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From audiovisual to intermedial editing. Film experience and enunciation put to the test of technical formats

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ENZO D'ARMENIO

From audiovisual to intermedial editing

Film experience and enunciation put to the test of technical formats

Abstract. This contribution aims to describe the experience of audiovisual signification through a new reading of the theory of enunciation, by putting into dialogue semiotic and neurofilmology theories. The contribution is divided into three parts: i) a new reading of the theory of enunciation which emphasises the perceptual dimension; ii) the proposal of a formal description of the audiovisual experience in line with the structural assumptions of the discipline; iii) the elaboration of the enunciational concept of technical format of images, which can account for the continuity between the signification mechanisms that regulate audiovisual editing and those of an intermedial editing.

Keywords: semiotics; enunciation; audiovisual experience; perception; intermediality.

Introduction

The contribution aims to describe the experience of audiovisual signification through a new reading of the theory of enunciation. The fundamental premise is linked to the recent re-examination within the discipline of three key issues. Firstly, the selection of experience as the primary focus of interest (Fontanille 2008, Eugeni 2010): rather than analysing only the textual structures, the minimum scene including the interpreter and the text shall be considered. Secondly, the emphasis put on the substances of audiovisual expression, which in the case of film has led to the acknowledgement of the primary role played by perception (Gaudreault 1998, Spaziante 2013). Finally, the attempt to describe the dialectic between perceptual processes and semiosis (Eco 1997, Bordron 2010). Starting from these assumptions, the study aims to realise a synthesis which can account for audiovisual experience, thus demonstrating the relevance of a semiotic approach as compared with other theoretical frameworks. Indeed, within the current debate about film and digital media, despite the prevalence of experiential orientations which consider semiotics and textualism outdated, a reflection on the processes of signification re-

mains implicit and unavoidable¹. The study's hypothesis is that the semiosis operates the fundamental suture between the mechanisms of perception and the interpretative processes of more complex editing sequences. In other words, it is not the perception which explains the semiosis, even though it illustrates its specific character in the audiovision. Rather, it is the semiosis which makes the perception significant, and emphasises its role and quality.

The argument can be outlined in three main steps. Enunciation shall be interpreted as the process which projects the interpreter in a different place, time and before other actors on the basis of the substances of expression of a semiotic function (paragraph 1). In the case of audiovisual enunciation, such projection occurs with the essential contribution of perception (paragraph 2). In order to account for the fundamental articulation between perception and discourse, which supports audiovisual experience, the study proposes the following formal description: the plan of expression is determined by the dynamic relationship connecting the sensory material produced by the text and the spectator, while the plan of content is obtained from the inferences produced by such relationship (paragraph 3). With the help of some examples, the study demonstrates that the unities of expression are not pre-determined, nor can their size be set *a priori*. Instead, the semiosis mediates between perception and discourse, thus selecting the signifying unities. In the light of this hypothesis, the study investigates the role played by the substances of audiovisual expression, and proposes the concept of *technical format* (paragraph 4). The concept indicates those substantial elements of images which evoke the device and the situation that has produced them. The diffusion and multiplication of recording devices has indeed enabled a series of new compositional possibilities. By rendering signifying the differences of definition, perspectival distortion and space of representation, such editing can be defined as intermedial (Montani 2010).

1. Experience and enunciation

The theory of enunciation was proposed by Émile Benveniste (1966-1974), in order to account for the structures and processes which mediate between the linguistic system and the discourses which are actually produced². Every act of *parole* is indeed linked to the action of a speaker

¹ For an overview of the main theories on film and media see the recent Dusi (2014: 13-28). With regard to the sociosemiotic approach developed by the author, see also Marrone (2005).

² With regard to enunciation, see the contributions by Manetti (2008), Coquet (2007) and the relevant entry in Greimas and Courtés (1979). For a recent overview on the concept of enunciation in human sciences, cf. Colas-Blaise, Perrin and Tore (2016).

within a dialogical situation; the speaker appropriates the linguistic system, thus producing the discourse. Benveniste has investigated this mediating mechanism by identifying a formal apparatus linked to the forms of subjectivity, temporality and spatiality which articulate the enunciation. These consist in a series of special categories which, despite being part of the linguistic system, assume their full meaning only when they are used in a discursive act. This group includes personal pronouns, verb tenses and place and time deictics. For instance, words such as “I”, “here” and “now” make sense only because they refer to a specific situation, in which they indicate the speaker, the place and the time of the enunciation. Outside of this dialogical context, the same words are empty forms. These categories are therefore defined thanks to the relationship between the time, place and subject of the experience on the one hand, and the time, place and subject of the discourse on the other. The formal apparatus reveals the mechanisms through which enunciation doubles experience discursively, using it as a centre of reference.

