

ABSTRACT IN INGLESE

Where the Tale Originates. A Conversation with Edgar Reitz

Edited by Alessia Cervini and Bruno Roberti

You may see the origin as the time when something that did not exist before suddenly starts to exist, or as the moment when something that was hidden is suddenly disclosed and brought to a regime of visibility. The meaning of the term 'origin' always seems to be closely related to a complex meaning of creation, as a first or a new beginning. The origin is the place of the most familiar and nothing would be what it truly is without it. An art that aims to storytelling, just as cinema does, actually has to measure itself against this idea of origin, that is the hearth where we come from. No story indeed can be told without considering that familiar intimacy is always entailed by the sharing of experience. These are the main concepts which the conversation with Edgar Reitz – the author of one of the last great epics of the twentieth century: *Heimat* – deals with.

The Image Without Origin

Roberto De Gaetano

The life of images is a life without beginning. This essay reflects on three central moments in which the thought and practice of the cinematic image – whether conceived as the coming to presence of the real or as an autonomous creative act – are subtracted to any notion of origin. These three moments coincide with three ideas and three practices of editing, which identify themselves with three phases of the history of the cinematic forms respectively: the dialectic or the infinite representation (Eisenstein), the intensive or the fragmented representation (Bresson), the archaeological or the redeemed representation (Godard).

The Seduction of Movement in Early Cinema

Erica Buzzo

The body and its movement have always been privileged objects of the camera eyes, as scientific cinematography proves to be true. Pioneering

studies carried out respectively by the physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey, by the physicist Wilhelm Röntgen and by the anthropologist Félix-Louis Regnault, reveal the need for explanations of the limits and meanings of the bodily; the need to capture the invisible substance, to break it up, to explore, to fix and to label it in order to understand the reason beyond attitudes and movements. Once the threshold of external perception has been crushed, images of fragmented, stripped to the bone and indexed bodies become epistemological principles for new concepts of identity.

Origins in Kracauer

Robert Bonamy

Many commented on Siegfried Kracauer's first memory of watching a film: the undulating dirty pond, hit by a wind blow, on which the visible rolls. However, a leitmotiv crosses *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality* and permits to carry on a reflection about the apparently simple, and indeed primordial, concept of camera-reality: it is the theme of shaking leaves. Such theme traces back its cinematic origin in the *vues Lumière* but can be also found in modern (Oliveira, Straub, Rivette etc.) and contemporary (Van Sant, Shyamalan, Civeyrac, Guiguet etc.) cinema.

Dialectical Images in Soviet cinema of the Twenties

Massimo Olivero

At the end of the Twenties, Benjamin formulated his own conception of Origin as a 'vortex in the flux of becoming'; in other words, as an anachronism, an original configuration of the past bound to alter the representation of the present. This article will analyze two works of Soviet cinema – Dovzhenko's *Zvenigora* (1927) and Vertov's *The Eleventh* (1928) – in order to recover these 'original' images, born from the collision between the representation of the present and the irruption of a past both reinvented and undisclosed.

The Scandal of the Origin: the Cinematic Incipit

Valentina Re

Starting from Frank Kermode's and Paul Ricœur's researches, the article conceives narrative configuration as an essential activity aimed at conveying

an *order* and a *meaning* to our experience of the world, otherwise chaotic and undifferentiated. In this process, beginnings play a key role, but it is exactly in playing this role that beginnings pose the problem, somehow shocking, of the origin's arbitrariness and legitimacy: from where does the speech originate and the narrator obtain his/her own authority? From where does the delimiting act originate? *Why starting from here?* The reaction to this 'inaugural shock' seems to be structured in at least two main paradigms, or models: the paradigm of concealment and elusion, through the use of conventions which naturalize the origin; the opposite one, consisting in displaying and sabotaging the conventions themselves. The article analyzes and discusses some textual strategies related to the two models with respect to the beginnings of *All I Desire* (D. Sirk, 1953) and *La Ronde* (M. Ophüls, 1950), which can significantly be set on the threshold between the classic and the modern.

