

ABSTRACT IN INGLESE

The Life of the Screen. A Conversation with Francesco Casetti

edited by Roberto De Gaetano

What can be the role of a theory of cinema when its object, in the current media landscape, appears profoundly transformed, multiplied and even dispersed when compared to its origins? This question moves the conversation, where examined are the various solicitations to which the theoretical discourses on cinema have tried, from time to time, to provide answers. Moving from the notion of self-reflexivity, which accompanied the seventh art since its origins, up to the ability to glimpse its still untapped possibilities, the author of *The Eye of the Century* and *The Lumière Galaxy* considers the concept of *experience* as the decisive parameter in order to think the recent evolution of the film and its current 'relocation' properly.

New Challenges for the Theory of Cinema

Pietro Montani

What kind of relationship do we entertain with images, and to what extent our interrelation with them is breaking up with the past? The concept of '*mileu associé*', introduced by Simondon, is useful to focus on this problem, and to understand it in relation to an always stronger bond between environmental and digital technology. Film theory seems also to be called to take another direction: the essay suggests some new possible ways of investigation, trying to combine Eisenstein with Vertov and highlighting the theoretical strength of editing.

The Distinction Between *Medium* and *Form*. Luhmann and the Question of the Dispositif

Antonio Somaini

The distinction between *Medium* and *Form*, put forward by the German philosopher and sociologist Niklas Luhmann, has an interesting impact on media and film theory. The essay traces the *querelle des dispositifs*, an animated debate on the status of the cinematic device which was opened in France by Bellour, Aumont and Dubois, that continued with Casetti's recent studies

– especially *The Lumière Galaxy* and the theory of the cinematic apparatus as an *assemblage* – up to the idea of the cinematic apparatus thought as an open and dynamic entity, as the dialectic between *Medium* and *Formen*, that allows to think cinema as a set of assembled and disassembled elements.

Experience and Poverty of Cinema. The Truth of the Image

Salvatore Tedesco

Today, the aging of every ‘philosophy of history (of film)’ puts the theoretical discourse in the face of a vital chance: coming back to draw the experiential relationship of a subject – caught in all its empirical heaviness and epistemological complexity – linked to ‘images’. But how does the subject reach this potential mode of being of the experience? How does the relationship between experience and experience of poverty (already emphasized by Benjamin) locate in cinema itself (in the system of cinema and in films)? How can one gather these pluralities in the image and in its peculiar ‘presence’?

Cinema as a Generative Machine

Paolo Bertetto

In the field of cinema, a reconsideration of the horizon of theory, aware of the complexity and variety of contemporary culture, must necessarily move from an observation: that of a shift in heuristics attention – occurred since the 70s, with the conceptual revolution introduced by *Feminist Film Theory* – from the ontological specificity of the object to its ‘practical’ operativity. However, the new perspectives that today’s *theorein* is beginning to open up seem to be able to overcome the alternative between *einai* and *poiein*, between being and doing, rather developing from their relationship of mutual implication. Starting from this premise, the essay aims to synthetically identify three guidelines that, otherwise declining this interweaving of essence and operation, seem to be able to orient the theoretical debate within *film studies* in a renewed way.

From Praise to Elegy. Ambitions and Positions of the Theory of Cinema

Michele Guerra

In recent years, more and more questions are being asked about the end of cinema, on its crushing and dispersion following the digital revolution: the end of cinema, the uncertainty of the track, the continuous possibility to translate the image elsewhere, with the consequences entailed by this fruition, are some of these questions. Therefore, to film theory is asked the tremendous effort to keep abreast of its object of study, something that moves so fast and makes both a reflection and a definition of it very difficult. However, if it is difficult today to say what cinema is, it is almost impossible to say what film theory is. 'Film theory' has lost the appeal that it had for many years. The film theorist is an old-fashioned figure, often even mocked; someone who lives out of his/her time and who (if he/she really wants to keep doing the job) must keep a safe distance from theory itself. Why, in a few decades, we have moved from the 'praise of theory', emphasized by Béla Balázs, to the 'elegy of theory', as problematically stressed by David Rodowick?