In principle, it is the type of language which determines the mediating processes and structures between the categories of its system and their discursive utterances. It is certainly possible to postulate a general enunciation, but the formal apparatus used to analyse its mediating structures must be specific. It is therefore necessary to identify how audiovisual discourse such as films, advertising and TV series puts the time, place and subjects of the experience in relation with the time, place and subjects produced by its discourses. It must also be noted however that since quite some time a rift has opened between audiovisual enunciation theories and general semiotics. The latter discipline has chosen to develop its structural assumptions excluding completely experience from its field of reflection. Algirdas J. Greimas (Greimas and Courtés 1979), the main representative of the Paris school, integrated Benveniste’s theory within his generative path, a formal diagram which simulates the mechanisms of meaning production, in order to be able to analyse them without considering the elements which are external to the textual structures. The price for the development of a sophisticated methodology of analysis has been a distortion of the theory of enunciation: the production of the discourse starting from the semiotic system is taken into account only as an instance of origin. According to Greimas, enunciation is the mediation between an unattainable “I-here-now”, the one actually producing the utterance, and the structures which are concretely present in the text. These are the result of the projection, starting from that origin, of different subjects (not me), places (not here) and time (not now). In this structural version of the theory of enunciation the mediating character persists, but is reduced to a theoretical assumption, as only the textual structures are analysed. Moreover, in order to expand its theoretical scope, semiotics has postulated that signification rests on

structures whose context is extremely general, and whose manifestations in actual substances – for instance audiovisual ones – are utterly secondary. The hypothesis of an audiovisual semiotics is therefore disqualified from the start, as enunciation is reduced to a formal simulation of the production of meaning, which is conceived as entirely internal to abstract textual structures.

Nevertheless, in refusing textualist reduction, audiovisual enunciation theories ended up taking it too seriously. Just as semiotics broadened its immanent assumptions to include experiences of signification (Fontanille 2004, 2008), enunciation theories have described themselves as *anti-immanentist* (Odin 2000, Eugeni 2010). In order to develop a fully semiotic hypothesis, it is necessary to mend the fracture between the discipline's general assumptions and the semiologies of the audiovisual, by elaborating a theory of enunciation which is able to describe the relationships between experience and specific semiosis – in our case, audiovisual semiosis.

Paradoxically, a theory of this kind can be found outside semiotics, thanks to Bruno Latour's (2012) proposal for an anthropology of moderns. By expanding the theory of enunciation well beyond the facts of language, Latour's hypothesis allows us to clarify the relationship between semiosis and experience. Latour starts by refusing the opposition between a unique and immutable nature on the one side, and the infinite possibilities of language on the other. Instead, according to Latour beings enunciate themselves in an admirable way even if they do not produce representations; they are engaged in their existential enunciation regime, which cannot be reduced to something static. The journey of birth, growth and death, as well as the dangers which a being must face in order to remain alive, is a good example of such dynamic trajectory. Other enunciation regimes, including that of semiosis, develop from this primary one, which can be summed up with the notion of experience. It is precisely in the relationship between the enunciation regime of experience and the one of semiosis that it is possible to identify the conceptual nucleus capable of holding together general and audiovisual semiosis. Latour draws on Greimas' reflections very faithfully, affirming that semiotic inscriptions imply a shift (*débrayage*), i.e. they produce objects whose space-time coordinates are different from those of experience. Starting from the "I-here-now" of the experiential situation, through the *débrayage* we find ourselves engaged with different actors, time and places. Here lies the key difference with Greimas' reflections. While for the Lithuanian semiologist enunciation consisted in a logical projection completely internal to the text, starting from an unattainable origin (I-here-now of production), Latour considers primarily the moment of fruition of the work which, starting from the spectator's experience, is able to project him before actors, places and time internal to the text. The present study aims to emphasise the way in which the different semiotic