Unusual Double Origin in the Exercise of Eyesight

Anna Poli

The text faces the theme of a possible filiation between cinema and the invention of the lens. The origin of cinema begins from this invention: the lens as first optic tool connected to the exercise of eyesight. But the unusual double origin is one of the first microscope observations: namely the 'animaculae animation', the first image in motion viewed through an optical instrument which revealed to humanity the existence of the microscopic world from which it actually originated. A historical excursus between technical inventions and their consequences opens to a consideration on the cinematic form. It highlights the particular nature of devices like the microscope and the telescope and the way they have inaugurated a *mise en 'frame'* of the world through means typical of the scientific observation.

Urbs et Civitas: the Fragmentation of Identity in the Cinematic City

Daniela Cardone

Urban spaces are the moral representation of collective will and political institution; so *urbs* and *civitas* are respectively each the aesthetic representation of the other. If an iconography of the city constitutes the mirror image of the architectonic structure and origin of political institutions, so will, freedom, rights, ownership, membership, dependence (all at the foundation of *civitas*) become 'visible' in the city's architecture. The camera is the

machine by which we can reveal imaginary urban spaces as well as preserving their original will and identity. The camera which moves along the city conveys then a real, surreal or potentially predictable, image.

The Infinite Origin of Cinematic ‘Superheroes’

Federico Pagello

The origin is one of the most recurrent theme in superhero comics as well as in their film adaptations. Its continuous repetition, however, implies a paradox, since it appears also as an infinite rewriting and questioning of the original myth. This paper analyses this phenomenon by discussing some film examples, from Richard Donner’s *Superman* (1978) to Christopher Nolan’s *Dark Knight* (2008).

African Cinema: Birth (of the Image) of the Nation

Andreina Campagna

The essay explores the role of cinema in the construction of African nations. It adopts the dialectics between the movement of return to the origin seen as the affirmation of black culture and the negation of the origin as a possibility of opening to the future. African cinema confronts with a series of topics such as the country’s complicated relationship with history and the need of ‘decolonizing’ thought, language and space through Negritude and *Consciencisme* ideologies.

The Origin of Vortex

Alessandro Cappabianca

The quest for origin must not be considered as a practice aimed at reaching a fixed point. It is rather a moment of loss in a whirl or vortex movement which has neither start nor end. The movement of Multiple Origin recalls Nietzsche’s concept of ‘eternal recurrence’, to the degree in which the becoming itself – as Deleuze argued – is seen as the only thing fit for the recurrence.

Films like *The Tree of Life* (T. Malick, 2011), *De l’origine du XXI siècle* (J.-L. Godard, 2000), *Lo specchio di Diana* (Y. Gianikian, A. Ricci Lucchi, 1996) or *The Wild Blue Yonder* (W. Herzog, 2005) build up cosmogonies of possible worlds in which the always elusive Origin vanishes into dreams and myth.

The Origin Seen as *Common Matter*

Salvatore Tedesco

Twentieth-century theories of form and organic form show a hard tension between the idea of the origin as appropriative dynamics – in which the dynamic element refers to a metaphysics of force, and the form-centring is just defined as appropriation – and the idea of the origin as a ‘common matter’. The essay explains these two theoretical options discussing these opposite polarities in biology and analysing some cinematic examples taken from Ejzenštejn’s thought on Disney’s *Silly Symphonies*.

The Concept of ‘Plural Origin’ in Cécile Fontaine’s Cinema

Lucia Tralli

This essay explores Cécile Fontaine’s cinematographic works - created with found footage materials and own home movies shot by her father Pierre. Fontaine’s films open to a twofold relationship with the concept of origin: on the one hand, with the personal origin, tied up with her experience as a migrant and the colonial history of her homeland (Réunion’ island); on the other hand, with the origin of cinema, brought back to its primigenial components of emulsion and base, obtained through the aggressive techniques used by Fontaine to manipulate the original materials.