The Dance of Nature, the Ballet of Theory. Theory of Film and Experimental Sciences

Ruggero Eugeni

The debate on the 'naturalization' of film theory has experienced two phases of development. At first, in the 90s, the debate was set up as a discussion on the naturalization of theoretical research methods (*epistemological* naturalization); later, starting from the end of the years 00s, it has involved a naturalistic vision of the film spectator as a body (*ontological* naturalization). The 'hinge' between these two parts is a metadisciplinary reflection on the concept of theory, on its role within the humanities, on its relationship with philosophy and the reasons for its survival. This article argues that both the past debate and the current reflection on film theory present two series of gaps and flaws: first, a critical and operative analysis on the relations between theory and experimental disciplines has only been sketched but not yet developed; on the other hand, the theoretical work is still held hostage by a sharp alternative between nature and culture – an abstract opposition that must be urgently overcome.

Positive Science

Massimo Locatelli

This essay delves into the long history of the relationship between film culture and positive sciences. It focuses on two main figures: Ernst Mach, who introduced photography and cinematography in science laboratories in the second half of the nineteenth century, and Gilbert Cohen-Séat, founder of the filmology movement after WWII. The concepts of function and method will reveal to be their main heritage and a key to understand also present-day epistemological debates on film.

On the Origins of Picture Making

Michele Cometa

Where is an image? What is an image? When is an image? Why is an image? How is an image? The purpose of this essay is to indicate a possible relationship between the art of the Palaeolithic and modern visual culture, establishing the paradigm of a 'biology of images'. The studies on prehistoric art actually force us to re-propose the question of what picture-making is. Applying the methods of visual culture in prehistoric contexts firstly means to consider the problem of the gaze and of the beholder, as well as to study the updated media and material culture of the arts of cave, coming to conceive the visual experience as the product of a complex interaction between three factors: the images/pictures, the glances/bodies and the devices/media. Therefore, one should not unravel the mystery of the origins of art, while rather begin to study the origin and evolution of images in the context of our own evolutionary history, by answering the questions put forward by 'visual culture' today and that a more careful consideration of our evolutionary history and our biological substance imposes.

Cinema Between Theory and Heterotopia

Massimo Donà

According to Foucault there is no society that does not produce its own heterotopia or heterotopias. Among these is, without any doubt, the art of cinema. In cinema we meet *another world* that, at the same time, is *not at all different* from what we meet outside the film theatre. Therefore, it does not allow us to do *something else* than what we would do in the so-called real world. More specifically, it allows us to see (*theorein*) as mere 'specta-

tors'; yes, to see the same world we see every single day, made of meanings: human being, male or female, being in love, disappointment, betrayal, hope or fear, insecurity and so on. A world also made of individuals, as we meet every day, but that normally we come to treat as *merely universal meanings*. What if cinema, therefore, drawn an even richer and more complete form of *heterotopia* than the one challenged by great philosophy (when the latter has been able to be *theoretical*)? In other words, what if cinema drawn a heterotopia conceivable only as the *externalization* of a very strong and rigorous 'theory'?

Making Philosophy Between and Through Screens

Mauro Carbone

Nowadays the screen, with its different implementations and applications, is a recurring object in everyday life. It became something we cannot live without or avoid: as an essential element of most media, starting from television, the screen is something fundamental. It is possible to compare it to a prosthesis: a kind of artificial limb replacing our gaze when it is still healthy and causing atrophy. Through an analysis of the 'premediation' phenomenon and 'news media', this essay develops a reflection on the processes of subjectivation and individuation.

Identity, Analysis, Resonance: On the Relationship Between Cinema and Philosophy

Daniela Angelucci

The essay focuses on contemporary theories dealing with cinema which have recently undergone many transformations. The most interesting aspect of the contemporary approaches mainly concerns the possibility of a contamination between various disciplines. From this perspective, by proposing a reconstruction of the theoretical scene, the essay intends to criticize both the idea of an identity between cinema and philosophy, that considers images just alike concepts, and of the ontological analysis of film put forward by analytic philosophy. Instead, in the wake of Deleuze's thought, the essay affirms a particular proximity – a resonance – between cinema and philosophy.

On Concepts Created by Cinema: Žižek with Deleuze Daniele Dottorini

How can there be a relationship between two different authors so radically distant as Deleuze and Žižek? Deleuze's aversion — or rather indifference — to Lacan's thought is known, while the latter still represents Žižek's main point of reference. But trying to find similarities to specific patterns of thought is not what matters here. The question would be instead: 'Is there, at least at one point, a common area between these two authors, or rather between the concepts of these two authors? Maybe in the way cinema comes into play?'

