Summary

2 CONFERENCES. Foreword

4 IMAGES OF THE PUBLIC. The construction of Italian TV audience (1953-1955)
   Luca Barra, Cecilia Penati, Massimo Scaglioni

18 SILVER SCREEN CARNIVAL. The reaction of society to different manifestations of Otherness
   Camilla Maccaferri

31 CINEMATIC ENWATERMENT. Drowning bodies in the contemporary film experience
   Adriano D’Aloia

40 DAVID ROCKWELL’S HALL OF FRAGMENTS. Looking for Film’s Genius as a Medium through Audiovisual Geographies
   Miriam De Rosa

50 NUMBERING FACES. «Col tempo. The W. Project» and the ways of pre-vision
   Glenda Franchin

58 DATAMATICS [2.0]. Ryoji Ikeda and the spectator's audio-visual immersion in the abstract reality of code
   Mauro Buzzi

67 ARCHITECTURES OF TIME. The loss of dimensions in Bourne’s world
   Cristina Tosatto

74 THE DILATED FRUITION. Video Gamers and Movie Producers
   Giovanni Caruso, Mauro Salvador
As a good habit, participants to international conferences are requested to present a written paper. However, it is not always granted that these papers will become articles collected in the Proceedings of the Conferences: it can happen that the limit set for the articles by the editors forces to cut large portions of the papers; in some other cases, for various reasons, the Proceedings are not published, or they are published after a long time. Hence, some interesting research materials remain for long periods in a sort of limbo, unable to get the visibility they deserve.

Starting from these considerations, the editorial board of Comunicazioni Sociali on line decided to dedicate a special annual issue of the Journal to the publication of papers presented in various international conferences and schools during the previous year. “Conferences 2010” is the first of these issues.

The intervention of Luca Barra, Cecilia Penati and Massimo Scaglioni was presented at the INA Conference "Television. The Experimental Moment" (Paris, May 28th, 2009). The paper outlines how, during the first year of Italian television, different social discourses mark the birth of a new kind of spectatorship. The analysis of documents, articles and TV programs reconstructs the “re-mediation” of theatre and film audiences into TV viewers.

The figure of the monster in the film history is at the heart of Camilla Maccaferri’s paper, which arises from a research project presented at some Institutions. The monster as an “Other” capable of embodying the concerns of society is analysed by Maccaferri, with particular attention to some episodes and figures only marginally known or studied so far.

Adriano D’Aloia’s paper was presented at the International Film Studies Conference "Emergent Encounters in Film Theory. Intersections Between Psychoanalysis and Philosophy", held at King’s College London on March 21st, 2009. The paper is part of a larger work: D’Aloia is trying to map the different forms of “empathizing” human bodies showed by cinematic images. In this case, he focuses on
the “water-embodiment” process (or enwaterment), and analyses both the substance of water and the figures of the drowning and immersed body.

The next four papers were all presented at the International Spring School ”Contemporary Visual Arts, Cinema & V. - Audiovisual Geographies” (University of Udine - Gorizia, March 20th 2010).

Miriam de Rosa analyses the installation “Hall of Fragments” by David Rockwell. The focus of her interest is the question of a possible re-definition of cinema within the current post-media condition.

Glenda Franchin analyses the installation “Over Time. The W. Project”, by Péter Forgács. The artist collects and uses the photographic and filmic archive of the Austrian doctor J. Wastl, devoted to the physiognomy of the stranger. Franchin focuses her interest on the different positions of vision offered by the installation in front of thousands of human faces there exposed.

Mauro Buzzi argues, by analysing the recent series “Datamatics” by Ryoji Ikeda, that the encoding mechanisms work today as a great metaphor of media as devices used for controlling the world.

Cristina Tosatto argues that the complexity of image in contemporary cinema is a visual metaphor of the “deterritorialization” of cinematic devices and of the new relationships between human body, technologies and territories. From this point of view, Tosatto analyses two chapters taken from the adventures of Jason Bourne, created by Robert Ludlum: “The Bourne Identity” by Doug Liman and “The Bourne Ultimatum” by Paul Greengrass.

Giovanni Caruso and Mauro Salvador presented their papers at the conference "Under the Mask: Perspectives on the Gamer" (University of Bedfordshire, Luton, June 2009). The two scholars analyse the video game “LittleBigPlanet” in comparison with the film of Michel Gondry “Be Kind Rewind”; their purpose is to identify rhetorical and narratives forms that allow and guide the emergence of the author-player, a new figure of “prosumer” that the authors call “produsers”.

The editors and authors wish to thank all the many institutions that have granted the permission to publish, in an expanded or different version, these contributions, that will be also published in the form of Proceedings.

Ruggero Eugeni
During the first year of regular scheduling, 1954, RAI\(^1\) launched an advertisement campaign aimed at increasing the purchase of TV licences. RAI aired a short clip which clearly outlined some of the main issues involved in the construction of a specific audience in the early stage of Italian television. Claiming that “RAI has sent us here to convince you of the happy moments you will spend in the company of television”, Mario Riva encouraged a typical bourgeois family to purchase a TV set. It is interesting to note that the two TV characters performing the sketch were already well-known to the Italian public: Mario Riva, former revue actor and radio performer, and Alberto Rabagliati, one of the first Italian radio stars and popular music idols. Through their presence in the advertisement, RAI tried to attract a wider audience, referring to a shared, previous medial memory. Moreover, through this campaign the representation of television audience that the Public Service Broadcasting tried to construct and diffuse clearly emerged: a family-oriented, domestic, middle-class image of the public.

It can be argued that, near the beginning of the regular scheduling, the issue of audience strongly emerged in the TV institution, mostly due to the sudden and sharp increase of the diffusion of the medium. This is revealed by the data collected in some reports of that period: as the span of regular programming rose from 923 hours in 1953 to 1,497 in 1954 (peaking to 1,828 in 1955), by 1954, 88,675 people owned a TV licence. This number more than doubled the next year, soaring to 182,416 people\(^2\). In 1955, a survey on the television viewers claimed that almost 6-7 millions adults, not possessing their own TV set, watched the programmes at friends’ places or in public contexts such as bars and taverns. Over

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\(^1\) The essay has been conceived and developed altogether by the three authors. Massimo Scaglioni has written the introduction and paragraph 4, Cecilia Penati paragraph 1 and 3, Luca Barra paragraph 2 and 5. The paper has been presented at the INA Conference “Television. The Experimental Moment” (Paris, May 28\(^{th}\) 2009).

one million young people used to watch TV outdoor too. However, from an overview of sources and documents such as television programmes, management’s speeches collected in house-organs and articles published on weekly and daily press, both popular and highbrow, it is evident that in the early years of Italian television (from 1953 until at least the second half of 1955) a fixed and stable image of a specific television audience was lacking.

The aim of the paper will therefore be to describe the gradual development of an unchanging and defined idea of television’s public from the invention to the institutionalization of this medium in Italy. The specific process of definition of an audience will be considered as a significant point of view to comprehend the process of institutionalization of early Italian television. Through a “trial and error” path, which characterized this primitive stage, Italian television settled a stable image of its public, which would become long-lasting during the scarcity era of the public broadcasting monopoly, from 1955 to 1975, also known, in the words of Umberto Eco, as “paleotelevisione”4. However, just before that “passive”, mainly domestic and middle-class image of TV audience took form, a multiplicity of different images emerged.

Our specific focus will be on this “primitive blossoming” of different models of television audiences between 1953 and 1955. Television tried to define a unified and stable image of its public re-mediating a cinematographic and a theatre model of audience as well as encouraging the growth of a family audience through the installation of TV sets into domestic spaces discouraging otherwise the practices of collective viewing. This, in a short period, kept alive different ways of addressing its spectator, mainly based on the dynamic of interplay. Significant evidence of a strategy of interaction between the television institution and the audience of the very first years will be provided, challenging the long-held view, generally accepted within the field of TV studies, of a passive form of early television spectatorship. With this challenge, we intend to rekindle the debate on the primitive Italian television public.

This paper is grounded in a wider research project on cultural history of Italian television, considering that the history of broadcasting can never be separated from its broader national, social and cultural historical context. Consequently, this research has dealt with different sorts of documents and sources, all rigorously investigated: early TV programmes still conserved in the RAI archives, para-texts (as well as house-organs and survey’s reports) as well as articles from popular and highbrow press. As the research developed, the

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6 The project was developed thanks to the research resources of RAI archives in Rome and Turin: “Biblioteca centrale Paolo Giuntella”, “Biblioteca Comunicazioni di massa di Via Tuculada”, the RAI film and video warehouse in via Salaria (Rome) and “Bibliomedia e Centro documentazione Dino Villani” (Turin).
most difficult challenge was the scarcity of the audiovisual material conserved within the RAI archives: in fact, a considerable amount of early programmes has not been preserved and it is not currently on display.

Two main points will be discussed in the paper. Firstly, how the paternalistic policy implemented by the management of the Public Service Broadcasting contributed to shape the first, stable image of TV “theatre-like” audience after a first stage of “trial and error”. Secondly, we will discuss where it is possible to find evidence in the primitive years of different ways of audience-addressing, based on a more active-interactive model of the public. Finally, we will reconstruct the case history of the TV show Duecento al secondo demonstrating how, in late 1955, the interactive model was symbolically put aside in favour of a mainstream, long-lasting image of the domestic/familiar/theatre-like and bourgeois television spectator.

1. Shaping the first television audience: between paternalism and re-mediation

There is a consensus among Italian scholars on some of the processes which have conditioned the development of a small-screen-specific spectatorship. The first and most important assumption, explored extensively within the field of Italian television history, is that the image of Italian television in its early years has been deeply shaped by the moralistic and paternalistic ideology of Catholic inspiration by one of the first management of RAI, led from 1954 by managing director Filiberto Guala. Guala was appointed by Amintore Fanfani, a leading politician and head of the Christian Democratic Party (Democrazia Cristiana). Notwithstanding the opposition raised from the majority of the former management of RAI, settled in Turin and expression of a liberal and merely “industrial” view on the television system, the Catholic administration could set the agenda of scheduling practices and implement a policy of broadcast focused on the concepts of education, entertainment and information.

From 1954, when Guala diffused his Code of behaviour for Italian Television, deeply influenced by high hierarchies of the Vatican, the moralistic character of the public service sharply increased, consequently causing a change in the image of the public that the new medium was supposed to address. The main point of the Guala Code, overall reflecting and confirming the common Catholic moral, was to recommend to the producers and authors of television programmes a specific concern about “audience sensitivity”, asking firmly to avoid the representation of violence and the use of offensive behaviour and language, both in genres such as teledrama and telefilms, and in shows peculiar to the new medium (such as quiz and variety shows, directly inspired by music hall and revue), which involved a direct interplay with contestants selected from the audience. Through these statements, the television institution took an authoritative position, dealing with the audience with a paternalistic attitude and taking for granted the idea of addressing the people to educate them.

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Besides, the first president of RAI in the age of television, Cristiano Ridomi, expressed clearly the pedagogic intent of the first small-screen programmes while pronouncing the inaugural speech of the 19th National Exhibition of Radio and Television (September 1953). This marked a sharp rise in the educational aim of the new medium from the radio era and theorised that the construction of a proper television audience had to be driven by a well-rounded schedule, grounded in cultural programmes. Ridomi’s speech closely evokes the theory of “social responsibility” of public broadcasting, postulated by Lord John Reith, BBC’s director-general from 1927 to 1938.

In the very first years of Italian television a particular rhetoric of spectatorship took form, grounded both in domestic consumption and collective viewing in public spaces such as bars, taverns and inns. Press reports clearly depict two different images of audience, distinct by different qualities: «the public of taverns, hostels and bars of suburban districts» and «the urban public of huge cities», which were described as opposite audiences. Consequently, the television viewing in its early years was clearly divided into two patterns of spectatorship, both site- and class-specific: according to Corriere d’informazione, a popular daily newspaper, the first was peculiar of «bars, rooted in collective consumption» and the second of «wealthy, urban people». These two models of spectatorship clearly denote that in this phase of transition of the media scenery, widely known as “age of scarcity”, television had to deal with two different aims: while pursuing the goal of providing a popular, lowbrow entertainment, programmes also had to be addressed to a more cultured and middle-class target. Therefore, it can be said that the period between 1953 and 1955 represents an experimental stage, in which different patterns of addressing an audience were performed at the same time.

The transition from a collective practice of television viewing – perceived in the public opinion as dangerous and morally bothering – to a form of domestic and familiar viewing was convincingly encouraged by popular and specialised press, through the slogans “A television in every family” and “Television, heart of our times”. This process was in fact a replication of what occurred with radio domestication in the early stage of the century, when the rhetoric of promotion was ideally addressed to wives. Buying a radio was represented as a way to keep men and husbands away from taverns and saloons, now enjoying the domestic pleasure of the family gathered around the new, impressing technology.
Some of the content found in *La televisione illustrata*, one of the first Italian popular magazines dedicated to this new medium, clearly expresses this process of ideal construction of a domestic and family audience. A good illustration of this case is a short novel about how the television crossed the threshold of a typical middle class family with two children, during the first year of regular scheduling in Italy, 1954. The brief tale is aimed at promoting the purchase of a television set as an instrument to contrast the children’s presence beneath the windows of public spaces where television had been placed. These were considered dangerous and inappropriate locations, mostly due to the social background of their attenders, who were prevalently male and belonged to the working-class. The short sketch represents a typical middle class family discussing the purchase of a TV set, yearned by the two children and their mother. The father, who embodies the family authority figure, appears hostile to the new medium, but his hostility is directed even more at public spaces of viewing. It is clear that the main parental concern is about the moral integrity of the youngest members of the family, which could well have been compromised in the event of their participation in public rituals of television viewing inside public places. The second issue raised within the family by the debate on television dealt with the aspiration of social upgrading involved by the very first ambition of owning a TV set. In this short sketch, such an ambition emerges as peculiar to the mother, who explicitly tends to characterise the owners of the new technology as rich and belonging to upper-classes.

Consequently, it is possible to argue that both the television institution (through its most representative managers, Guala and Ridomi) and para-texts about television (press reports, “exemplary novels”, claims and advertising campaigns) carried a paternalistic image of the audience and, despite being well-aware of the collective form of spectatorship diffused all over the nation, encouraged the gradual development of a family-rooted audience.

In so far as the first television audience was shaped on the model of previous media’s spectatorship, it can be said that a sort of *audience re-mediation* occurred close to the beginning of Italian television. The fact that television directly stems from some previous communication technologies and spectacular forms is an issue largely debated by scholars. According to Raymond Williams, it is possible to describe the TV medium as the result of a rearrangement of previous spectacular and technological devices: mainly radio, theatre and cinema. However, other spectacular forms influenced the medium as well: for instance, the music hall and the variety revue have to be considered the direct source of inspiration for television shows.

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15 “I don’t want you to hang around in the streets and stop to watch television in public spaces”, he replies to the pressing enquiries of the two children. The youngest child uses this position to attain his intention: “You could buy us a TV set, and we could watch it all together in the living room”. In *La televisione illustrata*, April 1954, year 1, n. 1, p. 10.

16 “Since Mrs. Amelia received the television as a gift from her husband, she’s no more feeling lonely, all the neighbours visiting her to see teledramas and women’s television”. – The imagine of wealthier, upper-sider neighbours having made her said those words with a bit of regret. “Darling, let Mrs. Amelia slide… It is clear that her husband is well-off”.

such as quizzes and minstrel shows. It might be argued that a process of re-mediation occurred not only on the side of the production of TV content, but also in a similar way on the side of the medium reception. A convincing argument to support this idea might be the advertisement put by RAI in the Corriere della era, the main Italian broadsheet, in early January 1954. As the images and the claims of the insertions significantly pointed out, the aim of the first programmes of the regular scheduling was clearly to imitate theatre (“Television presents: home theatre”), sport events (“Television is in service of sport”) and overall to “assimilate and go beyond” the miracle of the radio”. It is therefore clear that the addressee of the new medium was supposed to be the same audience entertained earlier by spectacular events such as theatre, sport, radiodramas, which became accessible, comfortable and direct for each household, due to television’s inherent quality: domesticity. Quoting Williams, we might say that previous spectacular forms had to adapt to newly devised technologies and to develop different relations with the audience.

Moreover, it is crucial to consider the role played by the newly born television critique in shaping the identity of the first television audience. Giovanni Cenzato’s reports on Corriere della sera are a case in point. Cenzato, a former theatre reviewer, shifted his interest to television in 1954. His reports clearly depict an image of a “medium without content”: in his opinion, television was conceived merely as a form of technology aimed to air a live collection of dramatic masterpieces and events with social relevance (for instance the election of the President of the Republic, or the Pope’s speeches). In one of his first reviews on the new medium, Cenzato stated that «Television should absorb previous artistic patterns and adjust them so as to accomplish the necessities of our times». Furthermore, he assumed that «Television could find its sense as a medium just in opera and dramatic theatre, neglecting all the other genres of programmes». The acknowledgment of a television re-mediation results in a definition of television viewers’ expectations, which provides interesting further implications on the topic of audience re-mediation: «It must be considered that there are two main pleasures that the audience expects from television: theatre and film».

2. Interaction: a struggle for the new medium

Together with the main assumptions in defining the TV audience pointed out above – the moralistic and paternalistic ideology towards both popular and bourgeois publics; the audience re-mediation of previous media – another approach takes into account the various ways the TV institution interacted with its emerging public. In a first experimental phase, preceding the establishment and institutionalisation of a “passive” paleo-television audience, the primitive Italian TV tried to involve its viewers at different levels. During this “trial and error process” emerged some peculiar forms of interaction that were soon abandoned, to regain visibility only in recent years.

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A first type of interaction involved people attending TV programmes directly in the studio (more often, the theatre) where they were filmed. The peculiar pattern of this model of communication stemmed directly from the conventions of “classic” theatrical spectatorship: for instance, in “filmed theatre” – the TV reprise of pièces act on real stages – shots of the real audience, shown before the opening and at the end of the play, contributed to frame the show as a traditional piece of theatre aired by television.

Similarly, in Scala reale (Royal Flush, 1954), a collection of songs and sketches unified by the host Adriana Serra, the public sat in a large stall and stressed the most entertaining moments with applauses and laughs: Miss Serra intervened only to invite the audience to calm down, pretending to wave it down. However, the spectators often remained off-screen, a rarely visualized presence strongly connected with the TV audience at home (or in bars, or even in other theatres).

The most interesting experiments of interaction with the public on-site, though, occurred in the shows directly derived from music hall and revues (the so-called “avanspettacolo”). Once again the audience sat (and laughed) in stalls, and once again the host tried to address it in representation of the wider public spread all over the nation. As an unexpected result, the national broadcasting of these on-site jokes gave them a complete new meaning, both expanding and frustrating their potential for a new involvement of the audience.

For instance, in the musical variety Un, due, tre (One, Two, Three, 1954), the presenter Corrado involved the on-site audience in a gag: he announced a prize-winning competition, inviting everyone in the theatre to check the number under their seat; when they discovered there was no number, and the host explained the joke, the camera evidenced the amused looks of some people in the theatre. A second trick (and surprised looks) followed together with the exchange of some lines with an off-screen spectator. Then Corrado terminated the joke with a sentence which was the prelude to the following exhibition: “Don’t believe to what the host says. You must never believe. But this time you have to!”

