Parisian society that the paintings were suppressed by the government of the time. The Collector employs *tableaux vivants* in order to penetrate into the three dimensional spaces represented by the paintings and better explore key features, such as composition, décor and props, lighting and poses. The ultimate significance of the paintings cannot finally be pinned down, however. The Collector attributes this to a missing painting which renders the series, and the meaning it was created to articulate, incomplete. He can only hypothesise as to what this alleged painting represented, and he does so based on the interpretation he attempts to make of the series as a whole. In other words, he uses a virtual painting of his own invention to supply the necessary ‘evidence’ required to support his theory.

The film opens with a sixty-one second stationary shot of a misty cul-de-sac in contemporary Paris, presumably the street in which the Collector’s house is located. After two epigraphs over black⁴, the subsequent shot features the interior of the Collector’s premises where the mobile camera explores the room housing the paintings. In a dry, clean,

4. These epigraphs, by Victor Hugo and Pierre Klossowski, both treat the struggle of human consciousness to

distinguish between ambivalent sensations and even to continue to exist.

closely-miked recording –clearly voice-over– an authoritative Narrator introduces the subject of this alleged documentary, his dramatising delivery accentuated by a surge in the strings of the classical score accompanying the scene. As the camera dollies in to an easel on which is propped a painting featuring a young man, hands tied behind him and a noose around his neck, encircled by men in religious ceremonial attire, the Narrator concludes his opening remarks:

“It is enough for the painter to interpret, in his sober, magisterial style, the dynamism of these figures, the expression of their poses and gestures, to reveal the ardent fanaticism of these men and their inexorable purpose”

A second acousmatic voice adds “J. Alboise in *L'Artiste*, 1889”, thus indicating that the Narrator’s florid speech is in fact a quotation, while subtly undermining the Narrator’s integrity. The reverberant quality of this second voice suggests it emanates from a space different from that of the Narrator, possibly the space represented on screen. This proves to be the case when, a moment later, just as the Narrator finishes another statement about the painter, the Collector (played by Jean Rougeul) steps out from behind the painting under discussion and walks thoughtfully across the room, once more vocally providing the reference to the Narrator’s speech: “M.F. Lajenevals, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1889”. The Borgesian strategy of validating unlikely claims through fictive academic references seems here designed as much for the sake of parody as for persuasion. Inhabiting different spaces, the two characters also inhabit different times: the Narrator a time subsequent to that in which the images of the film were recorded, and the Collector precisely the time in which he was photographed by the camera. The two men nevertheless communicate across this spatio-temporal divide, at times concurring, at others disagreeing. When the Narrator begins to formulate a question about the series of paintings (“How is it that only six paintings”), the Collector cuts him off: “Seven”.

This establishes the difference between the two men’s approach to the paintings, as well as the problematic at the centre of the film: the nature and limit of exegetical activity.

The Narrator manages the proceedings –not as an off-screen narrator normally does in a documentary, but ‘live’– similar to the commentator of a televised sporting event. He describes the Collector’s activities as he moves from room to room and asks leading, portentous questions of the Collector, then clarifies or summarises his answers. This creates the expectation of a definitive solution to the double-barrelled mystery stated at the outset: what is the secret at the heart of the series of paintings and why did it create a scandal in 19th century Paris. He attempts in this way to give shape and meaning to the film (within a film), even if this entails foreclosing the Collector’s elaborate speculations. Having witnessed just the first two of the *tableau vivant* stagings of the six paintings, the Narrator is already prepared to offer a summary interpretation:

“*Narrator*: Perhaps one might now venture the hypothesis of a group of paintings whose interconnection is ensured by a play of mirrors.

Collector: Speculation.

Narrator: One might see the painter’s oeuvre as a vast reflection on the art of reproduction.

Collector: Certainly not. That is not the way to look at this painting”

Whereas the Narrator drives toward interpretative closure, the Collector continues to open new lines of investigation, creating a labyrinth of possible meanings. The interplay between the Narrator and the Collector provides the basis of this parody of expository television arts documentaries –programmes that attempt neatly to sum up complex and multivalent works of art– and also highlights key preoccupations of both Ruiz and the ostensible subject of this project, Pierre Klossowski: how the refashioning

of works of art creates a subjective, circular time, and how this act, and the temporal disjunction it creates, begin to dissolve human identity. Both concepts find expression in the *tableau vivant*.

