

ABSTRACT

There's a narrow bond between political language and cinema.

Politics can not be limited to certain places or circumstances; it's a collective dimension that involves a large part of our existence. It has always been closely linked to areas such as law, economics, religion. And, of course, such as technology.

Politicians have always been promoters and victims of technological evolution: media are often used for the electoral campaign or for the diffusion of specific values, but they are also used to reduce the sociological state of ignorance of each elector and to appraise the behavior of the political class.

Cinema is not only an art; it's a sort of weapon: a movie is not only entertainment, but also a typology of communication that allows to communicate ideas and to create a strong bond between citizens and institutions.

The authoritarian regimes have often used the potentialities of the cinema to feed the popular consent: firstly the Soviet Russia, then the European fascisms, have experimented new frontiers of the cinema language.

The first decades of the history of cinema have been influenced by political contingencies: David W. Griffith was a supporter of the racist ideology, Sergeij M. Ejzenstejn was interested in tragedies and conquests of the proletarian class.

The ideologies (as great historical narrations of the humanity) have offered new possibilities of expression and an unknown typology of historical testimonies: the movies have recorded the way our ancestors perceived the realities of the past.

The propaganda cinema was widely used in Russia in '20s. The "October of the arts" has been a period of great creativeness; lots of artists were influenced by the futurism and by the avant-garde of the decade before (Lev Kulešov studied the mechanisms of the production of sense caused by specific chronological orders of projected images).

The most important soviet directors have been Ejzenstejn, Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, Aleksandr P. Dovzenko and Dziga Vertov. They tried to translate in images the Marxist Dialectic (a method of argument comprising three dialectical stages of development: thesis, antithesis and synthesis), but each one elaborated a personal style experimenting with the film editing process.

The first author, influenced by Griffith's *cross-cutting*, elaborated the *editing of the attractions* (collision montage to capture the attention of the spectators) and the *intellectual editing* (collision montage to stimulate the critical conscience of the audience through conceptual metaphors).

Pudovkin was interested in the semantic connection of (apparently) independent sequences.

Vertov refused the traditional "bourgeois" narration and was not interested in fictional stories; the world was considered as a big catalyst and the eye of the camera had to penetrate the Matter to film the energy circulating among the various bodies.

If Vertov penetrated the Space, Dovzenko penetrated the Time: he was one of the most unusual directors of his time. His pantheistic lyricism, in contrast with the Soviet materialism, allowed to conceive the human existence as a part of an immense and cyclical narration. The birth and the death were phases of a constantly and simultaneously repeating cycle.

Before the socialist realism and the cultural policy by Zdanov, the editing was probably the most important step in filmmaking; the "grammatical" structure of the film was the vehicle of the communist ideology: the order of the sequences, the events and the images were a sort of revelation of the most elementary dynamics of the Nature; nothing couldn't happen outside the laws of dialectic.

The Soviet cinema conquered the attention of the greatest international artists; in Europe, the fascist regime was the first government who understood the potentialities of propaganda cinema. Benito Mussolini promoted the development of the Italian cinematic industry to make it as strong as American or Russian one; the most representative directors were Mario Camerini and Alessandro Blasetti.

Camerini was inspired by American comedy and German expressionism: his films were pure diversion; they didn't absolutely want to describe the reality but they only wanted to put in scene an ideal world where the values of the fascist society were clearly expressed. Camerini followed the "philosophy" of the fascist party: Art had to entertain people, and not to educate them.

Blasetti had an autonomous artistic project: influenced by Russian cinema, he wanted to link his contemporary political culture to the past of his nation; he was interested in origins of fascist movement and he always tried to feed the collective feeling that made the ascent of the fascism possible. His work was often misunderstood by the audience and by some politicians (in the '30s fascist government wanted to forget the squads and the controversial ascent to power). He paradoxically received great success in the Nazi Germany.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler was creating a German star system inspired by Hollywood; the importance of this business was more "liturgical" than strictly artistic: the actors were cult characters and they were a sort of symbol of the greatness of Nazi society. However a great artistic contribution is Leni Riefenstahl's one: the sequences filmed in Nuremberg (during the 1934 Nazi congress) and in Berlin (during the 1936 Olympiads) are some of the most interesting and discussed pages of the history of cinema: lots of critics have accused her of racism and anti-Semitism, underlining the persuasive strength (and the ambiguous charm) of the images. Riefenstahl surely was a supporter of Nazi regime, but in her films there are no signs of her racist ideas: the "Olympia" movie is an interesting example because the narration shows no peculiar attention to Arian athletes, there are not traces of nationalism (differently than in the precedent movie "The triumph of the Will") and the work seems to be an ode to the beauty and to strength of all the competitors (some sequences show the dowries of a black athlete). The government didn't like her indistinct admiration for the various "races" and delayed the theatrical release of the documentary. Riefenstahl, Blasetti, Dovzenko and other artists have showed how ideologies can not be scientifically and universally translated into different languages: the possibilities of expression are countless and they are not controllable by any cultural authoritarianism.

