Introduction

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Since the 1960s through the 1980s, reflection on cinema questioned the relationship between image and language, resorting in particular to the tools of semiotics. Authors such as Christian Metz, Pier Paolo Pasolini and even Gilles Deleuze made important contributions on the theme of the classification of cinematographic 'signs'. But some developments in contemporary cinema allow us to ask a different question: how can cinema lead beyond language?

The recent production of (the recently disappeared) Jean-Luc Godard, for instance, is rather dedicated to an imagery that is not an immediate transcription of reality but the post-linguistic outcome of frequenting a world dominated by language. Consider, for example, *Adieu au langage* (2014), a film-essay in which the image tends to sever its ties with the *logos* (and subjectivity) in order to draw on an autonomous and 'real' consistency. In fact, this recent production is rooted in a cinematic tradition that ranges from the 'mystical cinema' of Jean Epstein to the paradoxical subjective without subject of the last scene of Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger*, and from the exemplary case of the donkey in Robert Bresson's *Au hasard Balthazar* (not by chance retaken by Jerzy Skolimowski's *Eo*, 2022) to the cinema of Jean Painlevé (think of the masterpiece *Les amours de la pieuvre*).

From this viewpoint, it is possible to investigate the relationship between cinema and language considering the way cinema possibly manages to overcome the limits of verbal sense. The papers collected in this issue of 'Aesthetica Preprint' discuss the relationship between cinema and the post-linguistic image from different perspectives. Felice Cimatti and Stefano Oliva first reconstruct the aspects of mysticism historically attributed to early cinema and then focus on the Wittgensteinian concept

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of Mystical, referring to the paradoxical experience of the limits of the world and language. The concept of Mystical is then employed in reference to Godard's aforementioned film, *Adieu au langage*, interpreted as an attempt to overcome the split between world and language.

On the other hand, the world-language opposition characterizes the human form of life and its dominance over nature, central to the era that has been called the Anthropocene. As Elena Past's article shows through her reflection on Michelangelo Frammartino's *Il buco* (2021), cinema is capable of confronting nature on a vast spatial and temporal scale, up to the point of dissolving language in the silence of an image no longer submitted to the word.

Timothy Campbell's article examines instead the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni and in particular *The Passenger* (1975), asking how it can lead beyond the language of possession to a space of potential. Furthermore, Campbell compares Antonioni and Godard by identifying two different ways of doing away with language in the works of the two directors. «Godard's adieu to language is premised on an inauthentic relation between the human and the technologies of the screen» while «in *The Passenger* Antonioni features an individual's problematic relation to the self, which leads to a decision to sever that relation in favor of another».

The issue of technology, and in particular the late-20th-century digital revolution, is the starting point of Cristina Coccimiglio's reflection. In her article, the farewell to language elaborated by Godard is related to Jacques Ellul's reflection – explicitly quoted in the film – on technology and, more precisely, on the crisis of language and meaning in the technological age. The ability of cinema to produce a post-linguistic image, on the other hand, is rooted precisely in the technical nature of the device. This somewhat paradoxical condition (a technique to defeat the quintessential technique that is language) calls for reflection on the means employed by cinema. From this perspective, Dario Cecchi's paper questions the concept of gesture as a medium capable of disarticulating language and imagination, and of reorganizing their relationship in a peculiar way in the filmic work.

Cinema, with its specific means, thus shows itself as a form of Visual Thinking akin to but distinct from language. Among the most useful concepts for thinking about cinema as Visual Thinking, Daniele Dottorini examines Sergei M. Ejzenštejn's reflections on *Obraznost'* ('Imaginity'), i.e., the ability of all the elements of a composition to contribute to the creation of a unity of meaning. Distinct from the simple capacity for representation, Imaginity

constitutes the visual power of the word, which tends to become a meaningful image in the process of montage.

Thus, cinema succeeds in overcoming the dualism between the visible and the invisible, opening up unprecedented possibilities for emotional and psychic life: an example of this power of cinema is Mizoguchi's film *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953), that Gioia Sili critically interprets through psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Matte Blanco. At the same time, as in Gemma Bianca Adesso's paper, cinema, (much like other practices such as, e.g., cartography), teaches us to stop believing in language and, in the wake of Gilles Deleuze and Fernand Deligny, to abandon its logic in order to recognize a full image, capable of drawing lines of flight.