In restaging paintings, *tableaux vivants* enter into a dialogue not only with the original works of art, but also with the models who may have posed for it, creating, according to Ruiz,

“[A] shared intensity [...] a bridge between the two groups of models [...] The first models are in a sense reincarnated [...] Certain philosophers, like Nietzsche and Klossowski, have seen an illustration or perhaps even a proof of the eternal return in such reincarnated gestures” (2005: 51)

Ruiz further muses, “Some observers have seen in this juxtaposition a continuum of intensity whose effect is to erase all identity” (1995: 51)⁵. These concepts are figured in the speech acts between the Narrator and Collector who appear to communicate across different temporal dimensions while sharing, despite their different dispositions, an almost mystical connection. For example, when the Collector falls asleep in the middle of an elaborate explanation, the Narrator whispers his commentary, recalling Godard’s voice-over in his *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (*2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle*, 1967), as if to avoid waking the Collector. When the Collector does awake a few moments later he picks up and continues on with the Narrator’s train of thought, even repeating one of the Narrator’s phrases: “reprehensible act”. This slippage of time and identity casts doubt on the notion of a unified self. Perhaps the Narrator and Collector or two aspects of the

same person, or one is the reflection of the other, but at a temporal remove. This accords with Ruiz’s speculations in his *Poetics of Cinema*: “In this lottery of synchronisms and diachronisms, a melancholy turn of mind leads us to suggest that the world has already happened and that we are nothing but echoes” (2005: 54). It also chimes again with ideas found in the stories and essays of Borges, a writer with whom Ruiz felt a great affinity. ‘The Garden of Forking Paths’ proposes the coexistence of multiple temporalities, while ‘Borges and I’ examines the coexistence of different selves.

While the *tableau vivant* may be an apposite form through which to explore such conjunctions, further problematising the documentary aspect of *Hypothesis* is the fact that Tonnerre is, of course, a fictional character and his paintings created specifically for the film⁶. Indeed, Klossowski himself invented the character of Tonnerre for a 1961 essay, worthy of Borges, entitled ‘La *Judith* de Frédéric Tonnerre’ (2001: 120-125), in which he parodies art criticism. But the film is not only a parody of the arts documentary, or a cinematic reflection of a parody in essay form; it is also an attempt, in true documentary spirit, to get to the heart of Klossowski’s thought. What it reveals there is an aporia. Klossowski’s absence mirrors the missing painting at the heart of *Hypothesis* which is the motivating force behind the Collector’s exegetical activity and also a symbol of the impossibility of interpretative closure. Ruiz sums it up thus: “It’s like the horizon: once you reach the horizon, there’s still [another] horizon” (quoted in Goddard, 2013: 46). Interpretation leads not to a univocal meaning, but to the need for further interpretation. Klossowski’s absence stands as a sign for this endless process. Indeed, his name is not even mentioned in the film. Like

5. The Collectors states: “The same gestures repeated from painting to painting, loom up, in isolation, to better efface the paintings themselves and what they represent.”

6. *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* was originally entitled *Tableaux Vivants*, and would feature Klossowski himself, who had an abiding interest in the *tableau vivant* and in

exegetical work on paintings, critiquing the *tableaux*. Ruiz remarked: “I wanted to show Klossowski’s philosophical system through a series of *tableaux vivants* which he would critique” (Ruiz in interview, Dumas 2006). Klossowski’s sudden departure from Paris just before the shoot forced Ruiz to conceive of a different film.

a character in a Borges story, the real Klossowski has his identity dissolved into that of the fictional Collector, and his art work into that of his own creation, Tonnerre.

At the end of *Hypothesis* the Collector admits that he cannot be sure about his final interpretation of the series of paintings. “What you have seen are merely some of the ideas these paintings have inspired in me over the years’ he says. But today... a doubt assails me. And I ask myself if the effort was worthwhile”. He then leads the viewer to his front door, wandering through rooms filled with the innumerable immobile figures from the *tableaux vivants* who stand like statues out of *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L’Année dernière à Marienbad*, Resnais, 1961) as if he is condemned forever to this life –half awake and half adream– of interpretative endeavour. On the soundtrack, however, we are returned to the street of the film’s opening, reminding us of the ‘real’ world beyond. As Richard Peña observes, “One can return to the world of street noise at the end of *Hypothesis* . . . yet afterward one cannot help but sense how artificial the normal world can seem after what has just been revealed” (1990: 236). The ratiocinations of the Collector seem to colour the ‘real’ world in which they take place, leading us to conceive our reality as strange, dreamlike, pregnant with possibility.

