

ABSTRACT IN INGLESE

From Action to Performance. A Conversation with Richard Schechner edited by Alessia Cervini

Since Aristotle, the concept of action has become essential in order to understand the functioning of each imitative/interpretative process, or of any work put into artistic form, starting with writing and acting. Throughout a reconsideration of the centrality of this concept, Richard Schechner retraces some of the nodal theoretical problems of the theatre and film-making, gradually shifting its focus from action to performance – a category able to understand and explain many of the contemporary artistic experiences – to which he has devoted important studies and reflections.

It Happens Now, But Does it Really? Paradoxes of Synchronicity Gian Paolo Caprettini

Media production affects the consumption scenarios and the imaginary as well as thought and its categories. The action generated by media production is so lifelike that it seems as something real. In this essay, the author deals with an important issue: how similarities between the represented world and the one we live in can be traced? How is it possible that fake reality, almost completely unrelated to real experience, can occur to our attention as if it is realized while we are observing it, and thus appearing as ‘real’?

The 1910s American Theory: «action, *action*, ACTION!» Michele Guerra

The word ‘action’ appears very often in several 1910s American books on cinema, and its meaning is quite different from one another. ‘Action’ can describe the actions performed by actors, through which the story is developed, but it can also mean the whole screenplay (frequently called ‘complete action’), to be founded on easily graspable and very concrete actions, with little to do with the affectation of literacy and psychological descriptions. This paper aims to show how the history of such a word, throughout early American film theory, sheds new light onto the phases of

narrative and stylistic settlement of American cinema.

Eisenstein and the Bullfighting Action

Giovanni Festa

This essay is divided into three parts: the first analyzes the chapter of Eisenstein's Mexican film *Que Viva Mexico!* (1933) dedicated to bullfighting; the second, the composition of the real bullfighting action; the third, the unconscious and erotic bullfighting elements that Eisenstein explored in his Mexican drawings. The result will be in three types of action: a 'real' one (where Eisenstein shoots a bullfight in Merida); an 'imaginary' one, characterized by the emergence of a real geometry of the underlying desire; an 'abstract' one, which occurs on the surface of a leaf – a *subjectile* body.

About the Limits of an 'Action Poem' on Film

Francesco Zucconi

As recently highlighted by Georges Didi-Huberman, much of the theoretical and artistic work by Pier Paolo Pasolini revolves around the problem of constructing a 'great action poem' in which the main players are 'the people' (English term that Didi-Huberman considers inadequate to express the political strength of the concept of *popolo*). But how do you restore *the space* and *time* of the actions of men and women living on the margins of progress within the *space-time* of the *mise en scène* of film? The article highlights the centrality of the film *La Ricotta* (1962) within Pasolini's work: a theoretical and self-critical film that underscores both the potential and the limits of Pasolini's aesthetic project and invites us to reflect on the ethical and political issues involved.

Trasumanar e Organizzar on Image

Nicola Turrini

A desire has passed through the life and work of Pier Paolo Pasolini: filming innocence, a quality which is irreducible to the person device, and indefinable by moral and juridical categories. Innocence is something that cannot be represented nor recognised but rather a surviving force that becomes visible from an impersonal reserve, revealing together a fundamental trait of both the image and subjectivity. Pasolini's investigation engages

with obstinate desire to find out where time has an effect on bodies, faces, gestures and words – in which the choice to use cinema as a custodian of political exposure finds its deep reason.