functions are able to realise such projection. In two very specific passages, Latour insists on the different modes of semiotic projection realised by different languages: «Music begins, a text is read, a drawing sketched out and “there we go”. Where? Elsewhere, into another space, another time, another figure or character or atmosphere or reality, *depending on the degrees of verisimilitude, figuration, or mimeticism of the work.*» (Latour 2012: 247; italics added). Contrary to the assumptions of Greimasian theory, the type of semiotic function determines the way in which signifying occurrences project us elsewhere, thus doubling our experience. «In any case, we got onto another *level*, in a triple shifting that is spatial, temporal, and “actantial” (to borrow from the jargon of semiotics)» (*ibidem*). In this way the mechanisms of signification, however general, develop thanks to specific processes of enunciation.

This happens every time a little cluster of words makes a character *stand out*; every time someone *also* makes a sound from skin stretched over a drum; every time a figure is *in addition* extracted from a line drawn on canvas; every time a gesture on stage engenders a character *as a bonus*; every time a lump of clay gives rise *by addition* to the rough form of a statue (*ibidem*).

Moreover, it shall be emphasised that in Latour’s perspective it is not the work which imposes completely its meaning on the interpreter, nor the interpreter which determines the semantic value of the work. Semiosis is an event in which the work affects the interpreter, projecting him in a different place, time and before other actors. However, semiosis also requires the interpreter to affect the work, prolonging its materials and substances to generate figures. A novel transports us in different places and time but, starting from the words and sentences of which it is composed, it requires us to realise an inferential transduction in order to generate its situations. On the contrary, a pictorial image opens a different scene, but asks us to recognize figures in the traits of colour and in the lines on the canvas. We are therefore looking for the way in which audiovisual texts project us in different time, places and before other actors on the one hand; and for the work of figuration required by the substances of expression on the other. It is evident how -in this perspective- the text, despite playing a fundamental role, is not the only entity which determines signification. The text projects us elsewhere starting from its substances of expression, but in order to do so its structures require a work of figuration capable of prolonging its materials. In other words, the issue is no longer to account for the signification immanent to textual structures, but for the one immanent to the experience of signification, in which text and interpreter constitute the minimum scene.

2. Perception and semiosis

In the light of the expansion described above, the theories of audiovisual enunciation which had defined themselves as extraneous to the immanence of the text can be reintegrated in full right, once the experience of signification is assumed as minimum nucleus. Lucio Spaziante (2013) criticises for instance Greimas' theory of enunciation by affirming that, rather than considering the act of production as an unattainable instance, it is necessary to start from the effect of the audiovisual text on its spectator in terms of perceptual grasp, i.e. the way in which it generates effects of meaning. In this way, notes Spaziante, one must consider in the first place the modality of access to the audiovisual text, which differs significantly from other types of semiotic function. While in spoken language a description is necessary to access a narrative world, in audiovisual discourse one *sees* and *hears* directly a series of perceptual delegates, resulting in a lesser degree of mediation. André Gaudreault (1998) used the term *monstration* to describe the way in which film is capable of narrating stories on the basis of its substances of expression, differently from verbal language, which is characterised by its *saying*. For his part, François Jost (1987) has developed two instances which are able to account for the perceptual doing internal to the text, going beyond the registration of the cognitive doing to which literary narratology had limited itself. In addition to the concept of focalisation, relative to the circulation of knowledge, Jost has formulated the two instances of *ocularisation* and *auricularisation*, which describe respectively the visual and auditive anchoring within audiovisual texts. With a move that has since then characterised the debate on enunciation, Jost has articulated the two instances in order to describe whether the seeing and the hearing are or not assumed by characters internal to the diegesis³. As Christian Metz (1991) has shown many years later, these studies risk to focus too narrowly on specific configurations, while ignoring the overall relationship in which they are situated. For these reasons, Metz has identified enunciation with the film itself, describing audiovision as an *impersonal* process which shows places, actions and characters. Only by starting from such impersonal process, which constitutes the primary mode of audiovisual enunciation, it is then possible to decouple more complex forms. Rather than identifying the configurations formulated by Jost and Gaudreault, this study seeks to answer the following question: starting from this series of *perceptual accesses*, how does audiovisual signification develop?

