

POWER

How can we deal with the concept of power from a point of view that puts the contemporary image, especially the cinematographic one, into play (if not into question)? The reflection on power – in the last century strongly influenced by the thought of authors like Foucault, or by the reinterpretation of Aristotle by Hanna Arendt and Giorgio Agamben – has shown that dealing with power means talking about an internal relationship within the subjects. The contemporary image of power is not that of the pyramid but of the network, of a complex branching of relationships in which we are immersed. Every discussion on images cannot but start from such perspective.

Power is omnipresent in every social relationship; the image is not external to it, but is concretely placed within the network of relationships that establish the link between knowledge and power. Precisely the articulation of such network constitutes the specificity of cinema as a form. Cinema is at the same time both an expression and a resistance to power relations, according to Foucault's sentence: "Where there is power, there is also resistance". Throughout its history, cinema has been able to reflect power relationships both within its device and through the creation of new images. If the dynamics of the relationship between image and power is therefore complex, there are different ways of intending such question, of showing how the cinematographic image is constituted as a space of thought on (and in some cases of) power.

Power/Strength. First of all, we should think power as the strength of the image. The essence of cinema lies in the relationship between power and strength in the image (and, conversely, in the powerlessness of the image). Quoting Agamben's reflections on the power of being (as of non-being) of the image, cinema can be thought of both as a great device for creating images and as a power for the imaginary, as the means capable of remediating the relationship between man and the world (Casetti). Conversely, in the twentieth century, cinema history has also been one of powerlessness: following Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, cinema has not been able in fact to redeem or transform the world. It is therefore necessary to critically resume all the great theorizations on cinema which are often centered on the notion of power: from the transfiguring power of cinema in Epstein, to its power of reconfiguring the world in Benjamin; from the concept of the power of the image in Eisenstein, to its the relationship of the image with reality according to Bazin. The question here shifts from the ontological level (what is cinema?) to the ethical and political one (what can cinema do?), thus also challenging the reflection of authors such as Deleuze and Agamben.

The gaze on power. Cinema creates images and, in doing so, it creates narratives. Throughout the history of cinema, power has taken on different forms. For example, the transfiguring form of grotesque bodies and gestures: from the Eisensteinian bodies to the masks of power scattered throughout the history of Italian cinema (from Petri to Ferreri, passing through the zoomorphic representations in *The Power* by Augusto Tretti), recently revived by directors such as Sorrentino. The problem of representation runs through all the cinema of political commitment, but what characterizes it is the fact that it puts into play the dialectic between visibility and invisibility: the excess representation of power – such as that which transcends the human – and the absence of representation. Cinema often focuses on the effects of an invisible, absent power, constituted by an

empty throne which is however capable of creating continuous images of itself, through the bodies subject to power.

Cinema and power. Power is here understood as a political, economic and social one in relation to the film industry. Cinema is the result of an often conflicting, sometimes perfectly harmonious, relationship with power. From propaganda films, functional to the logic of power (and at the same time capable of telling its imaginary, as in Leni Riefensthal's cinema), to underground and independent cinema. The question here intertwines the political and economic dimension of cinema understood as a production system: from the absorption of all film production under state control (as in the case of Nazi cinema) to the creation of powerful industrial groups, able to guide choices and aesthetic models (as in the classic Hollywood system). Such dynamic has never been closed or has never been legible as a form of absolute control over images. It has indeed shown the complexity of the folds and the details of images that often reveal their hidden, unconscious, otherwise invisible content. We should therefore also read cinema from the perspective of such dialectic, highlighting its complexity, whether cinema is placed within a system, or whether one thinks it as something free and in opposition to it.

Deadline for the submission of the abstract: March 31, 2020

Deadline for the submission of the essay: June 30, 2020

Essays should be expressly written for the journal and should strictly respect the following word limit:

***Focus:* Min 5000 Max 6000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**

***Rifrazioni:* Min 2000 Max 3000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**

Send to: redazionefatamorgana@gmail.com