Carmelo Bene, When the Act Lacerates the Action

Patrizia Fantozzi

The essay aims to present an intensive observation on the *pyrotechnie* of Carmelo Bene's cinema: a real pyrotechnic art – to quote from Jean-François Lyotard –, unparalleled 'useless grandeur' (to use Maurizio Grande's words), concrete realization of a 'sterile cinema of differences' that can only be resolved in pure expenditure, degradation of pure energy. Starting from here, we will investigate the special erotic force invested in the simulacrum, deployed and burned in vain in Carmelo Bene's cinema. No 'action' occurs under the rain of fire of *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* (1968), as also in the glittering nights of *Salomé* (1972) but only 'slips of postures' (Deleuze). In Carmelo Bene's cinema, in short, the only 'doing' is that of diverting, of bleeding; breaking with the logical connections, with the 'venous' slavery of language by opening, first and foremost, to an 'arterial' creative state, to *another scene*: literally, to a new life. A true 'state of grace' is that of the poet of *Capricci* (1969), who is looking for the best location to die; and there is no other way to achieve this if not through that game of *act-jouer, of playing* (an incongruous use of the sacred), consumed on the scene of a throbbing and radiant absence: since 'Only those who lacks *are*, and therefore returns'. (C. Bene)

Screwing the Idiot. The Dramatic Action in Lars von Trier

Paolo D'Alonzo

This paper examines the aesthetic content of the dramatic action in Lars von Trier's films, considered as an ambivalent, shameful and *repugnant action*. The main characters of these films are compared to Dostoevsky's *Idiot*. Therefore, the paper isolates three separate figures of idiocy in Lars von Trier's cinema and, in conclusion, suggests that the aesthetic content of the works examined should be interpreted with reference to Kierkegaard's notion of scandal and the definition of an irreconcilable conflict between social reality and passion for ideality.

Regimes of the Expertise, Passions of the Technique

Andrea Mariani

This essay addresses ‘Cinema sperimentale’ film practice, which had been institutionalised by the Cineguf groups, within the University fascist groups, in 1934. It aims at questioning this practice from the point of view of Walter Benjamin’s notions of ‘play’ and ‘training’. The essay stresses the ‘metabolization of the shocking traces of the new media’ in the encounter with technique and the technological medium. By analysing technical manuals and visual traces of Cineguf film practice, the essay problematizes the notion of ‘cinema sperimentale’, where technological tools reveal themselves as ‘negotiators’ of the metabolizing process in Benjaminian *training*.

From Interactive to Enactive Cinema

Adriano D’Aloia

The contemporary cinematic spectator is postulated as active also because of the advent of digital media that allow to manipulate text content, as well as to take part in the development of the narrative through concrete decisions or transactions. The spectator becomes a co-author of the text, he *interacts* with it, and sometimes s/he is involved in a real performance or in a game of apparently mutual exchange. With so called ‘enactive cinema’ – inspired to the paradigm of *embodied cognition* and the *enactive* account of human experience –, there has been a further change: compared to traditional interactive cinema, enactive cinema makes the spectator’s physiological responses and emotional experience affect the narrative in real time. This contribution offers an overview of the theoretical background of enactive cinema and critically discusses two case studies.

What is the Action Genre?

Nils Bothmann

Everything that a person does can be called an action. The command that the director of every film gives when he is ready to shot is ‘action!’. There is also a genre called the action movie. Yet, there seems to be a dissent among fans, critics and academics on what actually constitutes an action film. Following theoretical approaches from authors like Altman, O’Brien and Lichtenfeld, rather than just a cycle within the larger framework of action movies, this essay addresses the core of action genre, in order to understand its identifiable characteristics, as regards both semantics and syntax.

Action and Transformation in Contemporary American Cinema

Roy Menarini

From the well-known Deleuzian scheme of the form, which frames the transformative power of classic genre cinema, the contemporary – once overcome the crisis of the form in modernity – has drawn postmodern strategies of survival which have been studied extensively. But what has been happening in the last few years? In which relationship today's Hollywood cinema puts itself with the underlying theme of the action? Looking at the contemporary American production, we find that the concept of action has experienced an irreparable fracture after September 11, due to the fact that the nation more inclined to show off the practical transformation of its own destinies, has seen transformed itself from an external and alien action.