The starting point shall be the criticism advanced by Jacques Fontanille (2004) to the definition of syncretic semiotics, i.e. a textuality whose plan

³ Audiovisual enunciation gave rise to an intense debate: see the contributions by Casetti (1986), Bettetini (1984) and Metz (1991). With regard to visual enunciation, see the recent study by Dondero, Beyaert-Geslin and Moutat (2017).

of expression is composed by multiple languages. According to the relative entry in the dictionary by Greimas and Courtés (1979), the only way to study such semiotics is to postulate a unitary hypothesis with regard to content, and seek then to identify the relevances of the various substances of expression. Fontanille (2004) has criticised this notion, as it postulates that a semiotic is syncretic only if we assume that the content is homogeneous; it is difficult to understand how this reasoning could be applied to audiovisual texts, which are by their nature dynamic and need a negotiation to identify the two plans of the semiosis. Fontanille's proposal is to place the body as the fundamental operator of signification, an entity which approaches the occurrences of meaning starting from the constitutive multi-sensoriality of its experience. Following this suggestion, we shall first take into consideration perception as it develops from lived experience, and subsequently attempt to identify the relevances of media experience.

On this matter, Jean-François Bordron (2010) has elaborated a complex reflection, reinterpreting some phenomenological notions from a semiotic perspective. It is possible to find in this approach a similarity with the observations on semiosis formulated by Latour, according to whom signification is not determined solely by the text, nor by its interpreter. It is a relationship which defines the positions of subject and object only at a later moment. Bordron analyses the issue of perception in a similar way: it is not the subject which imposes perceptual signification on the object, nor it is the object which determines it. Perception is a relational event which projects the positions of subject and object only at a subsequent moment. With this regard the author draws on the notion of *serpentelement* conceived by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964) to indicate how subjects and objects co-belong to each other within the experience. The perceptual relationship is then the starting point, the common nucleus which includes all the possible perceptual profiles. Such nucleus is the plan of expression of perception, while the profiles actually selected, determined by the motor differentiation and intentional movements, select the plan of content, determining the semiosis. Therefore, the matter is not to start from a subject capable of perception and an object which offers itself to such perception, but rather to start from the perceptual relationship and its comprehensive possibilities (expression). Through the profiles actually selected by this relationship (content), the poles of a perceiving subject and a perceived object are determined. Bordron emphasises the fact that, contrary to common belief, perception is not a positive fact, but the result of a subtraction starting from the matter; the encounter between the body and the world begins with a resistance which can be traced back to sensory excitation, starting from which perception contributes to select further⁴.

⁴ Cf. Albertazzi, van Tonder, Vishwanath (2011). Starting from Franz Brentano's

Umberto Eco (1997) has also reflected on perception, despite focusing on mechanisms of a higher order than those examined by Bordron. The Italian semiologist's reflection centres primarily on the phenomenon of recognition, the first stable step at which the perceptive processes settles. Eco postulates a fundamental difference between perceptual and sign semiosis: «We speak of perceptual semiosis not when *something stands for something else* but when from something, by an inferential process, we come to pronounce a perceptual judgement *on that same something* and not on anything else» (Eco 1997: 125 Eng. trans.). In order to explain the dynamic of recognition, Eco formulates the notion of Cognitive Type (CT), i.e. a kind of schema based on an aggregation of recurring properties which derive from experience. Through a mental experiment, Eco imagines the way in which Aztecs elaborated a CT of the horse after having seen one for the first time: a “3-D model” based on the coherence of their perceptual acts (*ivi*: 130). However this is not an image, but «a series of morphological or motor characteristics (the animal trots, gallops, rears)’ which also contains ‘the characteristic neigh, and perhaps the smell’ as well as ‘the functional characteristic of being “rideable”». For these reasons, concludes Eco, «the CT of the horse was of a *multimedial* nature right from the start» (*ibidem*). According to this hypothesis, the stock of CTs stored in the memory enables the operations of perceptual recognition, which have a private character. On the contrary, the Nuclear Content (NC) and Molar Content (MC) are instead the result of further interpretations expressed socially in the form of signs⁵.