While the narrating two voices in *Hypothesis* do not ‘engender images’, in the sense in which Chion’s ‘iconogenic’ speech determines the image track of the film, neither do the long stretches of narration, explanation and argumentation constitute sustained ‘noniconogenic’ speech (Chion, 2009: 396-404), since they do largely refer to the visible paintings or *tableaux vivants* as the basis for the discourse, the speech elaborating on the visual representation captured by the camera. This varying and complex relationship between the voice and the image track that it interacts with, lies at the stylistic heart of *Ice Stories*, a black-and-white film composed visually of: staged and unstaged (documentary) moving images; still

photographic images of characters, objects and places related directly to the narrative; and still photographic images (by photographer Katalin Volcsanszky) of ice formations in northern landscapes and seascapes which contribute to the bleak and mysterious atmosphere. The voice-over (delivered by three different performers, who may represent five distinct characters) drives the narrative. There is no on-screen speech. As with Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962), “chronology is pulverised, time is fragmented like so many facets of a shattered crystal. The chronological continuum is flayed, shaving past, present, and future into distinct series, discontinuous and incommensurable” (Rodowick, 1997: 4). In addition to being composed of these Deleuzian ‘crystals of time’ (1989: 79) in which present and past, actual and virtual, coexist and thereby create a fundamental indeterminability or indiscernibility, the identity of the characters themselves remains indeterminable throughout, generating a narrative more abstruse than that of either *La Jetée* or, one of Deleuze’s touchstones for the time-image, *Last Year at Marienbad*.

The main plot of *Ice Stories* follows the journey of the male protagonist, (and principal narrator) aboard a Swedish ice-breaker toward ice-bound northern reaches (perhaps to the North Pole) where a nuclear accident has recently occurred. Even before embarking on his journey, the exact purpose of which, as well as the Narrator’s role in it, remain unclear, the Narrator suffers from a recurring nightmare in which blocks of ice threaten to crush him. On his first night aboard the ship the Narrator awakes to the sound of classical music on his radio. He attempts unsuccessfully to turn it off. Then:

“A little later, a voice that I recognised right away –it was my own voice– began recounting a confusing and threatening story. Strangely, I wasn’t surprised by this remarkable phenomenon. Quite the contrary. I followed the story with the greatest interest. While my voice recounted the story, I fell asleep”

The first of four embedded stories follows, narrated in voice-over by a different character, identifiable as such only by the quality of his voice, who recounts the story of Mathias. When Mathias realizes that he is made of ice, he decides he must get to the North Pole in order to save himself from melting and ceasing to exist as a discrete entity. Although arrangements are made for him to board the icebreaker on its voyage to the North Pole, ultimately the voice from the radio suggests that he doesn't entirely succeed: "Each winter he is resurrected; each spring he dies". This dissolution of identity accords with the epigraph that begins the film: an extract from one of William Blake's letters to Thomas Butts⁷ describing an animistic vision in which human beings inhere in everything –in every object, animate or inanimate.

Subsequent stories transmitted through the ship's radio to the Narrator recount several characters' descent into madness, and the adventures of a character who, as a human guinea pig, undergoes an experiment which results in his being able to become different objects at will. In this latter case, the radio voice claims that the character "transformed himself simultaneously into an ashtray, a pipe, a coffee cup, and succeeded in disguising himself as a Swedish tub chair". Despite the mysterious, menacing, almost apocalyptic atmosphere throughout the film, surreal scenes such as these leaven the film with a slyly comic and self-parodying tone. Significantly, the voice emanating from the radio is, like the voice of the Narrator in *Hypothesis*, dry and closely miked, suggesting that the voice may actually derive from the Narrator's mind. Indeed, the radio programme begins transmitting "a little after midnight", though the ship's First Officer assures the Narrator that the ship's radio terminates its transmission at 11pm. This splintering and dissolving of identity correlates with a blurring of the boundaries between reality,

dream and illusion. The breakdown of causal connections casts temporality adrift, while the radio programmes, spoken by unidentifiable narrators who tell first-person stories in which they quote other characters at length, create a *mise en abyme* of tales within tales within tales. These narrative elements accord with the four basic devices of fantastic literature that Borges's once outlined in a lecture: "the work within the work, the contamination of reality by dream, the voyage in time, and the double" (Irby, 1970: 18). Despite this embrace of the fantastic, *Ice Stories* maintains an air of realism.

Counterpointing Ruiz's fantastic and baroque vision, the photographic images assert the documentary reality of these places, objects and people, and ground the bizarre story in our shared world. When the radio voice describes the character transforming himself into household objects, after a few moments' delay the image track presents these objects in order they were mentioned: an ashtray, a pipe, a coffee cup, a Swedish tub chair. Though in this instance the interplay of iconogenic voice and corresponding image generates a comic effect, elsewhere the impact is disturbing. Images of desolation counterpoint the humour and hint at the real possibility of an onset of madness amidst the unpopulated inhuman world presented: the icebreaker's bow cutting through white ice to reveal black water; huge otherworldly ice formations rising from stark white landscapes; the Narrator's vacant cabin, with desk light and porthole; the ship's empty corridors, empty deck and implacable, rotating radar antenna. The shot of the Narrator's cabin (as he confesses that "a humming sound seemed to envelope [the radio voice] and that the almost imperceptible vibrations changed the colour of light in the cabin. Soon my cabin was filled with a blood red light") is genuinely unsettling, in large part due to the *mise-en-scène*. The shot begins with a close-