The broadcasting on TV of such a gag as the one described above, typical of stand-up comedy, necessarily took into consideration the reaction of a wider audience, who could see it as a supplementary element of the show (as the Radiocorriere recommends, «the presence of the public becomes, for the TV viewers, integral part of the show itselfs»), or on the contrary could feel excluded by the joke exactly as it was by the location where it took place. These forms of involvement were common in early Italian TV comedy shows, such as Ottovolante (Merry-go-round, 1954), and came to a peak (and to an end) with Duecento al secondo (Two Thousands a Second, 1955), a game show whose contestants were randomly selected between the spectators present in the theatre.

The possibility to reach a wider audience, overcoming the space of a single, specific theatre, led early television shows to establish a dialogue with another type of public, situated in the middle range of

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19 It happens during the last episode of the first season, aired on Tuesday, 20th October 1955.
20 Musica e buonumore, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 32, 8-14 August 1954, p. 17.
the on-site spectatorship and the dispersed audience in front of a TV set: in other words, the urban population who lived in the city where the show took place, and who could – more or less easily – reach the location and get in touch with the programme, or the television institution.

Once again in Duecento al secondo, for instance, some so-called “outside events” were included in the plot of the game show, inspired by US format Dollar a Second during an episode, presenter Mario Riva invited the viewers who lived in Milan to check if they possessed a 100-lire banknote beginning with a specified serial number, put in circulation the day before by a local bank; whoever owned a banknote that fulfilled the request, had to reach the Manzoni theatre in Milan, in order to participate to the live show.

In Rome, the local audience was similarly challenged by another show, Ottovolante, which once invited all the Roman citizens to bring their domestic pets to the theatre. As the Radiocorriere pointed out, «the sensational stir of this peculiar game with the spectators has been extraordinarily diffused, to confirm the vitality of television shows and their correspondence to the growing new audience»\(^{21}\). The “dualism” of the cities where the two main RAI production centres were, Milan and Rome, was mirrored by two twin shows – Un, due, tre and then Duecento al secondo in Milan, Ottovolante in Rome – that offered similar opportunities to the cities’ inhabitants to be involved in the programmes of the newly-born medium. Once again, a huge part of the TV audience was excluded and could participate at this primitive form of interplay only from a distance; once again, these patterns of interaction would have been dismissed almost immediately, as soon as the medium fully encompassed both its potential and its limits.

In addition to on-site and metropolitan audiences, primitive Italian television also tried to interact with the “real” TV audience, the wider public that watched the new medium all around Italy, «in big cities as well as in minor towns», «not only in bars and cafés – besides, naturally, in private homes – but also in the streets in front of shops and even in cinemas and theatres where companies put a TV set»\(^{22}\). The simpler form of involvement was the continuous appeal to a distant public (“ladies and gentlemen”), present in almost all the non-fiction shows, albeit with some light differences: in Album personale (Personal Album, 1953), a production of the experimental period where each episode was dedicated to a theatre vedette (as Wanda Osiris and Erminio Macario), there was often an off-screen voice interacting with the star, asking questions and leaving comments on the public’s behalf; while in Lascia o raddoppia (Leave it or Double it, 1955), the first great success of Italian TV, presenter Mike Bongiorno used to greet specific segments of the audience, such as groups locally supporting a contestant (“Carpi’s inhabitants”) or definite professional categories.

The paternalistic ideology of the early Italian television resulted in some of the first examples of “tool TV”: teacher/student interaction was mimed, purposing to transform television in a wider version of a classroom: this approach is evident in the so-called Ti dei ragazzi (Children’s TV’, 1953), or in Passaporto

\(^{21}\) Ottovolante numero due, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 15, 11-17 April 1954, p. 14.
\(^{22}\) Come in tribuna ai campionati di calcio, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 27, 4-10 July 1954, p. 15.
(Passport, 1954), an English course run by teacher Jole Giannini, where the lessons in front of the camera were only interrupted by the interventions of some English native-speaker children.

Besides these elementary forms of “linguistic” interaction, however, some experiments of a more complete, two-way communication between the institution and its audience were also performed. A first example may well be Una risposta per voi (An Answer for You, 1954-56), a weekly programme where Alessandro Cutolo, bibliography professor at the Milan University, answered to questions regarding general knowledge and humanistic studies: mails received from the public – «in geometric progression», as Cutolo himself pointed out – were read during the programme (similarly to the letters’ corner in newspapers and magazines), allowing the audience to take part in the transmission and, even if only incidentally, to comment on it or on the TV anchor itself.

If this first way of interacting with television recalls the means used by the national and regional press, a second form, the involvement of the audience in prize-winning competitions and games, is taken directly by radio programming. In all those cases, together with the tasks of a regular contact with a volatile audience and a prolongation in time of the ephemeral experience of vision, Radiocorriere – a weekly magazine on radio and TV programmes published by RAI – worked as a sort of house-organ of RAI, providing practical support to TV shows and their first, timid, extensions outside the small screen. The first example of competition occurred even before the beginning of regular scheduling: Attenti al fiasco (Mind the Fiasco, 1953), presented by Dino Falconi, proposed every week a riddle to the “far-off public” of the show; the viewers could send the solution to a dedicated mailbox, participating – if the solution was correct – to the “draw of stunning prizes”. The names of the winners were published in a dedicate section of Radiocorriere. These kinds of competition continued in the first years of regular transmissions: another example was the show Ottovolante, which offered the chance to win three TV sets to those who gave the right solution to a quiz, then published (with the names and the addresses of the winners) on Radiocorriere. As telephones were still absent from TV programmes, it was the regular mail – with the support of the house-organ – to provide the viewers with the possibility to participate in TV games and win prizes.

Other ways to interact with television were some acting and beauty contests, which can be placed between the TV competitions described above and “real” job advertisements. A few weeks before the beginning of regular programming, Radiocorriere launched a first search for television announcers, presenters and newsreaders. However, the most significant contest was connected to a TV serial, Il dottor Antonio (Doctor Antonio, 1954). Radio and TV subscribers were invited to listen attentively to the radio reduction of

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25 For an example, Radiocorriere, XXX n. 41, 3-10 October 1953, p. 14.
26 For an example, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 51, 19-25 December 1954, p. 33.
27 La Televisione ha bisogno di nuovi volti e nuove voci, Radiocorriere, XXX n. 49, 6-12 December 1953, p. 4.
the novel, to choose their favourite character and to send in their photos and curricula to the broadcaster. Some viewers were selected on the basis of the material sent to RAI and, after a casting, signed a three-month contract as actors for the television version of the drama. Such effort to select actors and actresses through a nationwide casting was an attempt to visualize, for the first time, the audience of the new medium, in a contest significantly called “New Faces for Television”: some weeks after the casting launch, Radiocorriere started to publish the photographs sent to RAI, with a brief indication of name, age and location. «The public that by definition had not a face, now begins to have one», stated the Radiocorriere, while Miss Lucy, a protagonist of the novel, became a «mirror in which girls try to watch themselves». The broadcaster gave voice to a diffused “anxiety” to engage with the new medium, not only by participating as a spectator or as a contestant, but also as an actor, a presenter, a protagonist. At the same time, the great response of the public allowed the broadcaster to map – at least partially – and visually represent the disperse and diversified audience of the new medium.

Finally, another interesting way the broadcaster connected to its wide audience was children’s programming: the involvement of the probably more active part of the TV public went far beyond the English lessons of Passaporto, and included some specifically intended competitions and other forms of constructive interaction with the new medium. One useful example is Ragazzi in gamba (Kids on the Ball, 1954), a programme which frequently invited the viewers aged from 5 to 12 years to send in their drawings and illustrations: for instance, in the competition “La cartolina di Natale” (“The Christmas’ Card”) the 30 best images were presented during the programme, and their authors rewarded with a children’s book. As far as constructive interaction is concerned, the Tv dei ragazzi involved its young public in several activities: for instance, it explained how to make a small-scale model of a little plane, with the Radiocorriere publishing the instructions and a 1:2 scale drawing of the pieces. The experiments to engage the children with – and fidelize them to – the new medium were here declined in a practical (and to some extent pedagogical) form.

3. The press as a mediated space of interaction between television and its audience

A further argument to support the theory of a strong pursue of interactivity laying under the pattern of early TV spectatorship is provided by the analysis of the modalities in which the Italian press took into account television in the period between 1953 and 1955. A case in point may well be represented by the column Postaradio, a regular section of the Radiocorriere dedicated to the readers’ letters. Due to the hybrid nature of the Radiocorriere, which was at the same time a popular magazine and a house-organ, this column

28 Nuovi volti per la tv, Radiocorriere, XXX n. 51, 20-26 December 1953, p. 17; Chi sarà di voi il dottor Antonio?, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 1, 3-9 January 1954, p. 15.
29 Nuovi volti per la tv, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 9, 28 February-6 March 1954, p. 14.
30 Nuovi volti per la tv, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 11, 14-20 March 1954, p. 15.
31 La cartolina di Natale, Radiocorriere, XXXI n. 46, 14-20 November 1954, p. 15.
32 Ragazzi, la tv vi insegna a costruire un modello volante, Radiocorriere, XXXII n. 29, 17-23 July 1955, p. 16-17.
can be considered as another example of the demand of participation emerged from the television audience and taken into consideration by RAI. From 1953, newly owners of TV sets – or people interested in purchasing one – mailed the Radiocorriere to ask for information on the new technological product. As they relied on the “experts” from the magazine to install correctly the new medium into their living room and to familiarise with it (domesticate it), it can be said that the column played the crucial role of media literacy. Likewise, the column “Parliamo tra noi” (“Let’s talk confidentially”), held weekly on La televisione illustrata starting from January 1954, often fulfilled the same purpose. Enquiries were about technical matters, for example on the adequate lighting the room should receive when the TV was on, or about explanations of the “miracle” of live broadcasting of sound and images. A handful of readers wrote to be reassured about the further costs implied by the possession of a TV set after the first payment. These few readers’ enquiries put forward new arguments backing the theory of an audience re-mediation that occurred in this experimental phase: in fact the readers asked the magazines to account for the minutes of break scheduled in the live broadcasting of dramatic theatre, between the divisions of the Acts.

Besides, these pages were considered by the first television viewers as a space where they could put forward their ambitions and give public relevance to their aspirations of taking part in TV programmes and being involved in the process of production of television content. A considerable amount of the published letters came from young female readers, who wrote to promote themselves enthusiastically as announcers, hyping their skills (as a perfect diction) and qualities (mainly beauty and nice appearance).

It is interesting to consider that broadsheets newspaper also tended to include in their pages the audience’s point of view in the public discourse on television developed. Giovanni Cenzato’s reviews frequently dealt with letters sent by common viewers, very often complaining about TV shows considered excessively lowbrow or morally inappropriate.

In 1956 Italy had to face the astonishing case of Professor Lando Degoli, a contestant eliminated from Lascia o raddoppia due to an ambiguous question about classical music: the episode, hyped and over-reported by the press, resulted in the largest public debate on television until then. The Corriere d’informazione reserved a whole page to the letters from the audience, all written in response to the question raised by the newspaper (“Have your say on Degoli’s case”): a sort of primitive forum, completely dedicated to the topic, took form on the tabloid.

In other words, it is possible to claim that – in those first, experimental years – the press represented a tribune aimed at mediating between television institution and its audience. Letters to magazines and newspapers from the audience represented an instrument to interact with TV, and at the same time a way for the novelty spectators to get acquainted with the new medium and all the different practices it had imposed upon the society.

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33 Il pubblico interviene nel caso Degoli in attesa del verdetto della commissione, Corriere d’informazione, 21/22 December 1955.
4. Duecento al secondo and the overcoming of the experimental phase

As we have suggested in the first part of this paper, the institutionalisation of television audience took form through a “trial and error process” which eventually led to the overcoming of an experimental phase and to the dismissal of the most evident and popular forms of interplay with the public.

A good example of this overcoming may be the case of quiz show Duecento al secondo. The show, created and written by Garinei and Giovannini, former theatre and radio authors and already well-known to the public for their peculiar sense of humour, almost near the knuckle, was presented to the press as a show «performed right in front of the public, to which the public itself must participate»34. Duecento al secondo, hosted by comedian Mario Riva, ran on Italian television from 1955 and immediately turned into a huge popular success, documented by press shots of people queuing to receive the invitation ticket to the show35. The scheme of Duecento al secondo was simple: one pair of contestants was selected to perform a task and they earned 200 lire for every second they could remain on stage. If they made a mistake, they had to pay a penalty, usually embarrassing and involving performances of slapstick comedy (for instance, the contestant had to slide down towards a small swimming pool placed in the middle of the stage).

If Duecento al secondo collected the appreciation of a vast popular public, on the other hand the show was sharply criticised by the majority of the highbrow critics and reviewers, who pointed out the lack of good taste in the show, which explicitly teased the contestants, playfully provoking and making fun of them. The players were negatively judged too because, in order to gain money, they resorted to perform “silly childish games”36, considered inappropriate for a prime-time TV show.

Due to the vast public discussion raised and to the negative reaction of the press, the show was cancelled on the schedule and replaced in late 1955 with Lascia o raddoppia, a quiz show modelled on the American The $64,000 Question, whose contestants were required to display their general knowledge37. The television institution thus confirmed its paternalistic attitude, preferring to please a middle-class and bourgeoisie audience through the dismissal of many stylistic features directly imported from previous popular entertainment shows (such as funfairs and amusement parks). This process clearly expresses the attempt of the apparatus to “normalise” its programmes and to implement a form of passive spectatorship which became typical of the paleo-television age from the beginning of 1956.

5. Conclusions

The replacement of Duecento al secondo with Lascia o raddoppia – with the reduction of the quiz show to a handful of “morally secure” patterns and mechanisms – is an important signal of the substantial changes

34 I quiz show anche in Italia. 100 al secondo, la più originale rubrica di varietà della tv, La televisione illustrata, June 1955, year 2, n. 6, pp. 38-39.
35 Press shot collected in La televisione illustrata, September 1955, year 2, n. 9, p. 31.
37 Difetti e coraggio dei pionieri della televisione, Corriere d’informazione, 23 November 1955.
into the interaction of the TV institution with its public that started to occur since the last months of 1955. This process clearly expresses the attempt of the apparatus to “normalise” its schedule and to implement a form of passive spectatorship which became typical of the paleo-television age.

Many other signs testify the end of a period of experimentation in which “trial and error” policies of interaction were implemented, and the subsequent top-down stabilization in a clearly defined image of audience mainly composed by families in their private homes. A first confirmation can be read in the long-lasting conflict between liberal executives with an “industrial” view and the catholic management for the control of the broadcaster, a conflict which ended in 1955 with the strengthening of the latter group. The catholic managers soon brought the RAI to level all its programmes to the strict moral norms of the “Guala code”. Besides, new forms of scientific measurement of the TV viewers changed, at least partially, the broadcaster’s vision of its “implied audience”: in October 1955, the results of a first quantitative survey on television spectators were published, calculated by research institute Doxa and referring to the months of February and March. The questions focused on the way people interacted with the new medium, more than with its programmes. Within the research queries, there were: the duration and frequency of TV viewing on a daily basis, both in house and outdoor; the new habits and their impact on the lifestyle and consumption of cultural goods; the sources used by viewers to find information about TV scheduling.

The reduction of challenging forms of viewers involvement into TV programmes coincided with the increase of pedagogic effort and more precise quantification of the audience and its habits: the role of the press and its attitude towards the new medium changed too. In the last months of 1955, the television column of the main Italian newspaper moved from the evening tabloid-style edition (Corriere d’informazione) to the morning broadsheet journal (Corriere della sera): an upgrade that effectively symbolizes the growing role of the television in media system, and the recognition of its audience as an increasingly important group that had to be taken into account even by social and cultural élites. Furthermore, the Radiocorriere itself was revolutionized: from the end of October 1955, it reduced the space exclusively dedicated to radio and TV programming and changed into a weekly mainstream magazine. This «radio and TV journal, will not mirror, although with high fidelity, only a part of the vast and complex activity of Italian radio-television, but will represent it as a whole; it will be more an echo of a general informative attitude than a voice recalling the flat chronicle of its single programmes»

Since the last months of 1955, the institutionalization of the medium therefore corresponded to a similar institutionalization of its audience. The growing mass of TV viewers obtained a new recognition as a central force in the development of the medium, and progressively became a research object, widely in-

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39 Ai nostri lettori, Radiocorriere, XXXII n. 43, 23-29 October 1955, p. 3.
40 Le abitudini di ascolto, Radiocorriere, XXXII n. 43, 23-29 October 1955, p. 3; 16-17.
vestigated with both qualitative and quantitative methods. As the TV audience started to be institutionally defined, its connection with the spectatorships of the previous media gradually weakened: TV became dominant – and stand-alone – in the media system. The various “experiments” inside and outside the small screen aimed at enhancing the involvement of the potential public with the new medium, that had been peculiar to TV experimental years, almost disappeared.

In conclusion, the “trial and error” process of the novelty years, which conducted to a sort of “predation age”41 where previous media habits and new experiments made possible by the new technology collided into the progressive discovery and definition of various types of public, vanished into the paleo-television paradigm, where those new forms of interplay were substantially repressed by a normalizing idea of a familiar TV audience which needed to be morally and culturally guided.

This essay tries to demonstrate the relevance of the very first phase of Italian television, using the relationship between the TV institution and its audience as a fil rouge to discover innovative attempts and crossroads, later suppressed by the prevalence of a unique interpretation of the audience. It is only a first step towards further research projects, which we hope would fulfill the difficult task to map extensively the mechanisms of TV institutionalization in Italy and, finally, to contribute to a broader cultural history of the medium.

The presence of monstrosity and deformity remains a constant theme in the history of cinema\(^1\), from its origins up to contemporary times. Different genres, from horror to sci-fi, from fantasy to drama, have been involved with the most extreme declination of “otherness” and, even if the means of representation can vary, depending on time and artistic currents, the monster generally becomes a mirror of society’s anxieties: through the encounter with its Other and dark side, the world reflects its mistakes, goes through a catharsis, more or less violent, and seeks for a firm point to control its unsteadiness. The purpose of this paper is to trace a partial history of the evolution of the figure of the monster through different cinematographic eras, with particular attention to those situations in which the relationship between normalcy and otherness is subverted. Since the width of the topic is more than considerable, the choice made here is to focus on lesser known operas, genres and authors, omitting those examples which have been already broadly investigated by film studies.

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From the Twenties to the Fifties: literary monsters and post-war obsessions

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, it is mostly through literary adaptations that the audience is forced to have a confrontation with monstrosity: Mr. Hyde by Stevenson, brought on the screen for the first time in 1920 by John Robertson, Victor Hugo's Hunchback of Notre-Dame, portrayed by Lon Chaney for Wallace Worsley in 1923, Gwynplaine, another creature of Hugo, in The Man Who Laughs (Paul Leni, USA, 1928), Frankenstein's monster, created by Mary Shelley and transformed into an icon by the interpretation of Boris Karloff, in James Whale's 1931 version (a silent adaptation was first made in 1910), the Phantom of the Opera, written by Gaston Leroux and adapted in 1929 by Rupert Julian, with Chaney as a protagonist, Dracula, from the homonymous novel by Bram Stoker, and so on.