The present study proposes to interpret the perceptual relationship as the nucleus of the experience of audiovisual signification. The dynamic encounter between the spectator and the sensory materials delivered by the text constitutes the plan of expression. The plan of content is instead

phenomenology, the authors' hypothesis is that the informative content of perception needs to be carefully distinguished from mechanisms of a higher order, as it precedes and is autonomous from inferential operations. As far as the idea of a subtractive perception is concerned, the first contribution of the volume confirms this approach: «The optic nerve has a channel capacity of 10^8 - 10^9 bits per second, whereas estimates of the structural complexity of perceptions are generally below 100 bits per second. The many orders of magnitude gap indicates that perceptions have to be *very* selective» (Koenderink 2011: 42).

⁵ Paolucci (2010) has criticised the notion of Cognitive Type, because in his opinion the recognition processes and perception are not regulated by a Type-Token relationship. Rather than mechanisms which can be traced back to rules, they would be procedures based on diagrammatical regularities. Such clarification appears decisive, although it is important to highlight how Eco insists on several occasions on the revisability and openness of CTs, on their being culturally influenced and on the presence within them of thymic orientations. With this regard, see the suggestion by Desideri (2011: 51-58), who distinguishes the aesthetic, pre-semiotic indices, described as clusters of qualitative marks of perception, from cognitive schemata of the kind described by Eco.

obtained from the inferences which this relationship produces. The study will investigate and articulate the basic framework of this semiotic function.

3. Audiovisual signification

Going back to the minimum scene of audiovisual experience, the one made up by the spectator and the text, it is certainly possible to affirm that audiovision is based on mechanisms of perceptual recognition due to the summoning of Cognitive Types. However, it is first of all necessary to specify that in comparison to direct experience, the one configured by audiovision is indirect. It is precisely in this gap in time, places and textual actors, that it is possible to identify the principle of enunciation: differently from multi-sensory experience, the filmic one consists in a doubling limited to audiovision⁶. While multi-sensory experience includes all the possible profiles determined by the perceptual relationship between subject and objects, audiovision shows the objects of perception as already profiled in a specific way. These are presented from a point of view or point of hearing, for a certain length, within punctual actions. In Eco's terms, it is possible to affirm that the mechanisms of monstration, ocularisation and auricularisation are based on the organised presentation by the text of visual and sound hypo-icons.

Eco's proposal needs nevertheless to be integrated with the more recent neurofilmology theories, which allow us to understand the quality of perceptual mechanisms going beyond the sole phenomena of recognition⁷. An intermediate position is the one proposed by Ruggero Eugeni (2010), who has developed a theoretic framework fully compatible with the notion of Cognitive Type. Using the notions of *configurations* and *sensory diagrams*, Eugeni intends to indicate the coagulations of qualities stored in the memory as a result of the accumulation of lived experiences, which are then reactivated during the audiovision even in the absence of complete stimuli. As experience is constitutively multi-modal, each simple audiovisual sensation can recall the remaining sensory spectra. A rough surface shown in a film, for instance, evokes inevitably its tactile effect. According to Eugeni this is not a process of recognition, but a reactivation due to sensory micro-scripts, which make it possible to experience again some sensations. Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra (2015) have specified the dynamic of these perceptual mechanisms by applying the theory of embodied simulation to the study of film experience. The theory is based on the study of

⁶ With this regard, Laurent Jullier (1995) distinguishes the narrative world from the world of filmic projection. In a similar way, Eugeni (2010) uses the term *direct world* to indicate multi-sensory experience, and *indirect world* to indicate the audiovisual diegesis.

⁷ Cf. D'Aloia and Eugeni (2014).

neurologic behaviour made possible by brain imaging techniques, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), Electroencephalography (EEG), Magnetoencephalography (MEG) and Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). We can summarise in a simplified way the aspects which are of interest to the present study: multi-modal neurones, situated in the pre-motor area of the brain, are only activated when we perform a motor act with a goal, but also when we look at a manipulable object lying within the peripersonal area, i.e. within our reach. The identification of mirror neurones has subsequently allowed to expand this hypothesis. These are a type of neurones which are indistinguishable from the motor ones but show a different behaviour, as they activate not only when we perform a motor action with a goal, but also when we observe or hear another individual performing it. With this regard Gallese and Guerra talk of “audio-motor multi-modal integration”⁸. The theory of embodied simulation is able to explain on a neurological basis the effectiveness of cinema, opening up new areas of research dedicated to more complex mechanisms, such as the perceptual processes which make continuous editing fluid, or the capacity of camera movements to increase involvement. For this reason, the mechanisms of embodied simulation need then to be integrated at a higher level of complexity: although perceptual recognition is the basic mechanism of the audiovisual text, the one which gives us access to different places, time and actors, it is necessary to consider the dynamic between the shots. To see and recognize characters, places and objects is sufficient to transport us elsewhere, but not to describe their more complex discursive articulations. Simplifying, we can affirm that the mechanisms of audiovisual access are the bricks with which the architecture of the discourse is built. Such bricks form more complex clusters, which are selected as expressive configurations and are rendered signifying as contents thanks to the inferential activity.