***Jules and Jim*: the Emergence of the Desire-image**

Jacopo Bodini

As Aristophanes tells in *Symposium*, the individual and desire originate at the same time, giving shape to what Deleuze called a *Platonistic* and *Oedipal* horizon. In Truffaut’s *Jules and Jim* (1962), the will to ‘reinvent love’ leads to a *reversal of Platonism*, through an *anti-Oedipal* idea of desire, thus originating a *desire-image*, i.e. ‘a little piece of *desire* in its pure state’.

On Order and On Disorder: De Oliveira’s *Voyage to the Beginning of the World*

Claudio Di Minno

Manoel de Oliveira’s *Voyage to the Beginning of the World* (1997) begins with the Nietzschean epigraph ‘Se rendre maître du chaos que l’on est’. The

purpose of this essay *is to show* how the film represents - through the journey towards the “beginning” (childhood, native-born places, homeland) made in the film by the characters of the director (Manoel) and the actor (Afonso) – an “idolatry of origins” (quoting from Marc Bloch). Aware of the principle that the past revives in present, and conscious that knowledge of the origin provides tools for understanding the actuality, the *main characters of the film* will become conscious, at the end of their path, that origin stands as a “whirlpool in the flow of becoming” (as Walter Benjamin says).

Mekas, Thoreau and the Notion of Return. *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*

Luigi Porto

The relationship between Jonas Mekas – 16mm poet and “guru” of the New American Cinema – and the naturalist philosopher Henry David Thoreau, goes far over being a simple strict adherence to a shared scale of values: it is, instead, a deeper feeling of fellowship. The emigrant (and refugee) Mekas, after many years spent searching for his *Walden* (1969), in 1971 goes back to his homeland Lithuania. There he experiences the meaning of voyage in the opposite sense, a return to the origin, inverting the natural direction of human evolution that Thoreau sees pointing to the direction of the West.

Travelling South: *Stolen Children*

Roberta Rosini

On the shoulders of Heidegger’s philosophy, this paper considers the issue of the origin in connection to the search for identity, and the way this characterises Gianni Amelio’s film *Stolen Children*. The protagonists’ travel to the South of Italy implies a return to the origin and a search for identity – where *origin* evokes a metaphorical image of primordial and archetypal values, of a naturalness (typical of Southern Italy) which now have been lost. The geographical travel, moreover, can be seen as a metaphor of a process of personal identification and existential search of the Self, of a personal spiritual journey of discovery and transformation. On the one hand, such journey involves the deconstruction and disaggregation of individuality and of personal identity’s substance: in other words, a loss of the Self. On the other hand, however, it also constitutes the possibility for a new and authentic redefinition of identity, based on the recognition of

emotional and instinctual aspects of the Self and its multiplicity, as well as on the re-appreciation of the Self's eradicated roots.

Solaris: the Origin as the End

Andrea Amoroso

Tarkovskij's *Solaris* (1972) is a survey on the origins of desire. Are we desiring beings, as we are conscious of the object of our desire (and, therefore, of its origin), or is desire something automatic, which exists beyond any kind of genealogy? Nevertheless, being humans desiring machines, they keep on questioning about the problem of their own and others' authenticity. However, at the end of the world - at the end's edge of any feeling and desire - will this question save us, or will it eternally make us slave of our conscience?

Back to the Origin: The White Diamond

Claudia Barolo

Through a reflection on the film *The White Diamond* (W. Herzog, 2004), the essay aims at questioning the concept of origin according to different approaches. In Herzog's work the nature of the visible has constantly been questioned in order to originate new images. In particular, the 'indigenous' Mark Anthony is a direct personification of a differing 'vision'. He leads the director towards the search of a primeval origin in the caves under Kaieteur falls, which become the emblem of both the possibilities and limits of the visible. According to Jung's theory of 'mother earth', the latter is the place from which everything originates. But that very place, by belonging to the myth, and thus avoiding any kind of representation, confirms an opening to a blurred origin.