Conflict, Disjunction, Condition: Cinema and Theory in the Philosophy of Alain Badiou

Bruno Besana and Pietro Bianchi

What is the place that art, and cinema in particular, occupies in the philosophy of Alain Badiou? And in which specific way cinema highlights the relationship between artistic practice and theorization? Badiou puts into questions every idea of philosophy as a 'theory of', such as — for example — a reflection on art or on cinema. He therefore erases the term 'aesthetic' from his vocabulary: i.e. he refuses the idea that philosophy should discuss a supposed essence of art or that there should be a descriptive, reflexive or normative branch called 'aesthetic'. The neologism 'inaesthetic' nominates in this sense the deactivation of aesthetic as much as the attempt to nominate the intra-philosophical consequences — the theoretical and speculative consequences — produced by specific and singular works of art. In such a context cinema plays an eccentric role, which is at the same time central and problematic, if not even destabilizing.

The Relations Between Media in the Era of Convergence

Federico Zecca

Multi-mediality, inter-mediality, cross-mediality, trans-mediality. In the last two decades, these four categories have frequently been employed in the study of the relations established between different media in the era of convergence, though quite often their meanings and referents have not been clearly identified and distinguished. This undeniable discursive instability causes these four terms to frequently mingle, cross over one another, and overlap. This article proposes a first hypothesis of meta-theoretical reor-

ganization of such categories – based on the distinction between the level, the object, and the type of media relations – with the aim of systematizing (and ‘stabilising’) their semantic status and heuristic value.

A Suivre: Yet on Cinema

Alessia Cervini

For some years now, theoretical studies have returned on the problem of what is the proper status of the cinematic image and the way in which it was eventually questioned by phenomena such as media convergence, relocation and remediation. Today, as in the past, this has led to the rising of a question about the possible ‘end of cinema’, at least in the form that we have known for a century. Many of the most recent film productions have staged precisely the hypothesis of this end, with strategies and solutions each time different. Through a series of examples, used as evidence of a general tendency of thinking about the end, this essay intends to show some of its possible theoretical consequences. More than thinking of its end in fact, cinema seems actually interested in developing a new origin.

Between Rebuild Pasts and Anticipated Futures. The Concept of *Digital* in the Theories of Cinema

Valentino Catricalà

This essay is an attempt to conceive the digital beyond technology in a deeper and wider archaeological way, by trying to find the roots which has brought to the mathematization and division of the image into numbers. The archaeological analysis is based on three different historical period: Max Bense ‘technological aesthetics’, the growth of a ‘media system’ and the firsts attempts of mathematization of the information in the eighteen century, through the insight by Edgar Allan Poe, and the relationship between art and media in the avant-garde period characterized by Raoul Hausmann’s Optophonone.

‘Taken as Real’: Fandom and Narrative Strategies in *Supernatural*

Valentina Re

This article aims to focus on the notion of metalepsis and to show how the multi-faceted use of this narrative strategy, in contemporary audiovisual

products such as TV series, can productively interact with forms of transmedial expansion and with transformative fan works – especially within the framework of the new ‘rule of the game’ pointed out by Thomas Elsaesser in his contribution on mind-game films: ‘The world depicted is taken as real’. In order to discuss this hypothesis the essay specifically considers the TV show *Supernatural*, which represents a clear example of complex storytelling and has a large fan community.

The Dynamic Square and the Rectangle of Attention. For a Theory of the Practices of Staging

Vito Zagarrìo

The author tries to define the steps that characterize his system of interpretation of films. In doing so, he takes into account some important national and international theoretical perspectives. The hermeneutics of film results into an analytical approach, a real investigation of the language of cinema that considers both its constituent parts and its ways of production. The theorist becomes a kind of detective who examines the film in its whole complexity: the author’s style, the staging, the film industry, the historical and social context.

Somatic Culture and Writings of the Self

Federica Villa

How has the relationship glance/body evolved in our contemporary society devoured by an authentic ‘frenzy of the visible’ (Jean-Louis Comolli)? Recent studies have focused on the link between technologies of vision of the body and processes of construction of subjectivity, hence interlacing fields of visual culture and the history of medicine. Within an overall framework of purely phenomenological nature, where the body is understood essentially as a key link between the individual and society, between signification of reality and construction of subjectivity, it becomes particularly interesting to question the forms and ways of representation of the human body in relation the processes of awareness of bodily reality that individuals develop thanks to new technologies of vision. This essay, which moves from an idea of the body as a self-skin, in particular aims to examine the paradox by which to an increased control and attention on the body corresponds a growing uncertainty about the very body itself.