7. «Swift I ran, | For they beckon'd to me, | Remote by the sea, | Saying: "Each grain of sand, | Every stone on the land, | Each rock and each hill, | Each fountain and rill, | Each

herb and each tree, | Mountain, hill, earth, and sea, | Cloud, meteor, and star, | Are men seen afar"» (Blake, 1956)

up view of a curtain which is swept aside (as if by the unseen Narrator) to reveal a low angle view of the empty cabin before the curtain is drawn closed again. Does the shot frame evidence of madness –the absence, despite the Narrator’s claims, of blood red light? The significance remains uncertain.

Elsewhere, images of the characters provide a temporary sense of orientation. When the first radio voice introduces Mathias, the utterance is accompanied on the picture track by a still image of a large, brown-haired man. A subsequent image of a short, wiry, dark-haired man appears to be the storyteller from the radio who features in his own first-person narrative about Mathias –again, this is a supposition based on the conventional filmic figure that invites the viewer to link voice and image if they occur simultaneously or in close succession. However, the image of the same small, dark-haired man features much later in another embedded narrative recounted by a different radio voice, and it is not clear whether the image is meant to represent the same person or a different one.

Nearing the end of the Narrator’s journey, when he understands “that I had a little more than a day to live” because the icebreaker “was heading straight for my brain”, he realises that he no longer needs to hear voices to take in stories; rather, “just a little noise or a burst of laughter sufficed sometimes, for me to understand the story right to the smallest detail. My cabin had become the seat of an infinity of corpuscular stories. I was breathing them”. In addition to the Narrator’s connection to an infinite network of stories, he senses his connection to the characters within the stories that have been recounted and sees his end as repeating theirs: “When I awoke the icebreaker was already there. I had arrived too. Like Mathias, like Pierre-Jean, like Paul”. The narrator’s recognition of the icebreaker’s presence brings the narrative full circle. “When I awoke the icebreaker was already there” is the first line of the film, and one of the last. The internalization of the icebreaker and the circularity of the narrative

suggest the subjective nature of the Narrator’s journey –a journey into madness, or toward the dissolution of the self, or both. All of the characters may indeed be one; and the landscapes, seascapes and other objects may be features of the Narrator’s imagination. The Narrator himself becomes a witness to his own story, the dreamer who is dreamed. In his essay ‘Partial Magic in the *Quixote*’ Borges claims to have found the reason why such embedded stories disturb us:

“[If] the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious. Carlyle observed that the history of the universe is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they are also written” (1970: 231)

If the characters in Ruiz’s films seduce the viewer, with their mellifluous, confessional voices, into going along with their fantastic and disorienting narratives, they also ultimately seduce themselves into listening for a little while, once more, to a story they have already recounted, or been recounted by. In attempting (perhaps endlessly) to understand something of their experience, their reality, the characters prompt viewers to question reality, to interrogate the nature of time and the basis of their own identity. Thanks to their labyrinthine narrative structures and the frequent disjunction between voice and image, the films generate radical ambiguity, polysemy. Discussing *Hypothesis*, Serge Daney observes:

“Certain really good films have this distinction: one ‘understands’ them (I mean that one doesn’t have the feeling of understanding nothing) only at the moment in which one sees them, in the actual experience that constitutes their vision” (1983: 24)

The perplexity that they induce, far from being just a diverting fantasy that fails to touch

our world, is part of their significance and their purpose –a challenge to the viewer. Discussing the disjunction of voice and image as found in the films of Straub and Huillet, Deleuze notes:

“The voice rises, it rises, it rises, and what it speaks about passes under the naked deserted ground that the visual image was showing us, a visual image that has no direct relation to the auditory image. But what is this speech act that rises in the air while its object passes underground? Resistance. An act of resistance” (1998: 19)

With his work, Ruiz resists a positivist cinema in which films are no more than the sum of their parts and everything (or almost everything) is finally explicable. In his *Poetics of Cinema*, Ruiz makes clear his desire to keep alive a cinema that opposes the standardization of mainstream film industries:

“Orson Welles used to ask, ‘Why work so hard, if only to fabricate others’ dreams?’ He was an optimist and

believed that the industry could dream. Accepting his postulate would mean confusing dreams with calculated, profit-hungry mythomania. Let’s be much more optimistic: even if the industry perfects itself (in its tendencies toward control), it will never be able to take over the space of uncertainty and polysemia that is essential to images – the possibility of transmitting a private world in a present time that is host to multiple pasts and futures” (2005: 121)

Ruiz emphasizes the necessity for skepticism and free thinking. Like Borges, he mystifies in order to liberate. Doubt, said Borges, is the most precious gift of all, for it opens up the possibility of dreaming. Working with a medium so closely tied to realism of one kind or another, Ruiz uses the siren song of oral narration to liberate his narratives from the necessity of causality, psychology, chronology, and to draw viewers into hypothetical worlds where the boundary between documentary reality and cinematic illusion becomes indeterminable. •

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Gertrud Koch. *Screen Dynamics. Mapping the Borders of Cinema*

SYNEMA - Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, Vienna, 2012, 181 pp.