The Avoided Origin in The Five Obstructions

Claudio Rozzoni

In his 2003 work *The Five Obstructions* Lars Von Trier 'forces' his friend and director Jørgen Leth to remake his 1967's short film *The Perfect Human* for five times. If, on the one hand, Leth's film - by serving as the main theme - can be thought as the 'Platonistic *origin*' of the play of variations imposed by von Trier, on the other hand, as this paper aims to show,

such an 'experiment' comes to bring the traditional terms of the relationship between original and copy into question.

Searching for an Origin. *Fringe* by J.J. Abrams

Franco Marineo

There are stories that move from an unseen, untold, forgotten, silenced origin. That origin becomes available as a living and changeable chronotope. The most obvious filmic examples are Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) and its near-remake, Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (1995), or Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997). Even some TV series made in recent years are built around the rhetorical model and the visual metaphor of the physical jump to the past; i.e., the rewinding of the timeline, the looking for an origin that does not always coincide with the beginning and seems to be an unverifiable starting point upon which the perception of the current present has to be reshaped. *Lost* and *Fringe* (both created by J.J. Abrams) are two complex models of this obsessive and often lost research of the origin.

The Twofold Re-elaboration of the Myth of Origin in *WALL•E*

Marco Luceri

The partial overcoming of postmodernity, as well as the tendency to seriality of feature films within contemporary American cinema, is no longer a prerogative of a few film directors. In some Pixar animated movies this phenomenon articulates itself into a restoration of origins, thanks to a new reading of some founding myths of western civilization and of a strong narrative language. This is what happens, for example, in *WALL•E* (A. Stanton, 2008).

The Utopia of the Origin. *Guests* by Krzysztof Wodiczko

Miriam De Rosa

The essay deals with the origin as utopia. Through the analysis of a case study (*Guests*, K. Wodiczko 2009), the origin is presented as an unachievable goal and unreachable destination. Being a residual entity, the origin is represented by means of a number of dichotomies: presence/absence, visible/invisible, identity/alterity, which are rendered through the image of immigrants. Those figures are *guests* since they embody the concept of

displacement, emphasising the connection between origin and identity.

The Spiral and the Fold. *Broken Embraces* by Almodóvar

Anna Caterina Dalmasso

In Pedro Almodóvar's *Broken Embraces* (2009) a new conception of origin emerges, which brings it close to Walter Benjamin's notion of origin as a *vortex* (as evocated in the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*) and to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *fold*. The theme of the spiral is pervading the film, which itself articulates as a vortex of images which aim at rising the time. The origin takes shape not as a factual or symbolic genesis, but as the blind spot where the gaze – of memory and cinema – rises up.

The Genesis of a Degeneration. The Torbid White in Haneke

Sara Matetich

Moving from the analysis of the film *The White Ribbon* (2009), by Michael Haneke, this short essay aims to speculate on the origin of an origin or, rather, on the impossibility for a precise thematization to "celebrate" a "perfect" and "essential" (Nietzsche) principle.

Between *Ursprung* and *Herkunft*, indeed, provenance implies plots and mysterious casualties which, by deconstructing the very notion of origin (Hannah Arendt), tarnish the metaphysical research of the genealogy of events.

The Origin of German Identity in August Sander's Photographic Archive

Caterina Martino

In the first half of the Twentieth Century, August Sander uses photography – considered as a scientific and documentary language – to make an intensive work of *typological* archiving of German inhabitants. Bearing in mind a reference to physiognomy, individuals are categorized according to their social status, class and profession. The archetype category is the peasant. During the Weimar society, Sander's photographic series – unfinished compared to the original project and characterized by impersonal and rigorous portraits – gives birth to an identificative image of German people

that inevitably collides with Nazi ideology.

The ‘Cosmic Poetry’ of *The Tree of Life*

Diego Mondella

The tale of the world’s Creation as considered in every possible meaning (legendary, religious, ethical, cultural): the Birth of the Universe; the Birth of Mankind; the Birth of Human Life. Terrence Malick conceives his work as a (re)founding and magnificent visual symphony: its editing, like a score made of images, is written by the natural motion of Light, Water and Air. The world’s destiny and the individual destiny melt together in *The Tree of Life* into an epic of Beauty, Grace and Innocence that contemplate, between the future and the past, the end of all things: Death.