Fontcuberta, the Theory of Post-Photography

Marcello Walter Bruno

The advent of digital technology has established a new era defined as post-photography by Joan Fontcuberta. The Spanish photographer believes that the deeper nature of digital photography, made of pixels that can be managed and manipulated by computer processing, is comparable to pictorial procedure and also to the writing. The computerization of digital photography finds its 'specificity' in the work of Fontcuberta that shows how, compared to the analogic, post-photography is a new theoretical object in need of new theories.

The Organizer: a Dialectical Comedy

Gian Piero Consoli

Turin in late eighteenth-century, factory work, the first attempts of strikes and workers unions: *The Organizer* (1963), film directed by Mario Monicelli, describes this social scenario and the birth of the labour movement. Through the main character, professor Sinigaglia, precursor of the Gramscian organic intellectual, Monicelli brings the Italian history between the unification of Italy and the war in Libya to the big screen. *The Organizer* narrates the first steps of the socialist movement and the concrete presence of Marxist theory.

Who Saw Them Dying?

Anton Giulio Mancino

Does it exist a remote possibility that two genre films as the Italian *Chi l'ha visto morire?* (1972) by Aldo Lado and the Spanish *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (1976) by Narciso Ibáñez Serrador may result their discursive strategy, already expressed in their respective question titles, from André Bazin's 'taboo' about the death in cinema? Can the compared reading of these two differently cruel films of the 70s, which put at the middle of their plot the unacceptable possibility for the screen to represent the killing of children, be considered as a cold case of applied 'theory'?

The Spectator's Emotions in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Francesca Scotto Lavina

By analyzing *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) the essay argues that spectator's emotions triggered by films cannot be explained by a single theory. The analysis integrates the psychoanalytical assumptions of Grand Theory with the cognitive ones of Post-Theory and the reductionist ones of Neurocinematics. It builds a dialectical encounter between the theoretical positions of the aforementioned theories. Such a dialogue, still remaining an unsolved question for Film theory, might foster the advancement of a theory in progress, in order to elucidate all the complex mechanisms of cinematic emotion.

Soft Cinema: Creativity, Software and Automation

Luca Cinquemani

Soft Cinema: Navigating the Database is the result of a theoretical and artistic research conducted by Lev Manovich and Andreas Kratky with the aim of investigating the possibilities of cinema in the era of new digital technologies. The semi-automatic process of film-making that drives *Soft Cinema* depicts important aspects regarding the functioning of the software, algorithms and electro-computational automation. By extending the theoretical reflection of the authors, the essay shows how these aspects play a crucial role in the development of new digital technologies and their relationship with contemporary capitalism.

"Iconoclash" in *Cowboys & Aliens*

Vincenzo Tauriello

Pietro Montani defines the hypermedia device as that kind of spectacular cinema which employs the most advanced technologies in order to involve the audience in an immersive and synesthetic way. The hypermedia pictures refer to a paradigm where pictures are *phantasmata*, *simulacra*, mere appearances standing as living images, idols mixing up to the real world. W.J.T. Mitchell's critical iconology is an interdisciplinary approach that aims at questioning and 'auscultating' (as Nietzsche said) the pictures belonging to idolatry. Therefore, it is not matter of using an iconoclastic method in order to destroy the fetishes of the society of the spectacle: the question one has to answer is 'what the hypermedia pictures really want'. *Cowboys & Aliens*

(Favreau, 2012) stands as a representative case in such a perspective.

Public Enemies. Survivals of an Imaginary in Digital Cinema

Pietro Masciullo

Public Enemies (Mann, 2009) configures a significant gap between the renewed immersive regime of cinematic images (High Definition) and the conscious adoption of archetypes derived from Hollywood genres (the gangster movie). Therefore, the re-articulation of memory of classic cinema interfaces with an overt theoretical reflection on the new devices of vision: these *survivals* of the imaginary of the nineteenth century, within the new domain of digital technology, make *Public Enemies* a particularly fertile example in order to analyse contemporary cinema as a *medium* which can be still self-reflexive and still produce Theory.