Gerard Casau

The cover of *Screen Dynamics* is illustrated by a photograph of Clemens von Wedemeyer's art work *Sun Cinema*. Located on the outskirts of the southern Turkish city of Mardin, the giant screen serves as a community cinema which can project shadows during the day and reflect the sunset and lights of the nearby city at night. In their preface, the editors talk about the suitability of this image as the leitmotiv of the book and the subjects it seeks to address, as it is a case where "the cultural technique of 'cinema', with its basic setting of projector, screen and spectator, a communal and social space, is being (re-)enacted at the periphery of the Occidental world [...] also the result of a project in the tradition of Land Art, conceived and realized by a contemporary artist –an indication that, for more than two decades, a considerable amount of moving images along with the discourse around them has expanded from cinema and film theory to other institutional and discursive spaces" (2012: 5).

While Bazin wondered about what cinema was, the question most often posed in *Screen Dynamics* is "where is cinema?" The book thus devotes itself to a scenario in which the multiplicity of devices and screens (both public and private) discuss the validity of continuing to identify cinema with the basic principles of "projector, screen and viewer" quoted above. It discusses the space occupied by the images we draw from a variety of sources, rather than the much vaunted "death of cinema"; and whether,

ultimately, we can blithely continue to use the term "cinema" as a general description of the act of seeing moving images or, on the contrary, we should turn our attention to creating increasingly specific words and do so with conviction.

The first stumbling block encountered by a work of these characteristics –whose central theme appears to be inseparable from the "here and now"– is the risk of meeting head-on what appears to be highly innovative but may not actually be so. When all is said and done, the ideas mooted in the above paragraphs could also be suitable for a contemporary text about the birth of television, or a meditation on seeing the Velvet Underground give a concert, their bodies bathed in the images of a film by Andy Warhol. This is why it is to be welcomed that the essays gathered in its pages (most of them taken from the talks given during the congress "Cinema Without Walls. Borderlands of Film", held in Berlin in spring 2010) cover a broad thematic spectrum: from the definition of "the memory of the cinephile" propounded by Raymond Bellour and which defines (or used to define?) the viewer; through Simon Rothöhlerun's analysis of Michael Mann's use of digital cinematography; to the use of film in contemporary theatre featured in Gertrud Koch's contribution.

Most of the filmmakers look at the themes addressed not so much from a distance but with the prudence of the person who knows that

any conclusion they may reach will always be provisional, and subject to revision. Nevertheless, we do find some examples where overenthusiasm makes the text appear somewhat naïve. This is the case with Jonathan Rosenbaum, who in his attempt to map the dawn of a new cinephilia provides a plethora of figures and statistics that sing the praises of the internet, free access (either legal or illegal) to the cinematic heritage and the almost infinite possibilities of on-line criticism. Rosenbaum's point of view is by no means reprehensible but his obsession with details (the emergence of highly specialised cinema clubs in different towns in Argentina) means he tiptoes around the underlying question behind this so-called "new cinephilia". However, this is only a slip-up, albeit irresolute, in a cinematic education whose cornerstones remain rooted in the pre-internet era, which encounters an offer that can rearrange any previous canons.

It is Rosenbaum himself who recognises that we are in "a transitional period where enormous paradigmatic shifts should be engendering new concepts, new terms, and new kinds of analysis" (2012: 38). He may be right, as he would have been had he written these words a decade ago when he published *Movie Mutations*, or even before that. This is what has made the critical exercise a kind of dialogue of the deaf between Vladimir and Estragon, as they wait for the future to make everything all right while around them nothing changes. This is why the most interesting passages in *Screen Dynamics* show the authors as being fully integrated into new technological habits, such as the chapters by Ute Holl and Ekkehard Knörer about the experience of watching films on the internet and on portable devices. Just as interesting are the essays by writers who capture the friction between past and present, like Simon Rothöhlerun, who describes the impossibility of detaching himself from a certain feeling of strangeness while watching *Public Enemies* (Michael Mann, 2009), a film set in the 1920s but whose digital photography generates a rabidly "anti-historical" way of evoking the past: "Digital reception can provide an irritating

experience of presentness, enabling the audience to intuitively sense what these old-fashioned cars, steam locomotives and rough tweed fabrics would have felt like when they were ultra-modern and contemporary, that is, the high-tech and high fashion of objects of their time. In part, this intense sort of contemporary sensation is surely also a product of sheer 'newness', of the encounter with a high-resolution image whose properties –the 'non-filmic' sharpness, for instance– are mostly known from the screens installed in art museums" (2012: 146).