It's not a matter of aesthetics, it's a matter of language! The relationship between text and reader is absolutely independent from the intentions of the author: the reader elaborates his/her interpretative hypothesis and re-negotiates, confirms or refuses his/her expectations analyzing clues in the text.

Cinema is surely a language, but it's not an ordinary language: it's something *more*, because it can use heterogeneous elements, formulas or signs borrowed from other languages; and it's something *less*, because cinema is not based on a coherent system of essential rules (cinema is a continuing revolution).

Film is "representation", and not the mirror of reality; the cinematic representation often oscillates between two contradictory tendencies: there is the intention to reproduce a pre-existing reality, and there is the attempt to create a new world.

If communists wanted to film the empirical truth of events, the fascist regimes wanted to create an ideal and purely fictional narrative world: they both were (ideologically) wrong because a film never reproduces exact reality and is never totally separate from the specific conditions of its material productions.

A movie always operates in relation to a network of social knowledge: it's a vehicle of values or ideas, but it also records moods and tracks unintentionally written in the text by the author(/s).

The audience relates to a film using precise cultural grids and the author must be able to accommodate or upset the expectations of viewers, according to a predetermined target.

During the twentieth century, politics has influenced cinema in different ways: after propaganda experiments, in the decades following the Second World War the directors began to be considered as "authors" and movies were intended for a less numerous and more cultured audience:

philosophy, political ideas, religion became an essential part of the artistic Content. Artists became also intellectuals, but this metamorphosis didn't skip the importance of the Form: new experimental languages were born (firstly Italian neo-realism, then French Nouvelle Vague, German JDF...).

Elio Petri analyzed modern psychosis with grotesque tones, Theo Anghelopulos invented new types of narrative to reconstruct the collective memory of Greek people, Jean-Luc Godard experimented

with editing process to emphasize the artificial nature of the film, Francesco Rosi shot *film-inquiries* about controversial events in Italy.

The spread of television marked an important step for political communication (Pippa Norris has talked about “modern era”). The new medium relatively replaced the role of propaganda films, but the process of mediatization of politics lasted many decades.

The spread of democracy and the fall of authoritarian regimes pointed out the role of *electoral* (and not simply political) communication. In this scenario the seventh art was an opportunity to political reflection only for the intellectuals and the cultured audience. The gap between popular and Auteur cinema was increasing.

Television used a more simple and powerful language, and it also more useful to the political classes.

In the ‘80s ideologies have become less important, trust in political parties has declined, the culture has been "secularized". After the peaks in the ‘60s and in the ‘70s, *intellectual* cinema has lost his importance.

“Ideology-image” phenomenon was disappearing; what’s that?

It’s when the viewer interprets a text according to a great historical (political, religious, philosophical) narration or, more exactly, when a set of elements inside a text activate (in the mind of the recipients) a precise part of social knowledge (suggesting and influencing their capacities of interpretation).

"Ideology-image" is the result of specific conditions of use of a particular text; it’s a phenomenon that involves the viewer emotionally and rationally.

This name was chosen according (indirectly) to the language of Gilles Deleuze (Time-image, Movement-image...), but it does not want to have any scientific value, if not practical: it is an *ad hoc* term just to summarize briefly the empathic connection that exists between an ideal author and an ideal spectator with the same cultural background.

This concept can't surely capture the essence of a complex process, a relatively unconscious process, such as the politicization of the cinema. Lots of theories and lots of methodologies have changed the history of this phenomenon. Probably this process is still evolving, and it's going to use new formulas, new medias and (who knows!) new ideologies.