

Scattered Notes on the documentary

In 1939 Joris Ivens described the approach and formulation of a documentary filmic writing (highlighting as well the problematic nature of any institution of genres and inscription of definitions) as a movement aroused by the contrapositions and refusal of the Hollywood machine. The simultaneous constitution of what later will be defined as independent movement rooted part of its intentions in the abandonment of *fiction*, in particular the one to which the cinema industry entrusted its capitals. The shift of the documentary plane from fiction yet does not translate into its contraposition as its limit, rather the documentary, as Ivens himself suggested, finds another pole, the newsreel or *cine journal*. If the exasperation of a purely documentary vocation (recalling the meaning of the term, that is a certification of reality) will lead in the second half of the Twentieth Century to the elaboration of cinema-truth, to the other end, already at the dawn of cinema, the dramatization of life was intensifying a conversion of the mean with a strongly *imaginative* power. Emile De Antonio's lucid critique (with which we can also compose the ones made by other cinematographers, and not, first among them Guy Debord with his *Critique of separation*, France, 1961, b/w, 35mm, 19') to the fundamentals of cinema-truth (B. Weiner, «Radical Scavenging: An Interview With Emile De Antonio», *Film Quarterly*, vol. 25, n. 1, Berkeley, CA, Autumn 1971, pp. 3-15) highlighted how the cinematographic practice (in particular the documentary one) underwent a mystifying process in claiming an impersonal position in front of ongoing events, desubjectified yet attributing the same position to the technique, that is the tool, without exhausting any end. This end in fact is the technique itself assuming the name and the task of -truth (we further suggest to rediscuss the flattening operated by critique on the propositions done by Kinoks with the following different formulations by cinema-truth). It is meaningful on the other end that a parallel refusal facing the Hollywood cinema productions (ten years before the notes written by Joris Ivens) translated in Russia into what has been defined in the Manifest on Sound as "photographed presentations of a theatrical order" (S. Ejzenštejn, V. Pudovkin, G. Alexandrov, «Statement on Sound», in *Zhizn' iskusstva* 5 August 1928, pp. 4-5, from *The film Factory. Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, edited by R. Taylor, I. Christie, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1988, pp. 234-237). The introduction of synch-sound in the newsreel, beyond producing effects of sensationalism, is perceived as a first symptom of a progressive loss of innocence and pureness of the cinematographic textual possibilities. The reference in this case is explicitly addressed to the manipulation in the montage phase. Instead of composing itself with a fragmentary juxtaposition, fossilizes on the separation and on an autonomous restitution of each fragment of image. For the group of Russian filmmakers, this is precisely the place from where started the progressive loss of the power of the imaginary in cinema, that instead continues to draw its sources, in particular in Ejzenštejn path, directly from life, but that resolves itself in a decisive manner here, mainly in the montage phase.

After one hundred years we question the relations between the reality and the imaginary without resting on the vague generalization instituted by the notion of docu-fiction and precisely because the question is doubly addressed to the cinematographic writing as well as to the ways in which the imaginaries are part of life itself, or even better in the worlds in which they take form.

The lens becomes a passage when the tool reveals a mean through which it is possible to trigger a situation. As in a dance, the image triggers a situation, the body directs the movement. The tension that from the gaze on the lens shifts toward who orients it constitutes in this way the same score of a return to come.

To propose the use of the camera as a mean does not correspond to its use as a tool. The main difference resides in the fact that it does not assume any challenging function, nor magic or propitiatory in searching the reality of life, or better the truth of subjects-objects. Pierre Perrault (see P. Perrault, *Caméramages*, L'Hexagone-Edilig, Montreal, Paris 1983) defined his practice as a way of impressing more than expressing. The film or the work: what arrived, arrives in the instant, any intermediary between the film and the event (polarization of the moment of impression with the exposition), this means that the film present arrived, next to a past and relaunched toward the future. It goes by itself to realize how this way demands a stake from the filmmaker as well as the filmed, a stake that is not a showing, an undressing (when the bodies are already exposed in a nudity), rather a becoming. Jean-Louis Comolli described the bodies erotization as a process through which the singularities of the filmed characters access the statute of filmic subjects, and for this reason become sharable. He attributed to the fictional word, the inner voice and the registered monologue, the identifying and mimetic power typical of documentary cinema (J.-L. Comolli, «Ämes héroïques cherchent corps érotiques», in «Le singulier», *Images Documentaires*, n. 25, Paris, 1996, pp. 13-21). Comolli underlines how a potential is not addressed toward an inner side of the character, rather to the bounds that the filmed word realizes between his body and the one of the spectator. Articulating Perrault's approach with the image given by Comolli one can guess that the proposal of a video-research does not lie on a principle of simulation or identification, rather it turns toward a simultaneity of coincidences and swerves, visibilities and invisibilities, weaving the emerging complexity: the filmed gestures and words, the voice – and for this reason never exclusively inner – will be the propositions of this articulation.

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