

Part Six - Edge, *macchina da presa* and point of view

The problem of the observer revisited — The *auteur* situation — The director situation
— The personage situation — The spectator situation

Short Panorama

Following Jacques Aumont's analysis we can characterize the evolution of the visual dimension within the 20 th Century in three stages: (i) the stage of the eye, (ii) the stage that goes from the visible to the visual and (iii) that from the visual to the imaginary. More than being another taxonomy this division is important for it tries to establish a distinction, within the visual domain, between the image, the vision, the visual, and the imaginary. Furthermore, from the point of view of the spectator, this taxonomy tries to address the problem of the observer, that is, the fact that we have two types of spectator: one situated 'within' the film and another 'outside' the film.

In following Virilio's proposition we accept that our idea of vision – including our visual education and understanding – is grounded in an artificial system originated in the photography and, later, in the cinema. It is then difficult to believe that something similar to an 'author' could be considered as a concept available to be used within the cinema analysis. For the same reason, the traditional ideas regarding the director, spectator and characters in cinema can no longer be universal and, in relation with them, we should refer to a film and not to a cinema. And that is why some authors stated that in cinema the characters become personages.

The idea that an image is *a construction* and not something that exists in its own is maybe the most notorious conclusion of this change on the conditions of 'actors' in cinema. Similarly, the idea that there is not a point of view but a set of multiple relations in a film is also a part of this change. Moreover, the Barthesian idea of two types of spectator –

one that projects ‘himself’ into the film and another that ‘brings’ the film into his intellectual and cultural system – is no longer clear and the spectator is nowadays, like in Woody Allen’s *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), someone who goes in and out of the plot of the film itself. Which also forces to re-think on the status of the character/personage.

Target

The purpose of this lecture is to briefly explore the consequences that the change on the visual perspective can have in the production of films or in the way we approach a film and try to understand it.

Key Questions

In the production of a film, which are the three fundamental elements? Why?

In analysing from a spatial point of view a film, do you think it is important to do a further spatial analysis on top of seeing how space comes up within the plot of the film?

If we accept that there is no direct relation between the eye, the idea of visual and the visual culture in which we grow-up, then how can we assess whether an image is good or, more, when is someone doing ‘good cinema’?

In the perception of your ordinary environment, how do you assess the intervention of cinema?