Let us think about a simple case of analytic editing: “if we align, joining them together, hooves pounding on the ground, the head of a running horse and the back of a fleeing horse, we will obtain in its exactness and significance the image of a gallop” (Casetti 1985: XIX, translation by the author). In this example, the three frames showing different details of a horse become an expressive configuration only when an inference synthesises them in a content, that of a galloping horse. In conformity with Eco’s hypotheses (1984), it is necessary to insist on the fact that the inference is not the result, but the nucleus around which it is possible to identify, at its extremes, the two plans of the semiosis. Starting from the dynamic

⁸ It is necessary to insist on the difference between motor acts performed towards a goal and mere movements. Only the former are able to activate the mirroring mechanisms. The authors identify the activation of these processes also as a result of the observation of facial mimics, when this expresses an emotion.

relationship constituted by the encounter between the spectator and the sensory materials of the film, audiovisual signification can be summarised using the following scheme: i) first of all, thanks to the summoning of multi-modal Cognitive Types derived from actual multi-sensory experiences, audiovisual signification makes it possible to access the indirect experience of the text through the recognition of hypo-iconic signs, already profiled according to the single audiovisual modalities (the hooves of a horse; the running head; the fleeing back); ii) secondly, it selects and groups together the profiles of perceptual elements in more complex expressive configurations (the sequence including the hooves on the ground, the hear of a running horse, the fleeing back); iii) finally, it unifies them in the figurative paths of the content (a galloping horse). The selection of expressive configurations and their interpretation in a figurative path of the content (ii and iii) are the result of a single process of inferential construction, whose “bricks” are simpler and more punctual mechanisms (i). On the one hand, perceptual inferences allow us to recognize the hooves, the head and the back of a horse through multi-medial Cognitive Types which, as we have seen, also include olfactive data and typical configurations (to be ridden). On the other, a semiotic function subsumes these perceptual elements into an oriented discursive signification.

A sequence from Brian De Palma’s *Blow Out* (USA, 1981) allows us to push the reflection further. Jack works as a sound designer for a film studio. While recording night sounds for his overcoming film using a directional microphone, Jack witnesses a car accident, but becomes soon convinced that it was an assault, because he is sure to have heard and recorded the sound of a gunshot. After having brought one of the car’s passengers to safety, Jack spends the night in a motel listening to the accident’s sound track. The editing alternates the monstration of the room in which Jack is located with the bridge on which he made the recording. This configuration indicates that Jack is remembering what happened while he listens to the audio using the headphones. In one of the cuts showing the bridge, the image appears at first as completely blurred. When Jack recognize the call of an owl starting from the sound formants emitted by the audio track, suddenly the image comes into focus, until the recognition of the corresponding visual figure is made possible. The examined sequence shows how the mechanisms of monstration and auricularisation are able to project the spectator into multiple scenes at the same time. It is then the inferential activity which produces a univocal signification, because it is the semiosis which operates the fundamental suture between the audiovisual discourse on the one hand, and the perceptual profiles determined by the editing on the other.

Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the role of perception or magnify the role of the discourse: the first does not disappear into the

second, but continues to feed it even at higher levels of complexity. Similarly the discourse, with its signifying dynamics determined by the editing, operates to inform the perceptual mechanisms. Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* (USA, 1995) allows us to conclude the reflection on the relationship between perception and audiovisual signification. The film's protagonist is a futuristic technology called SQUID, which allows to record and then relive experiences, transmitting directly the sensory data to the neuronal circuits with the help of a helmet and an optic reader. This kind of experience is obviously beyond the reach of audiovisual discourses. However, the subjective shots on which the recordings are based, together with the cuts showing the involvement reactions of those using the device, allow us to imagine it with good approximation. If in the case of *Blow Out* the matter was to evoke Cognitive Types, in order to complete the audiovisual signs thanks to the repertoire of lived experiences, in this case the spectator is asked to magnify the stimuli inferentially, so that he can imagine an experience which he will never be able to live.