***Shutter Island's* Unresolvable Grief**

Pietro Montani

This essay explores the relationship between cinema and literature, starting from *Shutter Island* (Scorsese, 2010) and the novel by Dennis Lehane on which the film is based. How this relationship should be understood? What does the film do by itself, which not only is already missing in the structure of the 'fabula' (e.g. in the 'plot', according to the classic distinction made by the Russian formalists), but also that – as in the case of the relationship with the philosophical conceptuality – could not be contained in it at all? The idea is that the film can explore deep zones of that same narrative structure (more precisely: a preliminary and pre-narrative work of the imagination) largely interdicted to the literary discourse, which cannot aspire to the same constitutive ambiguity and density of the audiovisual image. It is significant that this zone, in Scorsese's film, takes the form of an action, more precisely, the features of what in psychoanalysis is called *acting out*.

Max Ophüls, or the Variable Balance

Chiara Tognolotti

If Max Ophüls' cinematic production always stays well inside a defined production and genre context, at the same time it exceeds, in a way or another, the codes system. The plot is strong and consistent; the characters system and the narration correspond to genre rules; but the style of images always moves beyond the story and opens towards the less structured strength of

the visible – that is to say, attraction. It is precisely this dynamic narration/ attraction that leads to putting into question the idea of vision itself.

The Single Action: *Dillinger is Dead*

Alessandro Canadè

This essay builds a comparison between Ferreri's *Dillinger is Dead* (1969) and Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (1948), starting from the recurrence in both films of an action reduced to gesture or fetish object (Piccoli's polka dot gun and Edmund's mimicked gun). If on one side this action constitutes the real link between the two films, on the other, and at the same time, it establishes a profound difference. If in fact in *Germany Year Zero*, the action is already not able of changing anything but still maintains an ethical value, in *Dillinger's* society of boom, any recognition of values comes to fall and the character displays a psychological and social default which makes him unsuitable to social tasks – which Ferreri's film takes to the extreme, towards an apocalyptic direction, leading to a dissolution of the mask itself.

Duane Michals's Photo-Sequences

Caterina Martino

Contemporary American photographer Duane Michals is a pioneer of narrative photography – a photographic genre that has overcome the idea that photography cannot record and narrate an action. Through an unconventional approach and the use of the series, of the pose and of some tricks that create a sense of motion, Michals realizes photo-sequences that are able to narrate an action. Moreover, preferring metaphysical and supernatural themes, he brings into question the traditional indexical value associated with photography.

City Slivers: Transformative Actions of the Urban Space in Matta-Clark's Artwork

Luca Cinquemani

City Slivers (1976) by Gordon Matta-Clark is an experimental film created by attaching black strips to the camera lens in order to cut and manipulate the visible space of Manhattan's urban landscape. This essay discusses the

traits of continuity that link the film to Matta-Clarck's previous actions of dissecting architecture (building cuts). In addition, it argues how the use of the film medium renders *City Slivers* an action that both destabilizes and formalizes, providing extraordinary potential for the disclosure and transformation of urban space.

Fragment/Action: John Woo's *Face/Off*

Anton Giulio Mancino

Shattered mirrors, violent harmonies, wandering bullets: the structure of action sequences in *Face/Off* (1997) by John Woo is paradigmatic of the practice of breaking transparency. The strategy of displaying the destruction of transparent glass surfaces implies a non-realistic conception of films, belonging to contemporary action 'trans-genre' – from which come the excesses in setting and in framing where the choreography of violence triumphs as a substitute of the action, as well as the different lethal trajectories of bullets which segment the performative space.

'Anima vagula blandula': Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*

Francesca Scotto Lavina

Alice in Wonderland (Burton, 2010) narrative action comes across as the *large form* which Deleuze puts forward in the *Image-movement*. Thanks to digital compositing, Burton also *remediates* Bacon's painting effects described by Deleuze in *Logic of Sensation*. These suspend the action to put its resolution off and make levels of sensation part of the movement-image, overcoming its figurative characteristics. Burton's technological aesthetic entails the use of performance capture besides digital effects, modifying actor and spectator performances. Nevertheless, the experiential ground of the film becomes the limen where technological sublime triggers the function of the imaginary.