Despite the variety of subjects dealt with throughout *Screen Dynamics*, it isn't hard to detect that the key question within its pages is the one that none of the writers dares to say aloud, maybe because they are afraid of being labelled as apocalyptic: what will become of the cinema once stripped of those elements that used to be part of its rituals? In his essay, Raymond Bellour remembers the words of Godard and Fellini, who defined cinema as something greater than us that makes us look up. Nevertheless, several chapters in the book describe a series of cinephile habits that involve tiny screens and films that people don't go "to see", but reach us through the transmission of data without requiring any "physical" effort on the part of the viewer. The editors say that they didn't want to air the recurring idea of the "death of the cinema", but no matter how stimulating the horizons of *Screen Dynamics* are, they also place a question mark over the issue that would provide enough material for a second volume: How much will the cinema matter once it adapts to its new screens and takes on board the fact that it is smaller than the viewer? How will it amaze and captivate us if deprived of the invitation extended by an actress's enormous fleshy lips? These are the questions encountered at the crossroads where we currently find ourselves, where the cinema continues to belong to the big screen in the popular imagination, but whose reality and consumption seems to be firmly heading in other directions. •

Translated from Spanish by Mark Waudby

Sergi Sánchez. *Hacia una imagen no-tiempo. Deleuze y el cine contemporáneo*

Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, Asturias, 2013, 308 pp.

Shaila García-Catalán

It has to be said: initially ‘Deleuze’ was surplus to requirements in the (sub)title of the book. At times, his presence is sometimes asserted as a sort of veil so that the author can create a work of substance without feeling pretentious. Sergi Sánchez has achieved the highly complicated task of furthering thought on the movement image –*L’image-mouvement* (1983)– and the time image –*L’image-temps* (1985)– defined by the French philosopher, who hasn’t been given due recognition or been properly understood by the Spanish academia. He assumes Gilles Deleuze’s legacy and this explains why he feels so indebted to him. However, with the non-time image, Sánchez sets out a theorization that is completely his own (which the philosopher never managed to complete). Although Deleuze died in 1995 – he threw himself from the window of his Paris apartment on the Avenue de Niel– he had already rejected television because it didn’t take advantage of its aesthetic potential over its social function. However, in spite of a certain disenchantment, Deleuze instinctively felt that the digital image would change the ontology of the image and the way he thought about it. Sergi Sánchez defines this way of thinking about images, and how images are thought of, as the non-time image.

Digital cinematography ploughs the furrow of the non-time image. The concept unearths any apocalyptic signs and uses their ridges quite happily. It is significant that throughout its 308 pages the text makes no reference to “what is

digital” in the neutral sense, but refers to “the digital” in its most direct and decisive form. The digital is taken as a field of work and not as a ghostly halo of the image. The fact is that Sergi Sánchez isn’t interested in addressing the digital image as a mere conditioning factor of the production, as a device to make special effects more sophisticated or as a means of aspiring to substitute reality through simulation. He is interested in its discursive use, in those places where it is instrumental to the story. On page 167 he warns us that: “the digital helps us show the invisible or name the unnamed”. He thus propounds the non-time image as a telescope through which we can view the impossible.

The text is meticulously interwoven with a finely honed argument, which transcends any fascination with the surface to explore in depth the theory and materiality of the filmic texts. His writing is sharp and beautiful and exudes such a love of the cinema at every stage that each reader is burning with desire to be in the audience.

The book is structured into two main sections that seem to be pervaded by a directional logic that goes through contemporary cinema: ‘from a time image’ ‘towards a non-time image’. What seems to be an unstoppable vector does not observe the principles of chronological linearity but rather an inclusive and genealogical temporality, charged with legacies and flashbacks, of pasts that return and persist from the present. While Rancière

interpreted the movement image and the time image as different shores of the same image, the non-time image is the one that snatches away its compass, preventing verbal tenses from being conjugated inside it.

The first part of the book updates the time image with films Deleuze was unable to see. By analysing numerous films, Sánchez again determines how, insofar as the time image frees the image from causality, it oozes an enigmatic poeticism and delves into dark corners through amnesiac and cyclical constants as well as interrupted and dead temporalities.