4. The technical formats

We have seen how the substances of expression of different languages can allow us to access the semiotic function in different ways, modulating the relationship between lived experience and semiotic experience. In the light of the above analysis, it is possible to overturn the theory of linguistic enunciation, thus showing how it represents an exception rather than a rule with respect to other types of semiosis. Two are the elements which allow us to set apart the natural language and find an unexpected richness in the other languages. First, the correspondence between experience and discourse – which lies at the basis of theory of linguistic enunciation – is due to the weak support of the natural language. The sound inscriptions have a limited storage capacity, which in turn entails the superimposition between the space-time coordinates of production and those of discursive reception. On the contrary, all other semiotic functions create a hiatus between the time, place and subjects of the production and the ones of the reception. For this reasons, in non-verbal languages – especially the visual and audiovisual ones – the substance of expression not only determines the modality of access to the semiotic function, but also provides fundamental indications about the circumstances of production. According to Christian Metz's definition (1991), film enunciation is determined by the self-reflexive framing of the text, which show it as the result of an act of production. In the light of the key role played by the substances of expression, the present study proposes the notion of *technical format* of images. The latter describes those elements of the substance of expression which, despite

their belonging to the text, enable the recognition of the device that has produced them. The perspective distortion of a shot can be retraced to a GoPro; a black and white film, low-contrast and choppy, will call to mind the equipment of early cinema; a fixed and elevated shot, with a green chromatic tone, evokes an infrared surveillance camera.

A final example allows to specify and conclude the analysis, i.e. the TV series *Narcos* (USA, 2015-present) realised by Netflix. The series follows the rise and fall of Pablo Escobar, the leader of drug trafficking in Colombia during the second half of the 20th century. While being realised using actors and fictional re-enactments, each episode also features archival footage, alternating the high image quality of the fictional sequences and the worn-out and low-definition formats of the documentary material. Rather than reducing its power of involvement, this kind of editing increases its effectiveness precisely by denouncing its own partiality. The documentary value of the whole experience is augmented by the juxtaposition of fictional reconstruction and archival footage. Thanks to these considerations, it is possible to identify a further type of editing, in addition to the audiovisual one, i.e. intermedial editing (Montani 2010). A particular aspect appears promising: starting from the substances of expression of the text, the technical format makes it possible to easily identify the time coordinates of its production, using the same mechanisms of perceptual recognition and inferential signification adopted by audiovisual editing.

Conclusions

This study has attempted to demonstrate that the theory of enunciation allows us to shed new light on audiovisual signification, by clarifying the relationship between perception, editing and discourse.

A series of examples has made it possible to discern the role of embodied simulation. Thanks to the stock of Cognitive Types and sensory diagrams stored in the memory, embodied simulation completes the hypo-iconic signs displayed by the text, reactivating the sensory spectrum excluded by the representation. However, we have established that such mechanisms only represent the foundations of audiovisual architectures, as they integrate into more complex articulations, organised around editing cuts. Between the mechanisms of perceptual recognition and completion on the one side, and the complexity of the audiovisual discourse on the other, lies the inferential work of signification, capable of mediating between the figurative paths opened by perception and identifying the signifying configurations. It is thus necessary to postulate an interpretative perception capable of both unifying the multiple paths opened by perception, and reopening them in order to retrospectively select different ones.

In conclusion, by investigating the role of the substances of expression this study has proposed a new enunciational concept, i.e. the technical formats of images. These consist in those elements capable of referring to the device that produced them, including definition, perspective distortion, space of representation and fluidity. These elements make it possible to situate the production of the text in a specific space-time window, thus allowing us to postulate a further type of editing, which uses the same perceptual and semiotic mechanisms of audiovisual editing, i.e. intermedial editing. As we have seen in the case of *Narcos*, the potential of this kind of editing is yet to be explored.

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