Vik Muniz Encounter with the *Contadores* in *Waste Land*

Erica Buzzo

Starting from the theme of encounters as moments able to change reality and people living that reality, this essay aims to address *Waste of Land* (2010) – a documentary directed by Lucy Walker – as an example of focus

on the therapeutic power owned by the artistic dimension once it comes into contact with everyday life. Awakening and rebirth seem to originate even where beauty, by definition, does not exist. Thanks to Vik Muniz's journey to the *Jardim Gramacho*, in São Paulo of Brasil, some *catadores* can redeem their own extreme poverty. The essay highlights art's power and chances given by this power to *Jardim's* inhabitants. The artistic process succeeds in fact in subliming everyday life as long as *catadores* manage to re-think and re-create some aspects of their own miserable existences and, accordingly, to discover a new *themselves*. For these reasons, we can look at Muniz's artistic project as a series of actions that systematically recall the theme of encounter as a source of transformations. *Catadores* become *artistic materials* and *artists* at the same time.

***Black Mirror* and the Medial En(Action)**

Francesco Parisi

Starting from two episodes of the TV series *Black Mirror*, an interpretation of the impact of the media on human agency will be investigated. Particularly, Marshall McLuhan's theory about media as extensions will be discussed, as well as cognitive theories about the enaction. According to this cognitive approach, neural correlates of consciousness can be found not only in the brain, but in the relationship between mind, body and environment. The episodes analysed show the constitutive role played by media in our phenomenal experience, providing a striking representation of the theories of extension.

The Body of Inaction. Amir Naderi's *Cut*

Andrea Inzerillo

The body as a paradigm of the filmic matter: the actor's body and that of cinema come together in Amir Naderi's *Cut* (2011) in order to trace, through a filmic topos – that of the struggle, of the challenge and also the representation of the figure of the boxer – the whole story of the Seventh art on the shoulders of one man. The filmic action and the *action!* that gives rise to every film become in Naderi a struggle with cinema *tout court*.

Tableau Vivant as the Strategy of Action. Majewski's The Mill and the Cross

Miriam De Rosa

This essay offers an analysis of Lech Majewsky's *The mill and the cross* (2011), focusing on the concept of *tableau vivant* as an intermedial representative form. Set at the encounter between cinema, performance and painting, the film guides the spectator both along an exploration of the expressive possibilities of the moving image, and a linguistic research that compares the potentialities of the image in the very moment in which it ceases to be a still structure and becomes a site of action. Within this frame, the author follows the camera as a director, and identifies two strategies – *embodiment* and *re-enactment* – in order to make the *tableau* actually *vivant*.

Wait, Action, Memory in Miguel Gomes' Tabu

Federico Pierotti

Tabu (Gomes, 2012) can be considered as a reflection on the role of images as an archive of individual and collective memories. The film conveys an idea of contemporary visual culture which rethinks memories of historical events through a project on the images and forms of gaze of the twentieth century. In the second part of the film, set in an African farm before the Carnations Revolution, the intimate and secret memory of a single character (Ventura) is subtly combined with the collective memories of media images.

The Act of Killing. The Impunity and Performativity of Memory

Alice Cati

By asking perpetrators to restage their past crimes, the documentary *The Act of Killing* (Oppenheimer, 2012) deals with the trauma of the anticommunist genocide, occurred in Indonesia in 1965-1966. Following Hannah Arendt's remarks on human condition, the essay aims to analyze the film as a testimony of the detrimental effects caused by the undermined political sphere. On the one hand, the *re-enactment* of the traumatic experience shows the alienation of the subject from the social sphere. On the other, through the presentification of guilt, any re-creation of the past highlights the performative nature of memory.