The second part looks the non-time image from the very outset. It begins with the electronic image –the televised image epitomises the time image– to look at the impact of video on the rhetorical tradition of subjectivities, between patience and distance, and on the event and oneself. The author doesn't lament the fact –as Deleuze did– that the small screen has become an information board; rather he celebrates the way the digital has brought new sensibilities to the systems and gestures of representation while allowing their games to become more perverse. He is interested in the way the digital condition of the image –while it boasts of always being clear and accurate, more vivid than real life– has been used by many filmmakers as an ambivalent

weapon that is present and absent at one and the same time –the reverse side of its reverse side– in order to poke fun at the commitment of the representation to the referent.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most decisive and characteristic thing about the non-time image is the way that it fosters a total memory. Throughout the book we note that the non-time image isn't another image that is radically different from the time image, but is a time image that can't forget and therefore doesn't age or die. This may be why Deleuze and Guattari concurred that zombies are the only modern myth.

As we have just seen, the heterodox French philosopher doesn't eschew Sergi Sánchez's way of thinking. Indeed, as we read further, the book reveals itself as a surface on which the author summons Deleuze *from among the dead*. Within Deleuze's thinking it was philosophy that summoned up cinema, whereas in this book it is cinema that summons up philosophy, and powerfully so. Sánchez reads Rita in *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001) as that classic cinema that speaks to us from beyond the grave, and we read Sánchez as a spectre of Deleuze who also speaks to us from beyond the grave, in order to take a closer look at the cinema he couldn't see. •

Translated from Spanish by Mark Waudby

Antonio Somaini. *Ejzenštejn. Il cinema, le arti, il montaggio*

Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino, 2011, 446 pp.

Alan Salvadó

When Tom Gunning uses the term *cinema of attractions* to define early cinema, which gives priority to showing a cinematographic event rather than its narrative, he shines a light on the past and present of film history. Gunning's theory, which significantly bears a resemblance to Sergei Eisenstein's *montage of attractions*, enables us to reinterpret the early years of the filmmaker, understood as his own model of representation and not as an intermediate stage in the institutionalisation of cinema as a storytelling medium. Curiously enough, the process of mutation cinema has experienced, and is experiencing, through digital technology, has enabled Gunning and other authors to draw a diagonal line between contemporary blockbusters and the spectacular devices of early cinema. In both cases, the visual impact attracts the viewer's attention, and cinematographic forms become the carriers of the discourse of the great spectacle, whose greatest exponent is the sensory experience of the roller coaster. The evolution of cinema is built by going back to its origins.

There is something Eisensteinesque behind Gunning's gesture of rewriting the central theory to Eisenstein's montages in the light of other times and forms. Throughout his artistic and intellectual career, the fulcrum of the Russian filmmaker's thought consisted of looking back to the past as a device for understanding the present. Although he was a child of the revolution, this dialectical approach runs through his extensive

theoretical *corpus*, where the traces of the past guide us from the present to the future. The past is presented as something to be rediscovered and not as something to be destroyed. This temporal equation is the first major evidence revealed in Sergei Eisenstein's intellectual biography that Antonio Somaini pieces together in great detail and with great rigour in his *Ejzenštejn. Il cinema, le arti, il montaggio*. The Russian director's ideas, which are disseminated through a wide variety of articles and books, spanning the early 1920s to 1948 (the year he died), resemble multiple fragments of a line of thought which Somaini knows how to *edit* with keen-edged clarity. The book is arguably one of the finest reappraisals of Eisenstein's ideas to date.

The binomial of making films and thinking films is not Eisenstein's sole domain but one of the great paradigms of the 20th century. Epstein, Vertov, Delluc, L'Herbier, Pudovkin and Léger are some of the names that convert cinematographic practice into a laboratory experimenting with different ideas and postulates about the cinema. In this regard, we can state that Somaini's book puts in order all the notes from Eisenstein's laboratory. A laboratory where errors, failed projects and even the most (seemingly) banal details may have as much importance as the filmmaker's successes. There is no distinction between large and small forms; rather the notes and sketches contain the potential wisdom of the images. Somaini is aware of this and through this eminently

Benjaminian approach he finds new ways of interpreting Eisenstein's entire body of work in the more peripheral and residual forms. Thus, for instance, in the series of Eisenstein's unpublished drawings depicting the scene in *Macbeth* where King Duncan is killed, we find framings and compositional approaches that reappear in the sublime battle on the ice in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938).

Throughout the different chapters, Somaini shows how the Eisensteinesque forms arise from this ongoing work in progress. Hence the chronological approach is fundamental to the structure of the book, as we see in detail how the ideas came about and grew (returning and disappearing depending on the context), and at the same time we see how, almost rhizomatically, these ideas embrace, engage in a dialogue with, or run counter to the approaches of the other great contemporary thinkers of his day: Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Georges Bataille, André Malraux and Siegfried Kracauer. This cross-cutting approach and interdisciplinarity underpin the entire text, and are contained in the subtitle of the book: "cinema, the arts and montage". As if it were a sequence from Kuleshov's laboratory, these three concepts are interwoven in the book just as they are interwoven in Eisenstein's thought, where the cinematographic problems were studied in relation to the other arts and always resolved by the montage process. Somaini traces Eisenstein's intellectual path by showing us the multitude of junctions and branches that can open before us.