Generally, the monsters from these operas are victims of the cruelty of nature, responsible for their deformity or diverseness, and of the exclusion from a society that marginalizes them because of their physical characteristics. In some cases, however, they are the result of human *hybris*, as it is for Frankenstein or Mr. Hyde: under these circumstances, the relationship between the creator and his creature establishes a reversion of roles. The scientist, becoming the incarnation of a non-human voracity for absolute knowledge, embodies the real element of monstrosity, while his creation often represents the innocent scapegoat of his foolish and sacrilegious ambition. At other times, it is simply the sadistic instinct of the human being which leads to commit perverted deeds, as it has to be experienced by Gwynplaine, whose cheeks were slashed when he was a child so that he is forced to show an eternal grin: in any case, the monster, even when he chooses a negative and dangerous approach, as the vampire Dracula, is generally not responsible for his nature. It is the community that is guilty of obtuseness when it labels any element of otherness with the mark of “human oddity”. This process makes immediately clear that the destiny of every manifestation of non-conformity is to be segregated or exploited, when not even lynched, erased, neutralized and/or neglected.

Horror films of the Twenties-Thirties resound with the anxieties of the beginning of the century, and of the second half of the previous century, proposing the great themes of the conflict between mankind and nature, of the outrageous attitude of science, which aspires to become a substitute for God, of the contrast between inner and outer shape, so that a deformed creature can be kind-hearted, as it is for Quasimodo or Gwynplaine, and, on the contrary, a fascinating and handsome man, like Dracula, can become dangerous. Another point of view is furnished by German Expressionism, with *Das Cabinet des*
Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920), a series of movies by Paul Wegener about the mythical character of the Golem, the only surviving of which seems to be Der Golem. Wie er in die Welt kam (1920), and with the revitalization of the figure of the vampire operated by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau with Nosferatu - eine Symphonie des Grauens (1922).

But the most attentive and sensible celebrator of otherness is undoubtedly Tod Browning³, who has investigated the relationship between non-conformity and normalcy from multiple and innovative perspectives, putting it at the centre of an articulated ethical and artistic meditation. His work represents a crucial turning point for any reflexion about the theme of monstrosity related to society: the attraction to the Other is, in fact, among Browning's recurrent obsessions, together with the roots of crime and the epic themes of vengeance and sacrifice. His inquiry, therefore, dives into the two main aspects of deformity, the physical and the moral one. Segregated for different reasons from society, Browning's characters decide to take revenge or to forgive, to redeem themselves or to stick to criminality, to accept their nature or to refuse it by undergoing a mutation, which is often both physical and ethical. The focus of Browning's research, as mentioned, is not only the representation of diverseness, but also the approach that “integrated” people decide to adopt in their relationship with the Other. Both categories, the normal and the abnormal, seem to follow a precise path in his cinema: from The Show (USA, 1927) where, despite the fact that the freaks work only as background figures, the “normal” people are forced to interact with them, to The Unholy Three (USA, 1925), where the freaks, represented by a ventriloquist, a dwarf and a strong man, react by taking revenge on a society which stigmatized them in the role of “human oddities”.

A similar process is developed in The Unknown (USA, 1927), where the theme of repentance is amplified to the limits of human patience and it is merged with the topic of sacrifice, which becomes mutilation and, later on, death: an extreme cathartic journey which, the director seem to suggest, only a “special” being can accomplish⁴. The same journey takes place as well in West of Zanzibar (USA, 1928), where the illusionist Phroso, deprived of the use of his legs after an accident caused by his rival, is initially motivated only by a blind thirst for revenge, but he later chooses to meet a violent death to rescue his daughter.

Vengeance and sacrifice work therefore as the centre of Browning’s opera, together with the illusionary overlapping of reality and fiction. In some cases, in fact, “normal” people pretend to be deformed: in The Blackbird (USA, 1926), the criminal Dan Tate goes under the mask of The Bishop, a crippled priest, to hide his hideous deeds, in London after Midnight (USA, 1927), the police invent the existence of a society made of vampires to unmask a murderer. The most interesting of these examples remains, however, The Unknown, where Alonzo initially Pretends to be armless in order to hide from the police that are seeking him, only to have his arms mutilated and become a real freak himself. At other

times, are the freaks to be disguised as normal people: in The Unholy Three the ventriloquist and the dwarf pretend to be respectively an old lady and a baby, in order to easily enter people's houses and rob them.

But, of course, the masterpiece of his filmography and the manifesto of his conception of monstrosity remains Freaks (USA, 1932). A veritable gallery of human oddities, most of the actors were actual Freak Show performers. Armless and legless performers, dwarves, a bearded lady, siamese twins, pinheads, half-men, half-women: every single character of a typical American Freak Show stars in the movie. But besides this fact, what is mostly interesting about Freaks is the role reversal played out between the monsters and the normal people. The “beautiful” people are in fact the real villains: the gorgeous Cleopatra and his vigorous boyfriend, who don't hesitate to exploit and humiliate their less fortunate colleagues. The freaks, on their side, form an authentic community, based on true and admirable values, where friendship and love have a deep meaning, a form of purity, which the “normal” ones could most likely never experience. What Browning pictures here is a real inverted world, where the monsters, at first glance, are to be pitied, yet are in fact blessed with the most authentic form of human richness, the opportunity to be surrounded by real, disinterested love, while those who are gifted by Fate with an outstanding physical shape are internally corrupted by ambition and greed, and therefore doomed to eternal loneliness.

From the second half of the Thirties and into the Forties, the attention is turned towards monstrosity as a scientific theme: one finds a proliferation of mad scientists who build monsters in their gloomy laboratories. Among the many titles are to be mentioned Island of Lost Souls (Erle C. Kenton, USA, 1933), inspired by the novel of H.G. Wells The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Mystery of the Wax Museum (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1933), The Monster Maker (S. Newfield, USA, 1944), and Browning himself, with The Devil Doll (USA, 1936). The overlap of categories becomes even subtler: the real monster is the scientist who doesn't hesitate to experiment with his foolish inventions on people — creating deformed beings — but more often it is the society itself that drives him to commit perverted experiments, making him a victim, more than a torturer. This relationship is so aptly referenced by the already mentioned Hugo’s L’homme qui rit: homo homini lupus. The disquieting sensations bound to the development of new technologies are undoubtedly a result of the transitional period between the two World Wars, when the dangerous element doesn’t include post-atomic scenery yet, but embodies the disturbing shape of war mutilations. There still are other examples of martyred monsters, like the Wolf Man, for the first time on the big screen with the 1941 movie by George Waggner. In this instance, the beast is played by Lon Chaney Jr.: infected by a werewolf, the tragedy of Larry Talbot lies in the fact that he is totally aware of his transformation in a bloodthirsty savage, but cannot do anything to prevent himself from slaughtering people. The resolution

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8 Ivi, p. 89. “Freakishness, deformity, and disability had taken root as a staple of American entertainment in the years following World War I: it is difficult to ignore the parallels between the cinema’s ongoing obsession with disability and the real social problem of a quarter million disabled American soldiers who returned to find limited employment opportunities in an otherwise thriving economy”.

Camilla Maccaferri
Silver Screen Carnival
The Reaction of Society to Different Manifestations of Otherness
of the mythological conflict beast/man will come from his father, who will kill the wolf without knowing his identity, making this a story where otherness is seen as a burden more distressing than ever to carry. It is the archetype of the noir cycle that, from the beginning of the Forties, would mark the American panorama for the entire decade. This film trend would bring to light the darkest sides of the human soul and we will see numerous operas based on the mutation and the emersion of an obscure, wild side of the human psyche, as it happens in Cat People (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1952).

Between the Forties and the Fifties, the post-war trauma and the fear of nuclear weapons were large influences on the monster movie genre: dreading the foreign enemy is embodied in the alien. This foreign assailant was often a symbol of the political enemy at the time, the Soviet Union. In a paranoid age characterized by espionage the monster consequently becomes most dangerous when he pretends to be normal, hiding behind the reassuring features of a neighbor: the best example of this sub-genre is Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, USA, 1956).

The Fifties mark the debut of a curious author, who deserved the title of worst director of the whole history: Edward Wood Junior. Ed Wood, with his nonsense films full of ridiculously homemade special effects, has demonstrated to be capable of adopting a surprisingly innovative point of view in dealing with the topic of diversity. The cast itself recurringly employed by the director was made of freaks: the television vampire Maila Nurmi, gothic announcer of a series of horror movies, the sensitive Criswell, the gigantic wrestler Tor Johnson, several transvestites in whose club Wood himself was included, and the old Bela Lugosi, addicted to morphine and fallen into disgrace at the time. With Glen or Glenda? (also known as I Changed My Sex, I Lived Two Lives or He or She?) produced in 1953, the most autobiographical of his movies, Wood offers a unique reflection on otherness. It is a fictional documentary that presents through the illustration of a psychiatrist, two different cases of sexual ambiguity, inspired by the true story of George – Christina Jorgensen, one of the first transsexuals in the Fifties. With this movie, Wood shows his importance as a pioneer, digging into a topic so outrageous for its time. Wood seeks for scientific, albeit clumsy, explanations to illustrate the psychological motivations that would drive a man to wear women’s clothing. He employs a precise distinction between transsexualism and transvestitism, without any form of condemnation, but rather merely offering an invitation to understand. And even if Alan, the transsexual, is defined as “created almost as a Frankenstein monster”, the final message is positive and surprisingly modern for the time: why condemning a man who innocently finds his happiness in angora sweaters?

The Sixties and the Seventies: the fear of the invisible otherness

6 “The term transvestite is a name given by medical science to those persons who wear the clothing of the opposite sex (…). Most transvestites do not want to change their lives, their bodies. Many of them want to change the clothing they wear”. Quote from the movie.

7 Quote from the movie.
Towards the end of the Fifties and with coming on of the Sixties, monstrosity, as already mentioned, becomes ambiguous and difficult to recognize: the element of non-conformity often has the shape of normality, impossible to be identified at first sight as a threat; what’s at stake now is the reliability of the neighbor, the safety of everyday life, in other words, the society itself. These anxieties are brought by the Cold war, with its heavy burden of fears: espionage, the hidden enemy, the probable explosion of a third and fatal world conflict. *Village of the Damned* (Wolf Rilla, UK, 1960), is one of the most significant representations of these concerns: the children from a British village, gifted with paranormal powers and capable of actions of real cruelty towards the adults, turned out to be controlled by an alien intelligence. On the same topic, the monstrosity covered by normality, the innovative *Rosemary’s Baby* (Roman Polanski, USA, 1968) becomes the archetype of the “demoniac” genre: a young middle-class woman is deceived by a couple of unsuspected elderly neighbors, members of a satanic sect that wants to use her as a vehicle for the birth of the Antichrist.

Containing some elements of social criticism, but with a different perspective on the monster, portrayed more as a victim of paranoia in the media and of the lack of control over scientific progress, *It’s Alive!* (Larry Cohen, USA, 1974) is a story of a young mother who, as a consequence of the use of an experimental medicine while pregnant, gives birth to a monster with fangs, claws and an unstoppable homicidal instinct. As a result, the father loses his job and becomes the target of an obsessive media attention, feeling hunted, just like his hideous creature. The encounter of the man and his creature will be unexpectedly touching, even if it will work as a prelude to an unavoidable tragic ending. This baby monster belongs to the category of the victims of the human *hybris*, but the picture is even more complicated, as the role played by the media is of absolute relevance. The scariest scenes of the film are undoubtedly the hysterical and ruthless herds of journalists, incapable of the smallest gesture of humanity, rather than the scenes of the feral infant, who actually shows true feelings towards his relatives: when he is breast-fed by his mother and doesn’t hurt her, when he doesn’t attack his little brother, who gently speaks to him, and when he seems to beg his father to be rescued. Director Larry Cohen based the film on this ambiguity: on one hand, the monster is a threat and must be eliminated, but on the other he is just a little baby looking for protection. There is also the intention to drag the audience into voyeurism, playing on the morbid eagerness to finally see the monster, which is never clearly shown until the end of the movie: it is the same mechanism on which the entire Freak Show is based, where the attractions are fully shown only after the spectator has purchased a ticket.

Besides these inquires on the sociological presence of the horror in everyday life, some directors show a certain interest, even if occasionally, in real freaks, like those portrayed by Tod Browning; one of the most artistically relevant works of the Sixties in this sense is the Italian *La donna scimmia* (Marco Ferreri, Italy, 1963). Ugo Tognazzi portrays Antonio, a dull parasite who finds a hairy girl in a cloister and

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decides to exploit her as a freak: as the success of the attraction grows, Antonio marries the girl to assure his control over her and when she gets pregnant, he is eager to see if his son will be furry, to enlarge his number, but the woman dies while she is giving birth to a dead baby. Seemingly desperate for a time, the man eventually shows his utter inhumanity, not hesitating to exhibit for money the embalmed bodies of his family. The vision of the freak in Ferreri is completely opposite to the one presented by Browning. The exhibition, here, is not a way to overcome diversity, but a real torture for the victim. And if in Freaks the whole carnival celebrates the birth of the bearded woman's baby, the ape woman is terrified at the idea of having a hairy child. Every touch of that magic and positive atmosphere that Tod Browning built around his freaks is here turned into the darkest tragedy, because the ape woman never ceases to be alone. She will never have a community of “very special people” with strong moral values to support her, and she is totally aware of the fact that her only friend in the world is there for exploiting her diversity. She does not find any relief even in death, once again deprived of any form of dignity. It is evidently another case of role-reversal, where the monstrosity of the freak is only superficial and the real monster, the non-human, the threat, hides under a mask of apparent respectability.

Another authorial look on diversity is given by Werner Herzog, always attentive to the surprising mechanisms which rule human life, with two movies: Auch Zwergen haben kleine Gefährten (Germany, 1970) and Jeder für sich und Gott gegen Alle (Germany, 1974). The first is a disturbing, almost avant-garde opera, which documents a riot in an anonymous institution for dwarfs: the director, the only “big” human, is forced to lock himself in his office, taking with him a rebel dwarf as a hostage, while the chaos degenerates outside his door. To pay the expenses of the destructive anarchy of the dwarfs are mainly the animals of the colony, tortured and killed with no purpose, but violence, both physical and psychological, is also inflicted to human beings, and in particular to a blind dwarf and to the director himself. It is the demonstration of the fact that forms of discrimination can be applied even among those who are considered different from the “regular” society. The film ends as it opened, with the hysterical laughter of Hombre, the head of the riot, incredibly deaf to every attempt of communication and while he is locked in his madness. It is the metaphorical representation of the relativity of normalcy, where the standard established by the majority makes abnormal everything that differs from it. In the vision of Herzog, however, the real monstrosity doesn’t even lie in the dwarfs themselves, but in the setting of the story, deformed, disquieting and a natural vehicle for exasperated tensions, as it sometimes happens in contemporary society with postmodern urban environments.

Based on a true story is the case of Kaspar Hauser, found in 1824 in a square of Nuremberg, unable to speak nor explain where he came from. Exhibited in a small Freak Show, he is adopted by a doctor who becomes his tutor. Unfortunately, Kaspar shows uncommon sensibility and philosophical spirit, discussing the dogmas of the Church and other truths taken for granted by the society of his time, until a mysterious aggressor wounds him to death. It is then discovered that the killer is the same person
who had released Kaspar from a prison where he had spent his entire childhood and adolescence. According to the legend, Kaspar was the illegitimate son of a noble man, locked since childhood to be hidden from the world: the homicide of Kaspar represents the attempt to repress realities that are difficult and painful to accept. It is much easier to take him back from the oblivion he came from, silencing that collective conscience he was trying to awake. It’s interesting to notice how the director, despite the fact that historically Kaspar was a teenager, about sixteen years old, chose for the role of the protagonist Bruno S., a non-professional in his forties, with a complicated history of mental illness: Bruno is indeed a freak, as real as the dwarfs in *Auch Zwergen haben kleine Ängste*. Herzog goes on with his enquiry on deformity in his 1978 remake of Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, restoring the hideousness of Max Schreck with his favorite actor Klaus Kinski. He completely abandons the elegance attributed to the vampire by the interpretations of Lugosi and Lee. But despite his monstrosity, Nosferatu carries a mysterious appeal, which allows him to attract his victims: it is this ambivalent attraction-repulsion of the evil and the deathly that makes the vampire a freak, triumphant over normality.

The same inexplicable mixture of fear, disgust and compassion lies in the eyes of the Freak Show spectator, as well as of the girl staring at the vampire: and yet, in both cases it’s impossible to turn away, impossible not to watch and, therefore, not to surrender to the fascination of the Other. A direct homage to Freaks by Browning is *She Freak*, a rare movie by Byron Mabe (USA, 1967), in which the protagonist, the waitress Jade, marries the owner of a travelling carnival. Jade is quick to start an affair with an employee of the show and, although she loves the lifestyle of the carnival, she cannot stand the presence of the freaks that, as a consequence, reveal the affair to her husband: the man dies while facing his rival, bequeathing the carnival to his wife. The freaks rise against her and, as in Browning’s movie, assault her, turning her into a monstrous, but profitable, human oddity.

From the Sixties to the Eighties, monstrous creatures of various kinds are a constant presence on the big screen: they are often created from homemade special effects, but nevertheless capable of generating deep meditations over their role.

One of the classical American B-movies of the time is surely *Spider Baby or the Maddest Story Ever Told* (Jack Hill, USA, 1968), with Lon Chaney Jr., the story of the horrible Merrye family, affected by a “regressive syndrome” which causes mental retardation and a certain tendency to cannibalism. The clan is composed by two sadist sisters, a sort of pinhead brother and two mysterious uncles who live in the basement and eat human flesh. Bruno (Chaney Jr.) is the guardian of the house and the only “normal” person who can live safely with the Merryes, who love him very much. When two relatives of the family visit them, accompanied by a lawyer and his secretary, to obtain the custody of the daughters, and to lay their hands on the wealthy estate, the situation turns into a pandemonium. Omitting any considerations about the poverty of means employed and some inexplicable gaps in the development of the plot, the interest of the movie lies in the portrayal of the pure relationship which bounds Bruno to his monsters.
Even if the Merrye are as far as possible from the touching poetry of Browning’s freaks, it is interesting to see how their monstrosity is turned into real warmth from Bruno’s eyes: like a new Madame Tettrallini, this stepfather takes care of his “kids” despite of the sense of horror provoked in “normal” society by their inhuman attitudes. In the subverted logic of the Merrye family, the weird people are those coming from outside the house, with their elegant clothes, their repulsion for insects, creatures which they consider lovely, and somewhat tasty: a sort of reversal as seen in The Addams Family⁹, but with a bitter and tragic ending.