In this regard, the fact that Eisenstein's famous *montage of attractions* theory stemmed from the actor's gesture—as the author points out in the opening chapters of the book—is particularly interesting. The filmmaker discovered the importance of the expressiveness of actors during his experience with avant-garde theatre under the great director and actor Meyerhold. At the time, expressiveness was associated with biomechanics as a reflection of the industrialisation of soviet society. Through Meyerhold's teachings, Eisenstein found the starting point for his great theory of forms based on the expressiveness of the work of art. The virtue of the book lies in the fact that it documents with extreme rigour the evolution of Eisenstein's ideas to the extent that we see how a theatrical gesture has become transfigured into one of the most important cinematographic forms of the 20th century. The line of thought that runs through the book is so smooth that we can gain an insight into the present without any fear, and strengthens the parallels drawn at the beginning with Tom Gunning's theories.

In view of the changes that have affected cinema since the digital revolution of the late 20th century, the work carried out by Antonio Somaini in this book doesn't seem random or banal, in fact quite the contrary. On this long crossing over unknown territories, the light emanating from one of the beacons of the cinema, from one of the greatest creators and thinkers of cinematic forms, is indispensable when thinking about cinema today. •

Translated from Spanish by Mark Waudby

Guidelines for submissions

1. SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES

Cinema Comparat/ve Cinema accepts unpublished articles on comparative cinema. Articles that are not original will not be accepted.

The maximum number of authors per article will be three.

The main research strands of the journal are:

- The interpretation of filmic forms and the relationships between films, images and sounds.
- The history of interpretation and cinematographic ideas, and the analysis of critical and political contexts.
- Comparative essays on processes and practices of creation, distribution and exhibition.
- The study of the methodologies of comparative cinema and its relationship to literature and visual arts.
- The revision of the history of cinema based on the investigation of forms and the aesthetic confluences between films and narrative videos, non-fiction, avant-garde, scientific, industrial and expanded cinema.
- The essay and visual thought.

Articles

The research articles will have a minimum length of 2,000 words and a maximum of 6,000 words, including footnotes.

They will be related to thematic questions that will be published in the section Call for Papers of the website.

The section 'Films in Discussion' includes interviews and conversations, aimed at research, debate and documentation, and in relation to the monographic topics tackled in each issue. The minimum length is 3,000 words and the maximum is 10,000 words.

We are accepting submissions on a permanent basis.

The journal will also include certain documents that act as the conceptual basis for the themes and research strands proposed in each issue.

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The length of the reviews will be 800–1,000 words.

The information of the reviewed book shall include: full name of the author, publisher, city of publication, year of publication and number of pages.

The author of the review must indicate his or her name and email address.

We accept reviews of books whose first edition has been published over the last 8 years.

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Once the article is submitted, the journal will confirm receipt of the text within 10 days. During the assessment process, the identity of the author/s and reviewer/s will remain anonymous. If there is a discrepancy between the assessment of both reviewers, the publisher will ask for a third reviewer.

The journal will give a response to the authors within two months, and this will include a report from the reviewers.

In the instance that the article is accepted for publication but changes and corrections are needed, the authors will have 20 days to re-submit the article.

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Submission: The texts shall be submitted in a Word file and via email to: comparativecinema@upf.edu. Images must be submitted separately, in a TIF format, numbered and their placement shall be indicated in the article. We recommend using the software Power DVD (version 9, for PC) or GrabMac (for MAC). The images shall not be included in the text. The author shall also submit a signed declaration (download at www.upf.edu/comparativecinema).

CV: All articles must be accompanied by a brief CV of 150 words or less. In the instance of articles written by more than one author, their CVs will be published separately.

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Keywords: Keywords will include 6–10 words, separated by comas. They must be submitted in Catalan or Spanish and English.

Funding: Authors are responsible for indicating funding and institutional support received for the research.

Typeset and font size: Articles must be submitted using Times New Roman, 12 points. Paragraphs must be justified; indents won't be used. Titles and subtitles must be indicated in bold.

Word processor tools: Please refrain from using tools such as tables, numbering, columns, headings, hyperlinks, footnotes, etc. Any numbering must be made manually.

Bibliography: The sources of both texts and ideas by other authors must be clearly identified. Sources must be indicated in the body of the text using the HARVARD style (LAST NAME, Year: Page number). Please list all the bibliography used at the end of the text.

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