Increasingly a topic chosen by directors, cannibalism encounters a certain popularity towards the end of the Seventies: the most famous examples are certainly The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, USA, 1974) and The Hills Have Eyes (Wes Craven, USA, 1977), where the represented tensions are still connected to the war question but this time linked to the anxieties of the Vietnamese conflict. In the first film, a group of young people travelling through Texas gets lost in the Southern countryside and become the victims of a psychotic clan of cannibals who are ruled by the gigantic and mentally ill Leatherface who wears a mask made of human skin and wields a chainsaw. The movie shows many innovations: the very restricted budget employed results in the use of primitive but nevertheless very effective techniques, and the disturbing gallery of evil cannibals is meant to become a classic of the villains hall of fame. The Texan family is basically a real catalogue of the specimen of monsters analysed insofar: the father is a “bodysnatcher”, apparently a friendly and nice employee at the gas station but, in fact, a cruel murderer, the son is a schizophrenic with self-destructive compulsions, and the grandfather is an indeterminate half-mummified entity, with the ambiguous role of victim and meanwhile generator of the homicidal fury of the clan. The most impressive of them all is, however, the immense Leatherface, assumedly mentally challenged, since he never pronounce a single word, but yells and grunts as a beast. He is animated by a primitive and insatiable thirst for blood to boot. Another shocking element of monstrosity are the handcrafted ethnic decorations which embellish the family’s house: recalling the style of the Native Americans, these objects are made with the remains of slaughtered victims. Once again, the film shows an inverted world, creating a sort of parallel dimension ruled by chaos, where eating tourists is totally normal because they don't belong to the family and therefore they are subordinate human beings. Considering that the victims of the clan are a group of hippies with the typical Volkswagen van, the historical context is rather explicit: the age of Aquarius is over, the utopia is gone and it is turning into a dystopia, there are new forms of evil hiding in the dark of our age, ready to strike when we don’t expect it.

The message contained in The Hills Have Eyes is similar, but the topic of the deconstruction of the values is even more explicitly connected with the concept of family since the struggle takes place between two symmetrical clans: the cannibals and the victims. The Carter family is blocked in the desert with their

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⁹ The Addams Family is an American television series based on the characters created by Charles Addams for The New Yorker. It was originally aired by ABC for two seasons, from 1964 to 1966.
camper because of an engine failure, when a wild tribe of somewhat deformed cannibals assaults them. They are forced to defend themselves in a brutal way, sometimes even revolting from a moral point of view, as when they use the dead body of the mother as a decoy for the cannibals. The circumstances bring the Carters to reveal, in the end, that their nature is almost as evil and perverted as that of their enemies. The “normal” family is comparable with the cannibal clan in that they are both paternalistic in nature; a comparison that subverts the consistency of values in paternalistic societies. The thesis here is that the very essence of civilization, and everything concerning it, therefore religion, moral, institutions, are nothing but a mask behind which the substantial bestiality of the man is hiding. The only space left for humanity at the end of the movie comes from a girl of the clan who, sick of the barbarity of his family, helps the Carters by rescuing their kidnapped baby. The “normal” family, instead, comes out of the story morally disintegrated, with the son-in-law raging against one of the cannibals with bestial fury in the last sequences, whereas the cannibals enjoy an albeit limited sense of redemption.

The Seventies also see the debut of directors particularly interested in the topic of diversity, such as David Cronenberg and David Lynch, whose work has been widely analysed under this perspective. Although an analysis of their reflections over these themes would require a separate discussion, it is necessary to mention The Fly (USA, 1986) from the Canadian director, which insists on the topic of the human hybrid, by rendering the brilliant scientist Seth Brundle a disgusting, pitiable, victim of his experiments. Cronenberg will develop the topic of monstrosity especially in the analysis of the deconstruction of the flesh and of the incarnation of the essence of evilness, as it happens, respectively, in Videodrome (Canada, 1983) and The Brood (Canada, 1979).

David Lynch's research on monstrosity would deserve an even wider inquiry, being one of the obsessions the director has worked on throughout his entire career. The most evident example is of course The Elephant Man (UK/USA, 1980) based on the true story of Joseph Henry Merrick10 (John in the movie), where the freak becomes a source of entertainment for an unbearably superficial bourgeois society, and the attempt made by John to be integrated into it fails since, despite his noble spirit and his intelligence, his physical appearance forces him into the role of human oddity, even outside the cage of the Freak Show11. Another declination of monstrosity in Lynch’s œuvre is represented by the distasteful baby creature from Eraserhead (USA, 1979), an innocent and candid target of the hysterical reaction of a dysfunctional family to his deformity. Both Merrick and the deformed baby make the steadiness of the society and of its generally positively rated institutions (the family, the charity) oscillate: the role reversal between natural born monster and inhuman people is represented in both movies. But while Merrick is aware of his otherness and dramatically cut out of that society he hungrily attempts to be accepted by, the

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11 To be inspired by the story of Joseph Merrick was also the theatrical piece The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomerance, staged for the first time at the Booth Theater of Broadway in 1970. The play was also adapted for television by ABC in 1982.
creature from Eraserhead is totally unconscious of everything. The representation of the relationship between normalcy and otherness is therefore offered only by the point of view of the parents, who show all the possible reactions analysed until here: refusal, denial, pity, fear, aggressiveness.

From the Eighties to yesterday. Good and bad freaks.

The freak, both seen as a carnival performer or, more generally, as a deformed being, continues to be a constant presence in contemporary cinema at various levels: not only as a monster, scapegoat of society’s tensions in horror and sci-fi, but also as an element of otherness, seeking integration, as a parallel reality, as a metaphor of a world pushed towards globalization, where overcoming cultural barriers becomes an exigency of survival. Tim Burton is undoubtedly the most interesting director from this point of view: from his first works in the Eighties until contemporary days, he constantly insisted on the topic of the problematic integration of the Other, settling his dark, disquieting, magic and sentimental fairy tales in various contexts. But next to Burton, there are several other authors who build their stories around the theme of “magic” monstrosity.

Clive Barker, successful writer and director, creates in his books and his films alternative dimensions populated by fantastic beings, disquieting and marvellus at same time, with which the dull “normal” people have to deal. In his first film, Hellraiser (UK, 1987), to experience absolute pleasure, Frank enters a parallel dimension populated by the Cenobities: hideous freaks that tear him into pieces until he is deprived of his body. Finding out that he needs human blood to live again, he forces his ex-lover to kill people until he has a new, although disgusting, body. The film turns then into a reflection on the dissolution of the organic material and on the creation of a new society that is negatively Other, ruled by the Cenobities. In Nightbreed (1989), Barker faces diversity from a more traditional point of view. A boy accused of murder by his psychiatrist, played by David Cronenberg, discovers the subterranean kingdom of Midian, populated by human oddities who seem to belong to Barnum’s American Museum. Monsters with many limbs, fauns, horned ladies with golden skin and every kind of weird creature constitute the Nightbreed who have been discriminated through the centuries by a humanity that is envious of their powers. The boy finds out that he belongs to this race and after an initiation reminiscent of the “We accept you, one of us!” of Freaks, he helps his people to fight against the evil psychiatrist and his allies, expression of a brutal society, dashed by any manifestation of diversity. Freaks are victims of the real “normal” monsters, following that logic of absurdity already seen in other cases.

Society (Brian Yuzna, USA, 1989) represents the diverse people who are discriminated against at an economic level in a world dominated by monsters, indeed exceptional in beauty, elegance, and luxury. The young Bill, a brat of a very wealthy Beverly Hills family, is considered a sort of freak by his relatives, totally absorbed by their superficial lifestyle to pay attention to his problems. He will discover that they belong, together with all the rich and famous people they use to frequent, to a sect of cannibal creatures who organize terrifying orgies in which they melt their bodies with those of their victims, absorbing them and sucking out their lives. The movie contains a rather strong political message, condemning the overwhelming power of the upper classes and the superficiality of the fashion society in which the ones who do not count, like Bill, adopted as a baby from the orphanage to be grown as cattle, are seen as slaves of the system, deprived of rights and feelings. The metaphor of the cannibal orgy is a clear invitation not to be absorbed by the market’s mechanisms and to remark our own individuality, despite being considered outsiders.

Negative but nonetheless deserving some form of compassion is the protagonist of Phénomènes (Dario Argento, Italy, 1984), a child with a monstrous face, victim of a psychotic mother: even if the identity of the murderer is revealed only in the ending, it is implied that the creature is kept chained in the insane attempt to protect him from a society which doesn’t have the cultural resources to accept his diversity.

In An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, USA/UK, 1981), a revisitation of the wolf-man legend, the horror genre is contaminated with comedy. The film retreads topics already seen in the classic werewolf movies such as the tragic ending that the monster must face — unable to be accepted by society.

Based on a real-life figure, is Rocky Dennis, the protagonist of Mask (Peter Bogdanovich, USA, 1985), a teenager afflicted by lionitis, a rare disease deforming all features of the face, making him a new Merrick. The reflection on diversity here made, is interesting because it takes back that atmosphere of community already represented in Freaks: Rocky can find a place only between other freaks, like his mother, her hippy friends, and his blind girlfriend. But while the mother and his friends deal with Rocky in a normal way, aware of the fact he is extremely smart, the rest of society acts differently: the principal of his high school would like to send him to a special institution for the mentally ill, while his girlfriend’s parents try to break up the relationship.

Being impossible to recall all the most recent movies in which monstrosity plays an important role, I will only mention a sincere homage to the Freak Show and to one of the artists most connected to the freak aesthetics: Fur – An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus (Steven Shainberg, USA, 2006). More than a biopic, it is a fantastic hypothesis about the reasons that brought the photographer Diane Arbus13 to research about the weirdness of humanity. When Lionel Sweeney, completely covered by a thick hair,

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moves in the apartment above her, Diane wakes up from her bourgeois sleep and discovers a wonderful world made of nudists, transvestites and human oddities. The fascination for what is deformed or non-conventional, which was a part of Diane since she was a kid, eventually finds a vehicle of expression in her attraction to the strange man, inciting shock among her relatives. A heart-breaking sentimental story which is reminiscent of the fairytale of The Beauty and the Beast, its joyful representation of the carnival world, seen as cheerful and colored, places it in violent contrast with the grey and rigid “regular” society, too busy in saving the appearance to look at the real core of things. However, the reversal of perspective here is only partial, because the two will get together only after the man has completely shaved, becoming normal.

To conclude, the cinematographic monster has often taken on the role of a social metaphor to analyse a given society’s relationship with otherness in different ages: a reflection of the war enemy or of the fear of an invasion. The different ways of relating to the Other are not simply bound to the vision of a single director, but they are rather expression of a collective feeling, an attempt to answer to the need of the audience to exorcise cathartically the fear of what we can’t understand. There still are some “exceptional” directors who, instead of choosing the brutal catharsis (killing the monster) or the forced integration (humanizing the monster) have inquired in a non-conventional way into diversity, taking the Other side, or mixing reality and fiction, humbug and truth in a radical way, according to the ancient lesson of Barnum. The role-reversion between normalcy and otherness established in these cases echoes the definition of freak made by Robert Bogdan: “freak is a frame on mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about and presenting people”. And since the issue of identity has always been and will always be an open question, the constant presence of monsters will contribute to experience “the normality of Freaks, the freakishness of the normal, the precariousness and absurdity of being, however we define it, fully human”.15

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Paradoxically, over the last twenty-five years, as the actors’ physical body has gradually disappeared from the cinematic screen (with the advent of CGI simulacra), the bodily dimension of the film experience has increased. In a scenario in which cinema has spread to a myriad of monitors and displays (mobile phones, urban wallscreens, portable media players, digital and on-demand television, etc.) and the film experience seems to lose its integrity, the spectator is still seeking a strong and involving experience, still demanding stories made up of images and sounds that can still arouse the senses. My hypothesis is that contemporary cinema is facing this mutation by developing a number of specific and recurrent “experiential figures”. These figures are cases of strong and effective bodily tension, in which spectators’ motor, perceptual, emotional and mental activities are embodied into a “sensible substance”. Such a substance extends its features from the screen to the psychological space of the experience and transforms it into a unique “sensible environment”. The spectators are integrated into this environment, and empathetically act with the filmic objects and interact with the filmic subjects using their own senses.

In this paper I attempt to investigate what is actually meant today by making a bodily and sensible experience of film by analyzing the substance of water and the figures of drowning and immersed body, specifically in two successful American films: Ray (Taylor Hackford, 2004, USA) and A.I. – Artificial Intelligence (Steven Spielberg, 2001, USA). The case of “water-embodiment” – what I call enwaterment – is significant because of its relevance to the point where psychoanalysis and philosophy meet.

The theoretical background I refer to is dominated by the new experiential turn in the humanities.
and natural sciences, which is shifting the focus of media and film studies to the “sensory track” of spectatorship and hybridizing its perspective with that of cognitive neurosciences and the philosophy of mind\(^2\). According to the neuroscientific approach to social cognition, during a filmic experience our physical body remains still and passive in front of the screen, but we internally simulate the observed actions (especially intentional tactile actions) and movements: mirror neurons’ activity is the empirical proof that visual and motor frames are connected on a neural basis\(^3\). The so called “embodied simulation”\(^4\) allows the spectator to comprehend in an empathetic and pre-linguistic modality the meaning of others’ actions, their intentions and even their emotions and internal states. Nothing prevents us from hypothesizing that even in the mediated situation of the film experience, the spectator relates to images and sounds through an embodied simulation. S/he directly lives or feels the film-world, s/he moves and acts with and within it, s/he performs cinematic intentional acts.

Nevertheless, neural mirroring should be considered only as the basic level of filmic involvement. We cannot reduce consonance to a matter of neurons (nor can we reduce film theory to the metaphor of mirror). It is not by chance that the neuroscientists themselves are trying to recover the philosophical roots of human experience by resorting to the phenomenological perspective, and especially the Husserlian idea of “body”\(^5\) and the Merleau-Pontyian idea of “flesh”\(^6\). Since the mid-1990s, a part of film theory has been following the same trend\(^7\) and has focused its attention on the bodily and phenomenological dimensions of the film experience\(^8\). Adopting this theoretical frame, my approach implies a quasi-interactive spectator, involved in both a relational (perceptive) and a reflexive (apperceptive) activity. My aim is to take you beyond the mirror.

Since its beginnings, cinema has recognized that water can visually give matter and meaning to


\(^8\) Even film theory is rewriting itself putting the body at the core of its investigation, see Elsaesser, T. Hagener, M., 2007. Filmtheorie. Zur Einführung, Hamburg: Junius.
human desires, dreams and needs. Very often, the mere presence of water elicits suspense and a sense of imminent danger. In many cases, cinema cut the water surface on the orthogonal plane and offers a peculiar point of view (the frame is horizontally split by the water edge). As an example, think of the “awash shots” and “empty first-person shots” in Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975, USA). By embodying the perceptual frame of a shark and the concrete features of the ocean, the camera immediately communicates a high level of suspense that is bodily experienced by the spectator.

Using different aesthetical and technical strategies, contemporary cinema shows “enwatered” and drowning bodies to represent and express obsession and depression (like Virginia Woolf’s suicide in The Hours, Stephen Daldry, 2004, USA), state of shock (like in the intense prologue of Saving Private Ryan, Steven Spielberg, 1998, USA), past or infancy trauma (like the car accident in I, Robot [Alex Proyas, 2004, USA], or the father’s death in The Truman Show [Peter Weir, 1998, USA]), hallucinations and nightmares (like for Ray), self-negation and the split-subject (the clones’ homicides in The Prestige [Christopher Nolan, 2006, USA/UK], or to recall the pre-birth situation (like for the “precogs” in Minority Report [Steven Spielberg, 2002, USA]). Many other examples can be cited. The point is that film embodies in its own body the sensible features that ground the human faculty for experiencing the World, the Other and the Self. We all have a primordial sense of liquid or fluid and we have an (unconscious) memory of the in utero state; we instinctively associate water and drinkable fluids in general with the act of swallowing or with the state of being thirsty; we oppose our flesh consistency to water liquidity, our opacity to its transparency, our fleshing to its flowing; we involuntarily associate the quality of warm or cold, fluid or muddy, with expressive states, like relaxing or annoying, safe or dangerous, calm or slimy. We all have a “hydro-knowledge” of things.
However, I want to clarify that I do not adopt a psychoanalytical approach. Rather, I refer to Gastone Bachelard’s “psychoanalysis of waters”. The French philosopher argued that both substantial and formal imaginations are supported by direct images of matter. The experiential figures I propose are modalities of Bachelardian “materializing imagination”: they are not conceptual metaphors, but rather “lived-experiences”, because they incorporate “sensible and sensual” qualities and transform them into actions and relations, which are connected with intentional objects in the film. They are “lived-bodies” in the actual and virtual space of the experience. What I am interested in pointing out is the formal modalities of how contemporary cinema both physically and psychically engages the spectator in a “watering relation”. My aim is to prove that cinema embodies “aquatic” modalities of perception and expression, pulling the viewer into a liquid environment that is the confluence between the film-body and the filmgoer-body. In the case of enwaterment, the observer explores and breaks the “surface” of the film and gets its “adjectival” features, its sensible qualities, which are substantially connected to intentional objects, that is, to “actions” and “relations” with objects and subjects in the film-world. This “lived” implication connects the basic sensomotorial mirroring with emotional sharing and cognitive reflexivity.

1. Reflex

The first level of sensibility is sensomotorial. The scenes in which the character’s body is completely surrounded by water help us to understand how water can constitute the bodily environment of the filmic experience, and how the spectator can immediately experience the film-body. In those cases the spectators’ proprioception is strongly stimulated. Our skin – that is, the sheath of the body, our osmotic boundary – comes into contact with the water and we feel as if we are fully immersed in the “amniotic fluid” of film. Drowning scenes especially arouse spectators’ actual response, like lack of breath and sense of choking. In effective cases, we hold our breath, and we can even feel as if we are suffocating (especially in the case that we are empathising the drowning character’s inner state).

To clarify (and then to move over from) this basic level, I want to show you a clip from Ray. It is a case in which the protagonist’s blindness accentuates the feelings of the sense of touch. There are five water-based fragments in the film. In the first two Ray Charles’s hallucinations are showed. We first see Ray performing a tactile activity (he is packing his suitcase, he has been kissed and cleans his lips). Then we hear the noise of water. Only at this point, an audiovisual close-up allows us to see and hear Ray’s fingertips exploring the wet clothes, until he encounters a lifeless foreign body.

Ray (Taylor Hackford, 2004, USA)

Ray encounters the human limbs of a child (hands that touch hands…). He is terrorized and abruptly retracts his hands and stumbles backward (and so do we). The synaesthetic strategy of film puts us in Ray’s hands, so that we feel his sensory activity. Our physical body remains still “in front of” the screen, but we instinctively and haptically “simulate” actions and movements, thanks to sensomotorial consonance, an “embodied simulation” supported by the activity of mirror neurons. The second hallucination is constructed on the same structure, but in this case Ray’s feet are shown immersed in the water; he bends over the floor, and his hands encounter George’s dead foot; he leaps up and stumbles backward. In both cases, the passage to the hallucination regime is in abyme, with no cross-fade, or perceptual alteration, nor any usual solution that signals the change.

2. Mirroring

However, there is something more. As I mirror Ray’s moves, I realize that I am not only involuntarily mirroring his motor activity. I am also mirroring his inner state, his emotions, his fear. I cannot discuss here the relevance of fictional and aesthetic empathy for a non-cognitive film theory in the light of
neurosciences findings. It is sufficient to say that sensibility also affects the emotional attitude. In the case of water, the most relevant quality is depth. Ray’s hallucinations lay in shallow water, just under the surface. Nevertheless, the surface is a plane of separation of the body and, at the same time, of connection of two worlds. It is a perfect topos – rather than tropos – of the filmic situation: the surface is the screen, a fluid and trespassing threshold between conscious and unconscious, waking and sleeping, life and death, present and past, here and there.

It is not by chance that we see only the limbs of George, Ray’s brother, as he drowns in the flashback that makes us aware of Ray’s past trauma. The sensitive and sensible strategy of the film is focused on the body split. It is feet that slip, it is arms and legs that tumble into the rinse tub, it is limbs that return in Ray’s hallucinations. George’s body is a divided body, split into two worlds. But the body parts that remain and return in Ray’s “actual” world are non-vital organs. The surface is a space of appearing and disappearing, through which something emerges and something immerses. Water cuts and sutures.

I will discuss a scene from *A. I. – Artificial Intelligence* that solicits a response to tactile stimulations and which represents immersed and drowning human and “almost-human” bodies. A group of children are playing beside a swimming pool and one of them tries to hurt the “mecha”, David, with a knife to see if he can feel physical pain. “Tell me when you feel it?”, he says to David, who responds to being pricked with the knife with a leap, an instinctive motor reaction. And we physiologically mirror his reaction, we feel a pinch on our arm as the involuntary reaction to a stimulation that we have internally reproduced.

However, this is only the very basic level of our involvement. There is something more than a sensory-motor reaction. David’s shocked facial expressions allow us to get his fright (in the first close-up) and his disorientation (in the shots from the bottom of the swimming pool). The water surface becomes a
sight-filter that acts on bodies. And the filter texture can be more or less dense and penetrable. David sees and hears deformed bodies and voices from the other side of the water’s surface – a curved and faraway world. Again, the surface explicitly splits the body with no actual cut (we see the legs and the feet of Martin, David’s foster-brother, this time backing from death to life, from standstill to movement).

However, the most “aquatic” shot of the A. I. sequence does not take place in the water, but yet it is *enwatered*. Before the two boys fall into the pool, their mother turns her face, in response to Martin’s cry for help. We would describe such a movement as “fluid”, with a certain density and consistency, a slowed down and softened movement, and it could even be described as the first-person shot of a fish. Nevertheless, there is no manipulation of time: the *slow-motion* effect is obtained with a mirrored-parabolic movement of the camera with respect to the movement of the face and, at the same time, with a typical, cushioned, underwater sound. A liquid substance, with certain sensible properties, makes the movement emotionally loaded. Thus, the spectator is already immersed in a liquid environment before any characters’ bodies have plunged into the water.

3. Reflection

There is a third step that concerns the *sensate* domain of sensibility. We cannot reduce consonance to a matter of neurons or physiological evidence, nor can we narrow our interest to the aesthetics and bodily nature of film communication. The experiential figures do not exclude cognitive activity. Rather, they affect the whole narrative development and they configure body-based orientation-scripts or interpretation-scripts for the spectator. The figures of immersion and drowning are often strategically placed at precise turning points of the narrative (prologue/epilogue, climax, finale, etc.). For example, in *What Lies Beneath* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000, USA), the female body in the water appears first as a floating corpse in the dense and murky surface of the lake, while later it is immersed in the transparent and reflective (though
menacing) water in the bathroom, and toward the end it is a dead body – the body of a submerged and unconfessable past (the adultery and the homicide) – that comes back to life to take revenge. At the end of the film, it returns, swallowed by the deep blue water of vindictive revenge. A range of depths and densities are used as significant sensible qualities connected with a precise narrative function.

What Lies Beneath (Robert Zemeckis, 2000, USA)

This inferential and conceptual activity involves memory and personal past experience. As in What Lies Beneath, or I, Robot or in many other films, in Ray a painful past trauma suddenly emerges on the surface, from the deep of the protagonist’s past experience. What is relevant to us is the fact that the hallucinations, nightmares and flashbacks are built “in water”. During the medication treatment, Ray has a nightmare in which the water becomes blood and the whole world is altered by solarised photography and a stormy montage. Blood-coloured water leaks from the tub onto the camera lens, that is, onto the screen (a strong sensomotorial stimulation that, in fact, reveals the fictional nature of film experience).

Ray (Taylor Hackford, 2004, USA)

During his rehabilitation therapy, after a conversation with the doctor, Ray has other hallucinations in which he accesses his past by plunging into the tub. He goes into himself in depth to solve the sense of guilt that haunts him. As he decides to face the present (he is addicted to heroin) by facing his past, he breaks the water’s surface. Cinema conveys the psychological progress/regress dynamic with a deep/surface dynamic.

4. Reflexivity
The experiential figures not only affect physiological reflex, emotional mirroring and cognitive reflection, but also reflexivity. Thanks to the dynamic between point/glance shot and point/object shot, that is, David’s semi-subjective-shots from the bottom of the swimming pool – from the deep of his perspective of a hostile world – we both empathetically get his inner state and we auto-empathetically get our own
sensible state, our bodily position in the psychological space of the film experience. When the camera penetrates the surface, David’s, and our, “reverse point-of-view” makes us “sensibly aware” of two things: we see the world from a new, underwater and *enwatered*, perspective; and we see the place and the body we occupied before.

![Image](A. I. – *Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001, USA))

This confirms both Merleau-Ponty’s idea of *chiasmus* and *reversibility* and Sobchack’s idea that the spectator is both a *viewing* and a *viewed* subject, *seeing* and *being seen*, involved in both a conscious perceptive activity and an unconscious apperceptive activity, that is reflexivity.

To conclude, enwaterment is a form of experiential and environmental situation that “invisibly” helps the spectator to sensorially, sensitively, and sensately (in a single word: sensibly) perceive, share, comprehend and internalise the substance of film. Water is, eventually, a space of organisation of cinematic experience that is constructed on a triple sensibility: physiological reflex, emotional mirroring, cognitive reflection, and subjective reflexivity. Cinema allows the spectator to experience such a sensibility both by acting on the characters’ bodies and by proposing itself – its “language” and its aesthetics – as a body: fluid movement accelerates or decelerates body motion, aquatic photography makes the characters’ bodies “dense” or “diluted”, and underwater sounds and “awash” shots create a liquid film style that calls for a liquid spectatorship. Contemporary cinema enwaters both the filmgoer-body and the film-body in the same imaginative, materialised substance.
MIRIAM DE ROSA

DAVID ROCKWELL’S HALL OF FRAGMENTS

Looking for Film’s Genius as a Medium through Audiovisual Geographies

È qualche cosa che è saltato in aria, che s’è sbriciolato in mille briciole: è una cosa nuova, rifatta con quelle briciole, che ritrova integrità, il vero.

G. UNGARETTI 1

Un art n’est un art que s’il est limité intrinsèquement dans son moyen d’expression.

M. RICHIR 2

1. Raising the issue of medium specificity at the time of expanded cinema.

Facing a context where the premonition of an expanded cinema 3 is the rule by now, and where the aesthetic canon is essentially the result of remediation, convergence and relocation 4 processes, it is allowed to ask ourselves if the centre of the speculation about cinema stays the same, or rather if the technological and stylistic transformations which invaded the field have an influence in linguistic and – above all – in defining terms.

In fact, in a context where – namely – a wide spreading of multiple pattern of filmic fruition takes place, it is easy to get lost and fall under the spell of different charming and inspired works of art, which are

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undoubtedly interesting from many points of view, but which are on the border between cinema and non-cinema.

It becomes thus strictly important to understand what to focus our attention on, not closing ourselves in the movie theatre (considering film as the exclusive worthy object of research), nor even pretending to call cinema what is definitely not cinema. This is a ticklish question, because it pertains the deep nature of the very object of our study. There would be lots of systematic and complicated methodological approaches to the problem, but since I believe it to be a fundamental one, I prefer to restrict complexity – when possible – and choose the easiest way to disentangle the matter – or try, at least.

That’s why I suggest to simply take a step backward: to keep distance from something, sometimes, allow to better outline the situation.

This step backward is set in on two levels:

1. it is an apparent estrangement that cinema carries out, almost as if it would go out from itself, in order to find itself again

2. it is the functional detachment we have to carry out, as scholars of the cinematic scenario, turning analytically our eyes towards the forms that cinema assumes nowadays

These two levels converge into one, unique, wider movement directed to build the identity of cinema as contemporary medium.

It could seem a daring methodological proposal, but luckily a renowned precedent legitimate us to carry it out. Stanley Cavell is be mentioned, but – particularly – I’m not thinking about his notion of *automatism*; I am referring instead to Rosalind Krauss, and to her suggestion to abandon “the specificity of the individual medium […] in favour of a practice focussed on what has to be called art-in-general, the generic character of art independent of a specific, traditional support”6. In this perspective, the specificity of a medium doesn’t eventually lie in the expression forms of *that* medium, rather it is paradoxically to be found in other hybrid structures*. In other words, “the filmic apparatus presents us with a medium whose specificity is to be found in its condition as self-differing”7. This *differential condition*8 means that the real essence of a medium just comes to the surface in the very moment in which the medium itself is able to vanish in its traditional form and reshape as something else.

7 This would pose the aesthetic question of the condition of art, in terms of unity vs. multiplicity. On this issue, which cannot be discussed here, please refer to “Estetica – Problematica. 15” (definition by VATTIMO, G.), 1979. *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, III, Roma: Le lettere – EDIPTEM, p. 331.
9 KRAUSS, R. E., 1999b. p. 45.
The same position is shared by some recent publications\(^9\) precisely dealing with the issue of medium specificity. Unless the present atmosphere is characterized by a discontinuous horizon, where new materialities compared to classical cinema are invested with pre-eminently filmic expressiveness, a set of cinematic features seems to survive – or better: exactly the surviving cinematic features represent a symptom of innovation and preservation at the same time. My attempt is to shift the core of these considerations and apply the same logic to a concrete cinematic experience, aiming to identify its specific. This specific is what we can call film’s genius as a medium\(^1\).

2. Looking for cinematic Fragments through audiovisual geographies.

Having said this, we can now approach David Rockwell’s Hall of Fragments, assuming it as study case. This work fits the perspective I just illustrated briefly, because on the one hand it shows how cinema can apparently estrange from itself, and on the other hand I believe it to be a good example to practice that paradoxical detached gaze, which permits us to take into consideration an object looking for its media specificity.

The Hall of Fragments is an installation by David Rockwell & Associates produced with the collaboration of Reed Kroloff and Casey Jones. It was presented at the 11th Architecture Venice Biennale in 2008, where it was selected as ouverture of the whole exhibition. Significantly, the exhibition was entitled Out there – Architecture beyond Building, a theme which recalls the idea of going out of a disciplinary precinct, as if the movement beyond its borders would represent the necessary step in order to focus on it. The work is composed by a structure shaped as an aisle made up of a projecting surface; the subject is expressly invited to pass through this space, which develops just in front of him.

\(^9\) The most recent reference on this issue is the pamphlet by CASETTI, F., 2009. I media dopo l’ultimo Big Bang, Link, (Che fare? La tv dopo la crisi), 8, pp. 197-209.

\(^1\) The expression is by KRAUSS, R. E., 1999a, p. 297.
He is not only a visitor but a spectator at the same time, because while walking in between these screen-walls, he has the chance to watch moving-images taking shape on them. This is an important point of the installation concept, which is further strengthened by the areas around the central corridor. On the right and on the left there are in fact a number of screens set at the bottom of the two central walls, arranged in echelon formation and oriented towards the spectator’s eyes.

If the screens of the passage literally wrap the visitor up, favouring his movement through the space of the Hall, the lateral ones do not give him any possibility but stopping: they catch his attention, driving him to have a look. “The result is a direct engagement of the viewer with the [installation] as a viewing apparatus and, through it, with the space in which it is placed”12.

What he can watch on the screens I just mentioned, are sequences excerpted from famous films, projected over and over again; they are very different among them, and the motion pictures from which they are taken are very different as well (scenes from North by Northwest are placed just next to scenes from The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (Peter Jackson 2001), The Truman Show (Peter Weir 1998), What Dreams May Come (Vincent Ward 1998), Alien (Ridley Scott 1999), Batman (Tim Burton 1989), Time Bandits (Terry Gilliam 1981), Dark City (Alex Proyas 1998), Team America: World Police (Trey Parker 2004), La belle et la bête (Jean Cocteau 1946), Artificial Intelligence: AI (Steven Spielberg 2001), Himmel ueber Berlin (Wim Wenders 1987), North by Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock 1959), Fellini Satyricon (Federico Fellini 1969), Barton Fink (Joel Coen 1991), The Matrix (Andy & Larry Wachowski 1999), 8 ½ (Federico Fellini 1963), The Shining (Stanley Kubrick 1980), Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (George Lucas 1977), 2001 – A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick 1968), Citizen Kane (Orson Welles 1941), La Notte (Michelangelo Antonioni 1961), Play Time (Jacques Tati 1967), Blow Up (Michelangelo Antonioni 1966), The Golden Compass (Chris Weitz 2007), Zabriskie Point (Michelangelo Antonioni 1970), Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock 1954), Brazil (Terry Gilliam 1985), Auntie Mame (Merton Da Costa 1958), A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick 1971), Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (Mel Stuart 1971), Tron (Steven Lisberg 1982), The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming 1939), Russian Ark (Alexander Sokurov 2002), Professione: Reporter (Michelangelo Antonioni 1975), Gattaca (Andrew Niccol 1997), West Side Story (Jerome Robbins & Robert Wise 1961), Spider Man (Sam Raimi 2002), Lemony

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them are quoted by the curators following a common standard: all of them have been cut and inserted inside a new whole. They are displaced fragments, taken out from the institutional site of cinema and “collapsed into the physicality of their support”\(^\text{14}\), to be replaced in a new context; in fact, if the space of editing was traditionally the film, the sequences are now rooted out and re-edited in a three-dimensional, physical space, which becomes thus a cinematic place\(^\text{15}\). In this sense Hall of Fragments synthetizes and shows the movement performed by the body of cinema towards new media territories (i.e. video-installation), not actually to put a lost original text together back, since the components come from different sources, but yet to refashion themselves and the imagery they build into a new whole. The aim of creating a continuity which always characterized the editing process assumes here the forms of collage, perpetrating on the one hand the same goal – that is to say, create continuity –, but on the other hand showing the awareness that a fracture is occurred, slipping a space-time discontinuity into the contemporary audiovisual geography.

Consequently, these fragments are not arranged in a linear assembly of serialized sequences, on the contrary they are just placed side by side giving birth to a choreographic pattern made up of images combination and multiplication. More precisely: in the first part of the installation, heterogeneous sequences are used, while in the second one the video-projection shows the same excerpt on each screen. This resembles a split-screen, creating thus the impression of a multiplication of the image, because the very same sequence taken from Fleming’s Wizard of Oz (1939) is endlessly reflected. Notwithstanding the autonomy, which characterizes the screens at the beginning, they converge afterwards in terms both of content and timing.

As a matter of fact, the duration of each sequence is exactly the same; furthermore, they are synchronized; this is evident when the images of Dorothy’s hearing at the Wizard’s place prevail on the others, which are in fact suspended in order to let the screens share a mutual ending, displayed throughout the Hall.

The effect of this double pattern (combination / multiplication) is an explosion of frames, which is metaphorically rendered by the image of a fire crossing the screens and spreading all over the background. These flames, which are – once again – those staged by the old man in Fleming’s film, when trying to recreate the image of Oz, bring us right in the focus of the analysis.
The most important points about this installation risen by now are to be identified as (1) the aesthetic of fragmentation, (2) the tie between fragments and the imagery these fragments are able to convey and (3) the spatial dimension in which the revivication of this imagery takes place.

2.1. The aesthetic of fragmentation.

As far as the first issue is concerned, I think it is clear we are presented an object, which is not a coherent, integrated whole. As the name of the work by Rockwell suggests, the main principle of composition is fragmentation. To put the question of fragmentation means to single a rupture out, as regards to the work of art or the classical film, and – moreover – it means to refer to a circulation of the work of art in accordance with the nature of contemporary experience. Instead of being a logic of reconstruction, directed towards the assembly of parts in a new object recalling the original one, the approach to the issue of fragmentation assumed by the authors is a preserving one. Their aim is to emphasize the fragments as units worthy of artistic and cultural value in themselves. The fragment, here, is not considered as a singular piece of a totality thanks to which a whole acquires its meaning - indeed it is seen as the central component for a conception of art whose institutional condition has been put under discussion. It is thus the fragmentation of art – in our case, of the seventh art – which is actually represented by Rockwell’s Hall. In a context characterized by a lack of lyricism and structured narrations, the filmic narrative is deprived of its classical development because it is dispersed, expressing thus itself through visual forms, which are pretty close to an aesthetic of dissemination. Claude Amey recently dealt with this topic, as he argued “le concept d’art, qui pose le statut et la fonction de l’œuvre, est désormais lui-même le produit de l’incapacité de celle-ci à réunir ce qui est éclaté”. A process of décollage is progressively separating art from its own surfaces, inviting it to find other expression spaces. In other words, it becomes possible to find the filmic element even in something, which doesn’t apparently seem to be canonically cinematic, but rather belongs to an expanded dimension – for instance, an audiovisual work, placed in a gallery space, realized for an architecture exhibition, is anyway able to convey a cinematic experience. Hall of Fragments proposes thus this broadening of the representation space, which is not to be interpreted as a sort of dissolution of the work of art and – for extension – of cinema, rather as

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18 This tradition is to be traced back to Aristotle (Poetics, chapter 7, 18), according to whom a metonymical logic of fragment was impossible, because the part couldn’t be significant for the whole.
20 “La modalité du dé-mesuré, […] est celle de l’étendue de l’œuvre quand, excédant son appréhension frontale immédiate, elle se prolonge en un espace non commensurable à la vision d’une seule prise […] soit que l’œuvre englobe le spectateur… soit qu’elle l’inclue en un espace qui implique une circulation ni dehors ni dedans”. AMEY, C., 2004., p. 30.
essential opening. The dissociation of the technical constraint from the specific filmic is then a sign of a widening tension that appears in its deep necessity and synthetizes the differential condition theorized by Krauss.

2.2. Rejoining the fragments, building an imagery.

This expansion of the field works in a functional way as far as the evocatory power of the fragments is concerned. As already mentioned, they are instruments of a mise-en-forme, because thanks to the sequences selected by Rockwell & Co. we are given the chance to recreate an imagery. It is in particular an imagery linked to architecture, just because the exhibition in which the installation was presented was an Architecture exhibition, but as we noticed, the architectural space that is built in the Hall of Fragments, is basically a cinematic production. In fact, the authors declared:

among the visual pleasures that cinema is able to offer, it doesn’t reach its higher effectiveness as it reproduce an architecture […] but when it creates environments, whose perceptive dimension overwhelms the physical one.

The moving image is thus introduced and exploited to create a metaphorical space, and the fragments, which are considered like valuable pieces emancipated from the order of a whole, are able to evoke a new perceptive dimension. A dimension based on an imagery, which is brought back to life thanks to the mise-en-forme triggered by the moving-images displayed on the screens, that are able to design the borders and fix the dwelling rules of the space. What the curators wanted thus to demonstrate, was that an architectural space was […] created without the use of traditional architectural form … So much of our architecture — says Kroloff — “is about capturing the imagination in physical form and film does the same thing.”

Following this process of staging a variety of recognizable narratives an imagery get built, and even though it is referred first of all to architecture, it is interesting to underline that the rough materials necessary to shape it is made up of filmic frames. Once again, we are in front of a differential use of the moving-images, because it is thanks to the deformed forms of the fragment considered within a reflection which is not directly focused on the seventh art, that we come across a typical and traditional feature of cinema, that is to say the ability to give shape to reality, to render it visually, typify it, creating archetypes of it, producing


25 The quotation is excerpted from a video-interview to Reed Kroloff, which is available at the url: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwYgRVmvN8E (last accessed 16 March 2010).
thus *exempla* of its elements and situations. In short, the architectural spaces built thanks to Rockwell’s video-construction acquires meaning “as containers of representational systems that inform [the way in which] we interpret and act out our daily lives”\(^\text{26}\).

### 2.3. Enlivening an imagery throughout space.

These considerations lead us straight towards the last point I proposed to analyze, that is to be identified as the importance which the spatial dimension undertakes within our study case. In fact, in this installation the referential gallery space remains *Beyond Building*: what actually comes to light is a *mediatextural environment*, evoking the cultural imagery through which the viewer engages fragments of visual forms and of cinematic images that inhabit and animate his own reality. Therefore, the construction of the work of art is not granted by the simple *mise-en-scène* of the devices used, nor by the exhibition space in itself: it is the relation between the object and the spatial dimension to become the central element. In this way, the limits of the work of art break, opening up towards fragmentation. This *aesthetic of fragment*, fully reveals its nature of expressive language necessary to reinvent the space as augmented form, fractioning it and informing it as expanded, in order to give birth to a new place. Since the classical film is exploded into fragments becoming a multi-faceted object, whose borders exceed their institutional site, the filmic experience invades the space. As a consequence, the connections among the different elements which compose it melt in a liquid environment, so that the presence and the structures of its limits are unavoidably called into question. For this reason, the attention is to be focused on the *place* of cinema, whose rising pre-eminence as object of study seems to let it prevail on the issue of style\(^\text{27}\). In particular, it is interesting to consider the new spatial dimensions, which give shelter to the cinematic element, and where it intersects other cultural and artistic components. Here, the filmic device proceeds thanks to a constant operation of *collage*, accumulation, assembly and reshaping. In this sense, it explores the contemporary reality as questing for a meaning, for parallels-and-meridians belonging to a directing system, in which the subject becomes the author\(^\text{28}\). As Sylvie Rollet puts it “Quelque chose [...] excède les images. Soumis à cet excès, [...] le spectateur va se muer en enquêteur”\(^\text{29}\).

The creation of an environment made up of *video-construction* permits the visitor to establish a physical and emotional relationship with the space. But the subject is not only a visitor: he is a viewer too, then we have to do with a mutual process, since the interaction between the spectator and the moving-images designs the coordinate system of the audiovisual geography, which is conveyed by the installation. The result is a three-dimensional topology, because the filmic space is not lateral anymore; vice versa, it is something able

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\(^{29}\) Rollet, S., 2004., p. 27.
to embed the subject, who is then called to enter it endoscopically, walking and making his way through it. We can interpret this feature as an indubitable sign of a post- (media, modern?) condition, characterized by the figure of a subject who not only watches the frames on screen, but also manipulates the cinematic images, exploring and using them to dwell the world which surrounds him. Consequently, the meaning and the power of the work of art cease to be rooted exclusively in its ontological essence; they are to be found in the performing act which places the filmic experience in the context, in the practices triggered by the cinematic element and in the effects that its presence causes on the spaces.

If we want to take into consideration the specificity of cinema as a medium, then we necessarily have to turn our attention on an expanded scenario, in which the core is simply the filmic experience. An experience, which on the one hand can be easily found outside the canonical precincts of the seventh art as we were used to conceive it, and that on the other hand assumes the aspect of a differential artistic expression, converging with other media territories, remediating itself in other languages and relocating itself in unexpected contexts. Positioning itself outside its institutional collocation, the filmic device seems anyway to be recognizable. This is because of a cinematic flow surviving despite the mutations. As anticipated, we can talk about a film’s genius as a medium.

3. The film’s genius as a medium.

As the ancient conception of the term makes clear, the genius is a kind of deity able to preserve and protect what it is linked to; it reveals itself in the circumstances of experience, nevertheless it soars over the rhythm and the situations of everyday life. In other words, it is stuck in the middle between being and becoming, and so it is characterized at the same time by a conservative and a transformative attitude. That is the reason why Johann Georg Hamann considered it as Urkraft; this perspective, which associates the notion of genius to an original impulse aiming to disclose the essence of things, leads to the idea of a thin moving substance, featured by the capacity of enliven. It becomes thus very close to a kind of soul, a breath which blows and animates whatever it touches. Since the genius seems to be the principle of organic life, it has been quickly extended as source of personality and specificity; just because of this, it represents the central element to observe, in order to seize the transformations occurring to objects, contexts or concepts. Whenever something peculiar seems to run out of its driving force, its form loses its typical character, making the genius migrate and adhere to new forms to assure its own preservation. In this way, it becomes a sort of spirit-bearer.

It will be almost obvious how the same argument could easily be applied to cinema and its specificity.

30 The expression is by Jullier, L., 2006., Introduction to the Italian edition, p. 9.
31 Once again, according to Jullier, the post-modern spectator is used to “cut, repeat, slow, fasten, rearrange” the filmic text, getting as result a new cinematic form, which assumes the feature of a filmic experience. Cfr. Jullier, L., 2006., p. 21 (translated by the author).
At the time of the classical conception of cinema as traditional vision of film, the \textit{screen + spectator + movie theatre} device was the unique source of cinematic experience; this was preserved and continuously revitalized thanks to the repeating of the same practices, which nourished and maintained them alive, fixing at the same time the expressive canon, the representation codes and the fruition rules. When this same kind of experience emerged in a number of new occurrences and contexts, its typical filmic feature would risk to get lost; it tended then to condense itself in a series of social conventions, cultural practices, attitudes, expectations, images, aesthetic and technological forms, which converged into an immaterial substance of cinema, or better – a genius typical of cinema as a medium. If in the previous ages it was not necessary for this spirit\textsuperscript{33} to find a site, maybe just because it simply had it in the movie theatre, nowadays it needs to identify something recalling that very device. This is a way to react to the dissemminatory permutations which influence those elements able to keep it alive and vivid; to achieve the same aim, the innovations which invest the seventh art trigger an \textit{assemblage} of the fragments of filmic experience, whose consistence is to be found precisely in the cinematic genius. This finds its expression in new spaces (as the gallery space), assuming different forms, which perpetrate – to some extent – the old ones. Taken in between by two opposite forces, the cinematic genius proceeds in a double direction, that is to say: on the one hand it preserves the encyclopaedic know-how about cinema, while on the other hand it introduces this knowledge in new contexts, reshaping it and thus using it in a differential condition.

In other words, this is the story of an opening, because even though the originality of the spirit needs the definition of a form to shape a rough material in order to express itself, this same definition is something that cannot be set once for all, rather the power of the genius consists exactly in finding a new form from time to time\textsuperscript{34}. This form is what we are called to take into consideration.

My suggestion is to see Rockwell’s \textit{Hall of Fragments} as a place of cinematic genius, posing the boundaries of the seventh art at stake. I hope the analysis of the installation could justify this proposal, having shown the “redemptive possibilities”, which an alternative medium as art-video highlights, focusing “within its technological support”\textsuperscript{35} and aesthetic forms. In this perspective, apart from accepting the erosion of the institutional space of its specificity, the filmic device cannot do anything but recognize the chances of this widening, because the necessity of a renouncement is always associated to a regained richness in terms of experience.

\textsuperscript{33} I use the term ‘spirit’, keeping its definition as PAGANO, M., puts it in “Spirito”, 2006. \textit{Enciclopedia Filosofia}, Milano: Bompiani, 11, p. 10998.

\textsuperscript{34} Cfr. PAGANO, M., 2006., p. 11007.

\textsuperscript{35} The last two expression are by KRAUSS, R. E., 1999a., p. 304.
The installation *Col tempo. The W. Project*, presented at the last Venice Biennale (2009) by the video-artist Péter Forgács is so complex that it can be studied from many different perspectives. The first is certainly a political-sociological one (the treatment of the other according to the ways of reclusion/exclusion as a prisoner of war or individual of a discriminated race; presence of control mechanisms of the dominating political structure, here the Third Reich). We can adopt the point of view of the used techniques – the found footage or the use of video-testimony, video and morphing – or the perspective of art history – the links with the portraiture tradition, especially with Rembrandt and Giorgione.

It is presented as an apparently eccentric work in respect to the main thematic axes of Forgács’s production, based on the topic of private and familiar memory\(^1\). It is possible anyway to track inside *Col tempo* an identical aim of subtracting the image to a precise context of the original use and re-locate it in the dimension of an installation that gives it a new meaning by the attribution of a different semantic value. The materials on which the work is based come from a series of research projects by the Austrian doctor Josef Wastl (1892-1968)\(^2\) made between the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s. Among the material that was produced in this scientific researches, found in 1998 at the Department of Anthropology at the Museum of Natural History of Vienna, we can find many 16mm colour film reels – whose length is between 6 and 12 seconds each. Forgács represents the images of the Wastl archive through the predisposition of new vision contexts and creating *tonalities of gaze* far from the original ones.


1. Structure of the installation: for a topology of the gaze

The typology of the gazes – the way in which we look at things – traces a topology, meaning a geography of the other – object of observation – that is developed in seven different settings.

Such complex work cannot be analysed in detail in this context. What is interesting here is underlying the way in which Forgács has used the technique of found footage making it speak with other forms of visual art (the video-testimony, the photography, the sculpture) for the constitution of a multiple vision based on the model of an enormous gazing device. Forgács’s production holds together a refined reading of the tradition of classic portraiture (Giorgione and Rembrandt, both present at the entry of the installation) and the topics connected to it (the inter-subjectivity, the Me/You recognition), a new proposal on the topic of the face and its possibilities of meaning, a deep reflection on the tie between time, gaze, death and memory, a work on the nature of identity of each single human being and on the attempts to dominate it, a meta-linguistic thought in the instruments of representation of the Other and the Self (the painting, the camera, the video, the mirror).

The work stands on these five thematic levels, but I will try to demonstrate that these levels are sustained together and crossed by a basic thematic axis: Forgács's work is also – one could even say, it is mainly – a work on the conditions of possibility of the vision. In the introductory paper Time to Gaze. Viewpoints for exploring the exhibition, the curator of the installation András Rényi says: «Péter Forgács COL TEMPO explores the blindness of sights». Such assertion is just hinted at by Rényi, but I think it should be made explicit, since it contains the deep and paradoxical meaning of the work.

2. History of the W. Project

The installation is based – as we have mentioned – on a set of materials found in 1998 during an inspection in the Department of Anthropology of the Museum of Natural History of Vienna. It is a heterogeneous collection that includes texts of different kind, measuring instruments, photographs, 16 mm film reels, chalk masks, hair samples, hands and feet fingerprints kept as material of anthropologic measurement.

Many findings of this collection were produced and archived inside the projects started by Josef Wastl (1892-1968), director of the Department of Anthropology at the Museum of Natural History of Vienna from 1941. Strictly related to the Nazi party and the anti-Jewish ideology, Wastl considered his scientific research as a valid instrument supporting the racial thesis and he dedicated scrupulously the

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application of his own knowledge to the realisation of projects demonstrating such thesis. The archive found in Vienna witnesses the achievement of a series of surveys: the first was made in September 1939 on 440 male Polish Jews, imprisoned in the soccer field of Vienna, which were submitted to a series of measurements of body data. From 1940 to 1943 other surveys were conducted on war prisoners in the camps of Kaisersteinbruch and Wolfsberg, on the inhabitants of the Austrian village of Hinterstoder – North Austria – and in the forests of Bohemia.

Wastl acquired for the museum also a series of skulls and funerary masks of concentration camps victims. Wastl's “scientific approach” dates directly to the practice of anthropological measurements put in place by Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), creator of the anthropometry. His method remained effective from 1882 for about thirty years, substituted by the survey method using digital fingerprints. Bertillon's method identified the prisoner through the survey and the recording of body data which were considered important: height, arm length, measure of the trunk, measure of the right ear, measure of the head, lengths of the middle finger, left forearm and foot, observation of the face (ear, forehead, nose, eyes), of the hands and the naked body (to signal the presence of tattoos, scars, deformation of the vertebral column and so on). The prisoner's form contains also a front and profile photograph of the prisoner.

The elaboration of a measurement system to classify the individual based on the body data is rooted to a wider cultural movement that from Bertillon dates its origin directly to Cesare Lombroso, Franz Joseph Gall, Pierre Camper, Johann Kaspar Lavater, Charles Le Brun, Gianbattista Della Porta, very different personalities that take upon the same theoretical background: the physiognomic perspective.

The scientific activity of data gathering as anthropologic practice, as Wastl himself realised it - that is, a meticulous inspection of the individual to research signals indicating the race or a congenital inferiority - is rooted in the ancient idea that the body could reveal the character, the personality, the inclinations of the human being. No other body part is more appropriate than the face in order to show the singularity of the human being and to allow social identification: it is not by chance that Wastl – and Forgács afterwards, working on his material – concentrated so much on the shootings of the faces of the prisoners in foreground or very tight foreground, in front and in profile. Such judiciary practice inherited from Bertillon comes from a necessity to classify by type and measures each individual that, if taken singularly, in their specificity, would escape any attempt of classification.

To confuse identity with body features is a hard-to-die dream that Forgács tells us through an overturning of the ideological thesis implied in Wastl's archiving practice, according to whom «only the pre-set parameters of comparison and the numerability of samples makes “sense” of the individual cases». Wastl's perspective aims at canonizing individuality: the single case only signifies through the application of general rules or parameters previously given by the observer. The anthropometric lookout uses a criteria

5 For a first look on this topic, see Gurisatti, G., 2006. 11, Dizionario fisiognomico. Il volto, le forme, l'espressione, Quodlibet, Macerata.
in which the visual experience of the Other needs to take place: the Other does not have access to my experiential horizon by unpredictable and unique modalities, but it is from the beginning (since before) pre-seen by my gaze. The vision is involved in a double process of canonization, passive and active at the same time: on one side the observing gaze produces a rigid interpretative grid (rules of measurement/observation) that informs the apparition of the Other (prisoner of war, inmate of prison, etc.); on the other side the body/gaze as an object of vision is deprived of the possibility of breaking the margins of the type-like representation in which it is constricted.

The gaze only sees what it has pre-seen, since the individual signifies only as numerable and 'sampleable'. The apparition of the Titan presents more clearly the overturning of such pre-vision strategy (and of bringing back the individual to a canonized type).

3. Three stages: Titan, the Museum-hall, the Mirror

Through the exposition in blown up picture of the prisoner of war Marceau R. N. 26380 – camp of Wolfsberg, 1942 [Figure 1] – Forgács overturns the thesis for which the face only has a value as being paired to an archiving number, creating a wide format image addressed to the contemporary spectator, imposing its recuperated value, as a face, as individual, exposed to the possibility of a “re-semanticization”.

We can see here the passage from an organic face – belonging to the dominion of the anthropometric researches – to the expressive face, space attributed to art and literature where we gather what the subject sees in himself and tries to pick in others (individual and intimate space). This is about trying to pass from the world of types into the world of individuals.

![Figure 1. Titan](image)
The first hall [Figure 2] is constructed by Forgács with the same intention. It is presented as an accurate reconstruction of a museum-like environment.

In the first room […] Forgács stages this aesthetic Utopia of dialogue. The room is homely and intimate. We are in an elegant, properly illuminated museum space with atmospheric slow, profound, full symphonic music, with portraits in glided frames hanging on the walls at comfortable eye level. Everything is lit by hidden reflectors, yet they radiate light from within. An almost solemn, noble atmosphere fills the space.

The viewer, though, soon realizes that the present portraits are not quite the same as in a traditional art gallery: the faces are moving – more or less slowly, more or less gradually – until the movement becomes almost imperceptible, but all of them are “animated”. Like Rényi suggests, Forgács creates with this simple technical trick – the use of morphing – a slight uneasiness of the visual perception of the portraits, creating «uncanny the fictitious Humanist dialogue between the viewer and the subjects of the portraits. In doing so, he highlights the artificiality of the presence, which made these people pose for a camera».

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The work of retrieving the images archived by Wastl goes in a precise direction: Forgács takes the photographic portraits of the prisoners of the camps from the context of classification and pseudo-scientific practices of Wastl and attributes them a new aesthetic aspect. The portraits are finally freed from their cataloguing function (finalized to the study of the race) and given to a totally new universe of aesthetic contemplation. In this way Forgács deconstructs the original gaze dynamic that had historically produced those photographic subjects, in order to create a new gaze dynamic and deliver it to the contemporary spectator. The artist creates an environment of vision that allows the viewer to have a contemplative look, enriched with a museum-like tone: the faces stop being numbers inside an archival/classification experiment and acquire the status of object of art.

It is not by chance that the installation at the entrance welcomes a reproduction of the painting by Giorgione La vecchia and Forgács’s previous work In/Between – Rembrandt morphs: the artist ties since the beginning, with a refined intellectual operation, his own work to the most noble portrait tradition. Forgács removes the censorship applied by Wastl on the individuality expressed in every face. Such value must necessarily be negated in order to adapt the human subject to an experiment of racial anthropology, since the singularity/exceptionality of an individual does not provide meaningful data for a similar object. The specificity needs to be reduced to nothing in the listing of traits and measures – height, weight, hair and eye colour, shape of the nose and mouth, etc.

The photographs and films that were produced as part of the Wastl project are therefore not portraits, not even if German thoroughness in recording data kept a full and accurate log of the personal identities and a long list of other attributes of its models. The original intention was that these should belong to a scientific data-gathering exercise, and they give no intimation of the presence or absence of the Other. They are records of facial features, not of individuals.

Forgács’s work seems to allow a different relationship between viewer and object of vision: the anonymous face of an individual, originally photographed only as object of scientific classification, enters the new portrait dimension and becomes – (thanks to the gathering and the exposition of the work) – worth of being seen as himself. Otherwise, in this operation, we don’t have to look for consolation and reparation from a irrecoverable past of humiliation and deprivation of dignity that were undertaken by anonymous human beings, with which we, as spectators, are invited to construct a new, totally free, relationship. The author’s intervention is clear: a new rhetoric of the portrait is substituted to the one of racial anthropology/physiognomy and imposes a new dynamic between observer and observed. In Wastl’s project «only the pre-set parameters of comparison and the numerability of samples makes “sense” of the individual cases», while Forgács tries to give back to each single case a different specific value. In both

Ivi, p. 16.
cases it is about a way of taking place of the Other inside the horizon of the gaze of the I. On what conditions the Other takes place in my gaze?

The installation points out and criticizes the possibility that the gaze opens itself to the Other firstly as a will of domination. The vision appears strictly tied to the theme of violence and power: the vision develops itself mostly as a modality of possession of what it is seen. Wastl's practice of measurement observes classifying and observing it controls the observed.

The vision can dominate the Other, because the dynamic between the gaze and the object of vision already and since always activates the primary structure of the opening of the Self to the Other. To look means to establish a contact between the subject and the real, the assignment of an eye to something that surrounds it and it is answer of the gaze which establishes that thing as such.

In this way, seeing never presents itself as a neutral act, able of picking the real and particularly the presence of something in its own Self. The supremacy of the vision inside the Western epistemological system is given, on the contrary, to the conviction that the vision can – differently, for example, from the hand – access a dimension of reality (the “real/true reality”) that otherwise would remain precluded.

To think of the vision and the light as accessing the truthfulness of things – to see is not to touch, but it is to look from a distance leaving to be what is seen – does not correspond to the reality of the anthropologically lived visual act. Man does not only see, but he is open to what the light shows him, always on the form of the gaze, that is according to the measure of one’s own experience. The entity’s opening cannot always leave out of consideration a certain pre-determination, a certain pre-judgement of the eye open to the light, in a way that light can never show what is seen in a neutral way, but it will always show things in a certain light, a certain circumscribed cone of light, determined by the experience of the subject. The vision changes into an act of taking: seeing would always mean, in last instance, to take.

This dynamic is implemented by the use of the mirror [Figure 3] that becomes the symbol of the vision as power, or as the reduction of the Other to the Self. «We must sooner or later come to realise that it is our very own look that plays the role of the protagonist in this drama»\(^{10}\). Forgács works on the limit of the vision and the possibility of overturning it into blindness: the vision is always blind if it pretends to be pure. The route of the installation is a route of disillusionment on the true capacities of the vision and it ends with the addressing of the spectator to himself by the deforming mirror. Seeing changes into taking, because the Self always moves on the threshold between the opening of the Other and the risk that such opening closes in itself, including the Other in the form of the Self. I do not allow you to be what you are: you exist because I can reduce you to myself.

\(^{10}\) Ibidem.
Figura 3. The mirror
The following paper is a case study and starts from Ryoji Ikeda’s creation of Datamatics 2.0. It was first presented to the public on 29 October 2007, at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. I believe that the subject studied lays itself open to some short remarks on the wide core of themes which, directly or not, revolve around the production of the Japanese artist. I will tackle here those that seem to the most significant, namely:

1 – The centrality of Datamatics 2.0 within the corpus of the artist’s work.

2 – The close correlation, at the basis of the performance, of images and sounds, as well as the opportunities of significance offered by a reasoned use and refined research of the dimension of synchronism.

3 – The possible metaphorical use of music and at the same time of data, as a world code.

4 – The effect that such a case can have within the study of the continuous building of identity, that the film medium needs.

Datamatics is an artistic project, with many outcomes, which aims at exploring the perception possibilities of the invisible multi-substance of data, which are part of the world around us. The genesis traces back to a series of performances, under the name of Datamatics [prototype], which started on 3 March 2006 for the AV festival, at the Sage Gateshead in Newcastle (UK).

The following development was Datamatics [1.0], a series of shows held between 7 August 2006, with the performance at the California Theater in San Jose (US), and 30 November 2007, with the performance at Le Petit Faucheux di Tours (Fra). The artist’s interest follows in the wake of previous outcomes.

Projecting dynamic, computer-generated imagery – in pared down black and white with striking colour accents, Ikeda’s intense yet minimal graphic renderings of data progress through multiple dimensions. From 2D sequences of patterns derived from hard drive errors and studies of software code, the imagery transforms into dramatic, rotating views of the universe in 3D, whilst the final scenes add a further dimension
as four-dimensional mathematical processing opens up spectacular and seemingly infinite vistas. A powerful and hypnotic soundtrack reflects the imagery through a meticulous layering of sonic components to produce immense and apparently boundless acoustic spaces.¹

Towards the end of 2007, owing to the joint co-production of Forma, Les Spectacles Vivants, Centre Pompidou and YCAM (Yamaguchi Center for Arts & Media), the structure of previous audiovisual concerts is implemented with the addition of part two. Datamatics 2.0 is born, a work that

Using pure data as a source for sound and visuals, (…) combines abstract and mimetic presentations of matter, time and space in a breathtakingly accomplished work.²

If 2.0 series continues in the wake of previous outcomes, what highlights the achievement of a new research maturity is the capacity for totally deconstructing the fundamental elements of the other series, sound and source codes, leading to a sort of true meta-datamatics. The data are at the same time theme and material of the work. Such use enables us to investigate the way in which an abstract vision of reality serves to organize, understand and control the world. In this sense, fundamental is questioning the code’s dimension, at times ambiguous and polyvalent, in its double meaning herein contained, of a self show, and system of rules which allow the passage between stages which should be equivalent at least within the postulated reference system. (aliquid stat pro aliquo).

The way spectators should enjoy Datamatics 2.0 as chosen by the artist is of particular interest here. If the origins of Ikeda’s career stem from the world of ultra-minimalist electronic music, as time went by, he preferred to unstitch the label of musician and yearn for that of sound environment designer. Hence, he starts numerous new collaborations with architects and graphic designers leading to the series of Datamatics, where sound blends with visual elements. The performance is enjoyed in a closed space. Spectators are arranged in lines of seats in front of a wide screen. Before the show starts, all lights are turned off. Ikeda, with his instruments stands behind the audience. Images flow on the screen in a strict synchronic correlation with the tracks, which follow a fixed sequence. The performance lasts for about an hour and, contrary to most concerts, from chamber to pop music, an encore is not played. Cinema and electronic music share a joint relation between the contamination of means and that of experience grammars which rule the spectators’ behaviour.

¹ Comment to the work taken from http://www.ryojiikeda.com/datamatics/datamatics/datamatics[prototype-ver.2.0]/
² http://www.forma.org.uk/artist/represented/ryoji-ikeda/works-datamatics
With reference to the choice of the images shown and the interaction with the sound score, according to us, there are two main aspects that should be pointed out. First of all, the decision to regulate the link between sound and images through the continuous interest in what Chion defines as Points de synchronisation. The exact correspondence of the two components reaches a point that suggests a level of real concreteness of the image which turns into the producer of the sound perceived. In this sense the figurative component is a journey into the origins of sound. Noteworthy is also Ikeda’s insistence on the joint acceleration of sound and images, which explains once again the value of the synchronic aspect. Moreover, it would enable the spectator to identify some irregular phenomena in the flow of the track which are inevitably lost when the rhythm vortically increases. The sense is that of “I understand you, but only partially”, leitmotiv of the entire discourse of the artist on the theme of data. What it expresses, is the need to overcome traditional forms of enjoyment, and move on to a new and stronger way of listening; in the framework of an aesthetics, probably mostly yet to come. The metaphor expresses the rationale of a world whose functioning structures we still don’t fully understand.

3 “Point de synchronisation: nous appelons point de synchronisation, dans une chaîne audiovisuelle, un moment plus saillant de rencontre synchrone entre un moment sonore et un moment visuel concomitants, autrement dit un moment où l’effet de synchronie est plus marqué et plus accentué, créant un effet de soulignement et de scansion. La fréquence et la disposition des points de synchronisation dans la durée d’une sequence contribuent à lui donner son phrase et son rythme, mais aussi à créer des effets de sens” Chion M., 2003 Un art sonore, le cinéma. Histoire, esthétique, poétique, Paris, Cahiers du Cinéma, p. 430
Ikeda proposes a vision of the binary language, and of mathematics as a whole, which is far from those we normally have. Stripping ourselves of all the known forms of mental visualization of mathematics, brings out its fundamental feature, namely the fact of being a phenomenon of abstraction. Its being “invisible” is disguised by cultural habits we achieve (certainly not autonomously) at a very early age, for fully legitimate practical reasons. It might be useful to remember how children are taught the existence of integrals. For example: number five. You start by showing them a tangible object they can easily recognize. Let’s say five oranges. Then, you make children count them. Then, you show them a picture with five oranges and then another picture which matches the five oranges with the number “5”. At this point, now that these things match in their minds, we can show them a picture of number “5”, without oranges. And they are now ready to do exercises with number five on its own, as an object separate from the presence of oranges and which will surely be useful for the study of arithmetic and the basic relations between numbers. In a certain way we cheat children because we drive them to consider numbers as things and not as symbols of things, problems where facts are not exactly what they seem. But the deceit is to a good purpose, since we have taken them to the fundamental awareness of the need that mathematical entities be abstractions, immaterial ideas, which belong to another category different from both physical objects and images.

Previously we spoke about Datamatics 2.0 as a sort of meta-datamatics; and the reference is clearly understood on the basis of what aforementioned. Ikeda plans to sew new clothes onto mathematics, in order to bring back the surprise and wonder of the invisible multi-substance it is made of. Only in this way he can convey the charm of the endless flow and of the continuous multiplication of such matter. He can make us perceive the chasm of infinity in the number infinitely after Bremermann limit, as well as the infinity of infinites which in the Number Line (or in the Real Line) are included, for example, between 0 and 1 (they are already two types of different infinites).

4 I owe the following example (and not only this) to Wallace D. F., 2003, Everything and More. A Compact History of ∞, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
5 Relying on the fundamental quantum theory, in 1962 H Bremermann showed that there is a number of data, after which, if a computational problem needs solving the same or a greater amount of data, there is no point in looking for a solution. This because no data processing system can process more than 2 x 10⁴⁷ bit per second per gram of its mass. This means that even if the Earth were a huge computer that started working since the Earth was created it would have processed maximum 2,56 x 10⁹² bit. This number is Bremermann limit. Computations entailing greater numbers are called trans-computational problems and cannot be faced neither in theory.
6 It is an interval containing an infinite number of intermediate point.
Another strong point of Datamatics 2.0 is the choice of working on the juxtaposition and relation between different encoding systems, in order to build segments of discourse on the abstract dimension of encoding. Ikeda sets up the metaphor of the music code (sound) as synecdoche of the idea of the code as universal, creating a dialogue with the inquiry on the digital data in all its aspects. If such synecdochic choice can seem daring, suffice it to think that it is not the first time and neither one of the most radical.

(…) think upon the fact that this happened with the code of music, transformed from syntactic system into discourse on the laws governing the universe. If the most elementary system which describes the relations between sounds (what we decided to call music code in a broad sense) can be expressed in a mathematical language, the opposite happened with metaphysics, aesthetics and Pythagoric musicology. It was decided that every system, either physical or mathematical – without a sufficiently articulated mathematical language – could be expressed in terms of a musical metalanguage.7

This enables Umberto Eco, in the same text, to use as an example one of the most ancient and well-known aesthetic-mathematical theories: the classic theory of proportion. It was certainly linked to

7 Eco U., 1988, opening address at the XIV congress of the International Society of Musicology (Bologna, 27 August – 1 September 1987). Published in Intersezioni, (VIII – 2)
assumptions on relations with the measures of the human body (for instance Policleto) or architectural works (Vitruvio),

(...) but its first formulation appears within Pythagoric musicology. If Pythagoras is the inventor of the mathematical explanation of the universe he is so because primum omnium Pythagoras (fuit) inventor musicae, as Monk Engelberto will say in the Middleages.\(^8\)

Another aspect of Ikeda’s poetics is linked to this question, i.e. the awareness of the fact that - maybe a bit paradoxically - both music and electronic data, try sometimes to give reason to an empirical experience (for example the experience of sounds) we perceive as qualitative but through quantitative formulas.

At this point let us analyze the aforementioned question which makes Datamatics 2.0 experience of particular interest. The author’s choice of the type of enjoyment which is deeply linked to the grammar of experience of the film spectator. In order to bridge the gap between his work and the habitus of the film medium, Ikeda decides to contact what Francesco Casetti, in a recent paper, (we will quote again further on) defined as the liturgical capital of the medium (in our case the film).

a medium continues to maintain an identity, that of its uses which have consolidated over time and which don’t seem to disappear even if other uses have joined the main one. It continues to maintain an identity on the basis of the “liturgical capital” it hoarded, from which possible new investments are made.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Id.
\(^9\) Casetti F., 2009, I media dopo l’ultimo Big Bang, Che fare? La tv dopo la crisi, Link 8, p. 199
In this sense *Datamatics 2.0* is a privileged case allowing us to question ourselves on the forms of persistence of the film. On its capacity to escape from the cages of classic definitions, ever tighter where not already mystificatory, in order to work on the construction of its identity also when it doesn’t seem to be envisaged. This because the behavioural habit towards it (in both consumption and production terms) is so strong today that it can colonize spaces which apparently do not seem its own. So as to better understand how this can happen, broadly speaking, as in the case studied herein, we should consider Stanley Cavell’s fundamental concept of *automatism*\(^\text{10}\). With the term automatism, we mean that set of processes, both technical and linguistic which, building up in a series, show regular features, bringing about the hypothesis of a recurring rule that regulates and explains their functioning, removing them from the mere occasional dimension on one hand and on the other setting them free from the total subjection to the intentionality of the subjects involved. It thus comes before the intentionality of the author’s function; both collective (as in the case of a film), or due to a single subject (such as the writing of a novel). Creating a text means always accepting or breaking away from a set of rules or habits, more or less specifically known.

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With regard to automatism, Casetti places it among the reasons leading to a possible meeting between symbolic demands and the complex of actions, places and speeches.

These recurring procedures offer a stable and tested ground for exercise, where symbolic demands can flow into well oiled mechanisms and at the same time the elements of a communicative situation can loose their occasional character owing to a clearly recognizable framework.\footnote{Casetti F., \textit{I media dopo l’ultimo Big Bang} p. 205}

At the same time he brings some additions to Cavell’s concept, one of which is fundamental to understand the functioning of our case study.

Speaking about automatism, you can – and perhaps you must – extend its presence from Cavell’s speech forms to other types of forms, such as behavioural ways or space types: automatism broadly deals with the \textit{habit}, i.e. with the existence of a custom or use, that Peirce already considered as one of the key elements of signs. The common sense that recognizes the existence of consolidated uses, and fixes media identities from these, finds here new grounds.\footnote{Id., p. 206}
Through this viewpoint, we can recognize in Ikeda’s work, his ability to exploit the feature of the film medium (as automatism) which manages to make apparently alien texts its own, starting from the processes (production and fruition) it employs. We would also like to stress how Datamatics 2.0 operation is even more subtle than it seems at first sight. It can look for a comparison with the identity of the film medium, not only in the recognizability of the technical device (which today seems an ever weaker identifying function13), but in the way it organizes space and in its social habits (for instance, as aforementioned, paying the ticket, duration of the show, fixed timetable, no encore, etc.).

In these terms, we can add a further element of interest to the rich range of problems Ikeda’s work faces: the fact that Datamatics 2.0 invites us to think about the possibility of looking for the key to the film medium identity, in the paradigm of expression of a cultural and, at the same time, social habit.

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13 “Cavell has been using the word “medium” to refer both to the physical basis of an art and to the artistic discoveries of form and genre and type and technique that give significance to that physical basis. Because it is by virtue of the automatism of photography that moving pictures satisfy our wish for the world re-created in its own image, the power of the film medium can be said to be the power of its automatism” Rothman W. and Keane M., 2000, Reading Cavell’s The world viewed: a philosophical perspective on film, Detroit, Wayne State University Press.
In order to start a discussion about the connections between urban space and space of the image, it is necessary to refer the reflection to a same semantic system, so that we need, first of all, to define an equivalence between concepts and words. According to this I will adopt the term of architecture by shifting its meaning toward a definition that allows me to use it everywhere the gaze of a moving spectator meets an organized, dimensioned and ordered space. In this way I will be able to talk about urban architecture as well as image architecture, by considering both these expressions as architectures of the visible, where the gaze of a moving spectator drags narrative threads by following traced routes.

My proposal deals with an analysis that respects all the traditional categories of film analysis, but at the same time tries to find out new analytic perspectives, by observing the spatial organization of the image, of its own architecture.

In my opinion this is a really necessary reflection in front of a cinema that for sure is now forced to re-consider all its processes of creating stories, in a representative system where the narrative structure often and often depends on visual dimension in an unbalanced relation.

I will proceed by using the concept of *respatialization* of film image, as a process of visual re-articulation of space, as a consequence of different phenomena of media invasion, according to which the practices of reading and relation between subject and image have to change.

Often *respatialization* is responsible of mutation processes of space-time coordinates, according to which by changing one dimension, the other is submitted to adapt itself like two reciprocally connected variables.

The spreading invasion of vision devices in urban space, each one keeping its own extension, has made the subject in habit with the comparisons of different times. Duration and speed of images flows are the variables through which suspensions, accelerations, delays, mix themselves in the real space, working to control people passages, moments like pieces of projected images.
The transformation of temporal dimension by manipulating space, is a dominant element in the complicated cinematographic transposition of Jason Bourne adventures, created by Robert Ludlum starting from 2002. The cinematographic version is now composed of three chapters - The Bourne Identity, The Bourne Supremacy, The Bourne Ultimatum - telling the efforts of Jason, a secret agent, to recover his memory, passing through escapes and pursuits all around the world. Bourne’s trilogy is a meaningful example to introduce the analysis of image space, because it contains several metalinguistic references for the vision, strongly representative of our urban landscape experience. Moreover it is an example of an architectonic representation of the effects of the visual models that devices imposes to real space and its subjects. We are going to start with a scene taken from The Bourne identity (USA, 2005) by Doug Liman.

Bourne is escaping across Europe trying to find out some details about his real identity. In this moment he is moving by car from Zurich to Paris, but he is identified by the secret service for which he has been working in the past, and becomes a sort of prey of a man-hunt, involving different agents spread all over the continent.

First of all we see the offices of the secret service where we realize that they have found Bourne by using a very sophisticated system of access and control of all the surveillance cameras in the city: Bourne is completely surrounded by lenses following all his movements. In a metalinguistic recall to his role of protagonist, he becomes the main character of the narration running on the central screen in the middle of the wall of the office, too. So he is placed in a perfect position to be seen by all the computer desks, becoming a sort of visual reference for all the shots constructed around his projected images. (figure 1)

So, inside the office we hear the chief asking for the instantaneous reunion of all the best agents in Europe, to be ready to reach and kill Bourne.

We assist to the development of a scene where the image coincides with a portion of a computer screen which is making a research through a map, and then with a satellite vision of South Europe, reducing progressively the shot to a city, Barcelona, a street, a room, a man with a mobile device, and then starting a new research again. The scene shows the same process that we activate using Google Earth or Google Maps to visualize some parts of the world and focus the attention on the precise detail we want to see on our computer screen. When the localization of the agent is complete, the film image is displaced by fusing itself with the image on the computer screen. The space of the image is the satellite map from which the detail of the research comes out, followed by the fly sight of a city that we recognize as Barcelona. (figures 2-4)

The whole scene is built with a very intense and fast editing like the time we need to open a web page, where images of satellite maps overlap to real images of the city, but on that same space several graphic signs of localization devices continue to compare. So, it happens that there is an overlapping between real spaces and representations of spaces that produces a unique space reduced in a unique time,
the present, where the instantaneous events prevail: we see transmission and reception of communications in real time. Everything seems to be accelerated, there is no time to understand all the passages which lead from an image to the other, because watching is enough. Duration of the transmission of information coincides with duration of the vision, so that time appears shorter than real one, shorter than here and now, as well as the editing running after the present.

The contemporaneous situations in different parts of the world represent the main column of a visual structure based on time. In fact, space seems not to have boundaries, while time is totally condensed in the present, in the action going to be done. Distances do not exist in the visual world of Bourne, because technology deletes it, so that the spaces of the character's life become just exposed surfaces, places without history or depth, possible variations of the same interface. As a matter of fact, the succession of the images is only a multiplication of the present.

In L'espace critique, translated as The lost dimension, Paul Virilio asserts: «[...] we encounter in the interface a form-image in which time more than space makes the ‘surface’, since the only depth is that of the primitive dimension of speed [...]» by talking about the crisis of physical dimensions due to the always and always unbalanced relation between technology and reality.

In The Bourne Ultimatum, directed by Paul Greengrass in 2007, time condensation is subdued to an extreme acceleration, by developing a structure that reminds of The Fold described by Gilles Deleuze, but this time under the form of visual folds in time.

Now we are going to watch a scene where Bourne is still surrounded by cameras, followed by the usual secret agents, driven by the ones inside the office. Bourne is trying to meet a journalist whose articles talk about Bourne's story, in order to get more information. The journalist is also controlled by cameras or particular surveillance devices placed in strategic positions or they are mobile points of view, devices in the hands of moving agents. The scene starts in the street but becomes more and more complex inside Waterloo Station. The construction of space follows audiovisual categories: movements are foreseen, communicated and checked through the telephone contact between Bourne and the journalist, on one hand and between agents and offices on the other. Anyway what we are more interested in, is the coincidence of time and the discontinuity of spaces. (figures 5-12)

During the pursuit, very often shots are doubled because we can see them through the eye of the camera or overlapped devices. We see the same moment twice, repeated, doubled, because cinema can represent contemporary actions only in this way: by showing them in succession. So there is a temporal axis that connects visually the spaces of the images that we see on the first layer, the first screen surface (people in the offices) and the mediated ones, a second screen surface. The connection between this two

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spaces is a connection between places far from each other, but contemporarily living and visible: «give me eyes on the streets» is the request of the man in the office and this literally happens. Even though the shooting lives works through very fast and uncontrolled movements because of the necessity of looking for an objective (that is Bourne), at the same time the directed shooting respects the same rules: so the direction style is made of dirty shots, out of focus, too fast passages from long shots to close ups, and we sensibly perceive these movements as driven by a technological device.

The mix of voices in the office and mute images of the station develops a chiasm structure, by connecting the screen space of mediated images, with the space of the office: the surface and the depth of the present in the same image. This is what we could define a **timed space**, architecture where duration is the essential condition to activate the playing between two spaces.

So the two spaces exchange something reciprocally: on one hand image re-spatializes itself by assuming the form of the device and on the other hand it acquires all the specific functions of the device itself. This process allows the gaze to move by crossing different spaces or architectonic layers, running across the present, passing from the condition of the observer to the condition of the observed.

In a system like this, where narration is built on a complex net of screens working as hooks for the gaze, it is clear to realize how the presence of vision devices inside the images could change the meaning (ri-semantization) of the film space. It is forced to change its own functions by activating different gaze’s behaviours strongly influenced by technological ones.

Both the examples we saw show two situations where the screen surface works like an interface in between, a threshold where the distinction between outside and inside, far and close, disappears. Virilio suggests the interpretation of the screen-interface like

«a new surface that annuls the classical separation of position, of instant or object as well as the traditional partitioning of space into physical dimensions, in favour of an almost instantaneous configuration in which the observer and the observed are roughly linked, confused and chained by an encoded language from which emerges the ambiguity of interpretation of represented form images [...].»

The process followed by Virilio, moving between two disciplines, by adopting the architect’s gaze in front of the organization of an urban design that includes a medial communication system, allows to substitute the traditional spatial, geographical, geometrical parameters with the screen interface ones. He uses the dimensions of the screen to describe the real space ones, passing from virtuality to reality. The screen becomes only a passage threshold that connects two worlds, an edge where the distinction between
inside and outside, far and near falls. At the same time volume and weight are no longer essential dimensions because they cannot survive on a two-dimensional surface.

«Each surface is an interface between two environments that is ruled by constant activity in the form of an exchange between the two substances in contact with one another. […] The limitation of space has become commutation: the radical separation, the necessary crossing, the transit of a constant activity, the activity of incessant exchanges, the transfer between two environments and two substances. What used to be the boundary of a material, its “terminus”, has become an entryway hidden in the most imperceptible entity. From here on, the appearance of surfaces and superficies conceals a secret transparency, a thickness without thickness, a volume without volume, an imperceptible quantity».

As Virilio points out in a prophetic analysis, the notions of geometric scale and physical dimension disappear by losing consistence in an undefined fragmentation of visible, spread on different points of view. As in the scenes we have just watched, the represented space is so wide and spread on very huge distances, that it is reduced to a whole present: it is the perspective of real time, “the real time-space where the action starts to happen” as Virilio says in L’espace critique. Virilio describes an urban landscape where the time coordinates prevail on the space ones and where physical distances fall because of the instantaneous times. What he tries to describe is what I see in this images: in the urban space the subject assists to the presentation and narration of now. The system of surveillance devices in our cities, in the shopping centres, in the banks, produces places where the subject can see himself living, but displaced on a screen visible to everybody. So that he loses his difference between here and there, between private and public dimension. In a space without any kind of physical parameter, time is the unique immutable dimension. The spatial distance between reality and virtuality is substituted by a temporal proximity.

«[…] the inhabitant of the teletopical metacity can no longer clearly distinguish here from elsewhere, private from public. The insecurity of their territorial hold extends from the space of their own world to the space of their own body».

In L’estetique de la disparition, translated The aesthetic of disappearance (1984), Paul Virilio asserts that «The question today therefore is no longer to know if cinema can do without a place but if places can do without cinema».

3 Ivi, p. 17.
In this assertion is contained, in my opinion, the depth of our reflection about the intersection between disciplines and kinds of spaces: the real, urban, architectural one and the virtual one of the communication system, the image. Well, in what he defines the “global world” where we live, without any territorial limits, cinema is displacing itself in several portions of space of representation just trying to continue to represent the world as it is: an indefinite mosaic of static and mobile (sur)faces of the present.
The loss of dimensions in Bourne’s world.
LittleBigPlanet² is a video game based on audience content production that transforms players into authors. At first sight it seems nothing more than a classic platform³. But when the player completes the story mode, the game is far from being completed.

Any LittleBigPlanet gamer can download from PlayStation Network⁴ levels made by other users. He can play or modify them or create his own level with a huge editor that makes bottom-up production the core of the game [Figure 1]. Despite not very good sales figures at the beginning, the game developed by Media Molecule sold more than three million copies in two years⁵.

In winter 2010, Sony Computer Entertainment will publish LittleBigPlanet², in which the powers of the players will be extended from the simple level creation to the game genre itself. In this sequel the spatial, temporal and procedural qualities of the user generated levels will be totally controlled by the player.

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² LittleBigPlanet (PS3 version), Media Molecule, SCE 2008.
³ A platform game is based on getting over platforms laid on different heights. The most famous title is, with no doubt, Super Mario Bros developed and published by Nintendo in 1985 for his NES (Nintendo Entertainment System).
⁴ PSN is the online gaming and media delivery service provided by Sony Computer Entertainment, dedicated to PlayStation3 and PlayStation Portable consoles.
⁶ LittleBigPlanet 2 (PS3 version), Media Molecule, SCE, Q4 2010.
Even if this evolution is radical, the first version of the game was revolutionary enough to affect and change the idea of gameplay as it was known. With these premises it’s clear that the strength of *LittleBigPlanet* is the player himself and the community where all creations are discussed, evaluated and shared.

**Between Spectators and Gamers**

Despite the impact of this change based on player involvement in the creative process, *LittleBigPlanet* is not a total novelty – at least from the users’ point of view. In fact, this kind of bottom-up approach to audiovisual content is quite common in the context of a broader media environment.

According to Henry Jenkins: «[…] the current media environment makes visible the once invisible work of media spectatorship». It’s clear that the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have deeply modified cultural consumption, allowing a different relationship with the text, and above all, the chance to physically modify it. But, as Jenkins stated, nothing has been created from the development of ICTs, these new technologies simply consented the rise of users and communities that had already been working on texts.

Thinking about cinema, it’s evident that classical viewing in movie theatres is now less central in the film experience: the relationship between movie and its viewer does not end with the vision but continues through a series of productive practices that generate new texts.

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According to Maria Grazia Fanchi, we are facing the “hyper-spectator”, a subject who «[..] applies himself to extend the pleasure [of his relationship with the film] to what is before and after the simple showing».

Looking at video games, even before the explosion of ICTs, gamers spent hours talking about their game experience with friends, expressing opinions about it, asking for hints to pass tricky passages and so on. These activities demonstrated that video games are not an anti-social medium even before the recent success of online gaming and, mainly, that players have always been active and able to produce meanings from their consumption of media. What was lacking was a connector that allowed the diffusion of these talks across the boundaries of local communities. The Internet, the main tool for this new author, makes them concrete (even if digitalized) and available to a widespread audience.

This is what actually changes in both cinema and video games: if this bottom-up production was known in the past as the result of a symbolic (or semiotic) activity, nowadays it moves from symbolic to concrete. The hyper-spectator is no more an accommodating receiver, he asks for an active role, he wants to be part of the medium and he wants to use it in order to produce concrete contents. Finally, movie-goers and gamers have grown more and more aware of themselves in their medial experience, and act as “produsers”:

Produsers engage not in a traditional form of content production, but are instead involved in produsage – the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement. Participants in such activities are not producers in a conventional, industrial sense, as that term implies a distinction between producers and consumers which no longer exists; the artefacts of their work are not products existing as discrete, complete packages; and their activities are not a form of production because they proceed based on a set of preconditions and principles that are markedly at odds with the conventional industrial mode.

As already said, this kind of evolution is common to both video games and cinema. So we have chosen to develop an analysis through a comparison between the two, rather than concentrate on textual similarities, investigating how their consumers use cinema and video games and how these audiences are related and comparable. This usage we look for is what we call “dilated fruition”: audience contribution becomes an important part of the fruition itself, literally expanding it; again, it’s not only about talking, reading or

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blogging. Above all we look at complex “bottom-up” production as home-made movies or the development of full contents for video games.

Produsers and Products

As a comparison between the bottom-up outcomes of video game and film “produsers”, in the context of the new authorship we tried to define above, online walkthroughs, game faqs, game reviews, cheat codes, and downloadable guides (even in video format) are the “bottom-up” outcomes of video game “produsers”; reviews, dedicated forums, and blogs are the “bottom-up” outcomes of film “produsers”. These works are part of a production that we define as aside from the main text, a part of what Gerard Genette called “paratexts”\(^\text{13}\).

Their purpose is to orientate the relationship or the consumption between movies or video games and their audiences (guides are made to “guide” gamers; film reviews are made to guide the choice of film lovers). But there is another kind of production that plays with texts in order to create something new. The growth of the ICTs, as mentioned, has shown to a widespread public the existence of these audience practices. Furthermore, with the diffusion of PCs, people got used to technology and started to use it for their own interests. For movie-goers this represented the possibility to have more and more sophisticated software to edit videos and a virtual space to share them, turning themselves into movie producers and distributors. Even for video gamers, things are also changing: according to Herz\(^\text{14}\), the revolution started from “mod” activities of online gamers communities. The importance of “modding” in games is unquestionable, however there are some differences between that experience and the focus of our analysis.

Modders worked directly on game code (often released by the software houses) to modify the game or to realize a completely different version of it. In both cases the game code was only formally available to everyone: the knowledge of computer language separated those who knew programming from those who did not. Often, the new games or contents were not able to find official distribution, thus remaining confined to the Internet as amateurish products. Nonetheless “modding” and “modders” represent the will of an audience to be considered as an active part of video game productions, not solely as players but as an audience capable of doing whatever it wants with its products. Cultural industries respond to these needs trying to stay close to their customers, catching their attention not only with new products but also by offering new changes. According to Jenkins, we can call these chances “marketing operations” or “a new form of democratization”, but it’s clear that there is an opening to bottom-up production\(^\text{15}\).


\(^{15}\) Jenkins, H., 2002, Interactive audiences?, cit.
As Phil Harrison, former Executive Vice President of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, pointed out, we are talking about “Game 3.0”\(^{16}\): there are several games that ask players to move from game-play to game-design, although the emphasis is weighted differently depending on the game. There are games such as *Super Smash Bros Brawl*\(^ {17}\) or *Animal Crossing Wild World*\(^ {18}\) in which contribution is secondary to gameplay. There are games like *Spore*, *LittleBigPlanet* or *Mod Nation Racer*\(^ {20}\) in which creation and sharing of content are fundamental parts of the game itself. These softwares don’t require players to be aware of computer language: instead, they offer simple object editors to lowering the entry barriers to production practices.

**Like Directors and Game Designers**

In 2007, during his keynote speech at SXSW festival, Will Wright, one of the most famous game designers, said: «I wanna take the players out of the protagonist of Luke Skywalker, and put them in the world of George Lucas\(^ {21}\). In this statement we can recognize his idea of video gamer: Wright claims for a universe maker rather than a player. This figure would have the power to control and modify worlds, aware that these operations are an integral part of the game experience.

As we can see, in the past years Wright’s games have become more open to player imagination: in *Sim City*\(^ {22}\) the player has to administrate a virtual city deciding everything that concerns infrastructure and building areas. *The Sims*\(^ {23}\) is about the people of Sim City. The player has to decide what people will do in their life, their job or career, what they eat, the clothing they wear, their hair style and so on. *Spore* deals with the real creation of life forms from unit cell phase to space exploration: the player has to make his creatures and, as the evolution consents it, can also generate buildings and vehicles.

Returning to Wright statement we can now understand it better. By intervening within the text, the new consumer demonstrates a competency and ability to organize it as if George Lucas who, before being a director, is a lover of cinema, science fiction and even an expert of lighting, special effects and so on. What we have described to this point as the new gamer perfectly fits into Wright’s conception.

The same thing could be said about the contemporary movie-goer. Like the player of video games, he possesses a full set of skills to produce content from the texts he loves. Michel Gondry’s *Be Kind Rewind*\(^ {24}\) protagonists are perfect examples. The film is a good portrayal and also a legitimation of

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\(^ {17}\) *Super Smash Bros Brawl* (Wii version), Sora Ltd., Nintendo, 2008.


\(^ {19}\) *Spore* (PC version), Maxis, EA, 2008.

\(^ {20}\) *Mod Nation Racers* (PS3 version), United Front Games, SCE, 2010.


\(^ {22}\) *Sim City* (PC version), Maxis, EA, 1989.


\(^ {24}\) *Be Kind Rewind*, 2008. [Film] Directed by Michel Gondry, USA.
“sweded” films as bottom-up creations. The producers of these sweded versions have good practical skills and a deep love for the original text, even if they work with no budget [Figure 2.].

Figure 2. Be Kind Rewind, poster portraying the shooting of RoboCop sweded version [© 2008 New Line Cinema]

A real example of these bottom-up movie productions is MGS: Philanthropy26 “A non profit fan movie based on the games by Hideo Kojima”, as the home page of the site dedicated to the movie says27. The Hive Division movie is based on the Metal Gear franchise, developed and published by Konami. The authors began their production shooting a low quality trailer and distributing it online for free. While doing this, they attracted new collaborators enlarging their community. By repeating this auto-promotion process several times they also got support from technical producers that gave them groundbreaking tools for free to improve at best the quality of the movie. With more or less no budget (10,000 Euros were spent in seven years of work), the very large community of Hive Division distributed, at the end of 2009, a seventy-two minutes movie, with high level audio and video, obviously downloadable for free [Figure 3.].

25 “Sweded” films are grassroots movies created by re-shooting part of a film replicating dialogues and situations with no budget.
Authors of Self

Considering all these productions we can argue they are related to a user who wants to express himself by sharing his passions with others. It could be seen as a way by which “bottom-up” creators show their investments and involvements in media (texts).

But we can also see here some differences between video games and films: in video games, bottom-up productions have found their institutional place, at least when in agreement with the game industry (i.e., LittleBigPlanet levels are shared and played through PlayStation Network). In the film industry however, audience productions have traditionally never reached any official distribution. Raiders: the Adaptation, a “shot by shot” remake of Raiders of the Lost Ark\(^{28}\), couldn’t circulate much. The Phantom Edit, a remake of Star Wars Episode I: the Phantom Menace\(^{29}\), suffered the same destiny. Even the sweded movies in Be Kind Rewind were destroyed by court bailiffs due to copyright violations.

It is curious that a production like MGS: Philanthropy, freely available on the Internet, didn’t find any resistance from Kojima or Konami. On the contrary the game designer himself, commented with great enthusiasm his viewing of the movie\(^{30}\). Even if we are talking about great franchises that generated many

\(^{28}\) Raiders of the Lost Ark, 1981. [Film] Directed by Steven Spielberg, USA.

\(^{29}\) Star Wars Episode I: the Phantom Menace, 1999. [Film] Directed by George Lucas, USA.

fans and soon became cult, only if productions literally change medium, from video game to cinema in this case, they can reach a good visibility.

Besides these differences in distribution destiny, if we remain in the same medium, the specificities of cinema and video games create also different effects on bottom-up activity. In video games, computer code sets the possibilities for the player. Even if the chance to have an active part in game design is presented as an improvement in creative freedom, this is problematic because computer code limitations keep the video game industry safe from unexpected uses.

However, users can upset the code even in closed systems. Some users generate particular “Mii”s using the official Nintendo editor, resembling famous film or game characters [Figure 4.]. Also the remake of famous texts in LittleBigPlanet custom levels or the use of an Iron Man-like sprite instead of a sprite completely invented in Drawn to Life, could be read not only as form of self-expression but as a reply to code limitation in order to have games meeting the users’ needs and as a kind of declaration of love for their favourite media products.

On the other side, movies seem to be completely open to consumer intervention. The outcomes are everything but predictable and only copyright can constitute a limitation.

Figure 4. Darth Vader Mii created with the official Wii editor.

31 Mii is the Nintendo Wii avatar. Every player could use it to play games developed by Nintendo itself, like Wii Sports or Wii Play.
32 Drawn to Life (DS version), 5th Cell, THQ, 2007.
The Future of Gaming?

The comparison we presented underlines the similarities between contemporary video gamers and movie-goers. Both extend the fruition in a broader media environment producing contents and expressing passions. Even if the chances for consumer production remain different in the two media, both subjects are part of the larger definition of “produser”. Both immerse themselves in a broader context in which different media merge not only their formal and linguistic features but also their paths of pragmatic fruition, in response to users which ask to be more and more active.

According to Reginald Fils-Aime, CEO of Nintendo of America, this creativity is the future of video game: «The era of passive entertainment is waning, active entertainment is where the action is. Entertainment consumers are moving from react to interact»34.

Rather than representing the future, this could be one of the possible outcomes for video game design, the path that software houses could choose to meet the players desire for creative expression, even if the freedom created is mainly illusory.