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VOLUME III

Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time

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Title **Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the** Journal "Scuola Democratica" – Reinventing Education VOLUME III Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time

This volume contains papers presented in the 2nd International Conference of the Journal "Scuola Democratica" which took place online on 2-5 June 2021. The Conference was devoted to the needs and prospects of Reinventing Education.

The challenges posed by the contemporary world have long required a rethinking of educational concepts, policies and practices. The question about education 'for what' as well as 'how' and 'for whom' has become unavoidable and yet it largely

remained elusive due to a tenacious attachment to the ideas and routines of the past which are now far off the radical transformations required of educational systems.

Scenarios, reflections and practices fostering the possibility of change towards the reinvention of the educational field as a driver of more general and global changes have been centerstage topics at the Conference. Multidisciplinary approach from experts from different disciplinary communities, including sociology, pedagogy, psychology, economics, architecture, political science has brought together researchers, decision makers and educators from all around the world to investigate constraints and opportunities for reinventing education.

The Conference has been an opportunity to present and discuss empirical and theoretical works from a variety of disciplines and fields covering education and thus promoting a trans- and interdisciplinary discussion on urgent topics; to foster debates among experts and professionals; to diffuse research findings all over international scientific networks and practitioners' mainstreams; to launch further strategies and networking alliances on local, national and international scale; to provide a new space for debate and evidences to educational policies. In this framework, more than 800 participants, including academics, educators, university students, had the opportunity to engage in a productive and fruitful dialogue based on research, analyses and critics, most of which have been published in this volume in their full version.

Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Space and Time A Premise

Papers in this third volume deals with the Covid-19 pandemic which is having an enormous impact on education systems worldwide. Policy makers, teachers, school managers, parents and students have been called to the reinvent their way of 'doing school'. At the same time, the governance of the education system and schools' organizations have been exposed to unprecedented tensions.

Within a short period of time, radical changes had to be introduced, simultaneously, at various levels of the school system. At national and regional level, there has been the need to rethink the way in which teachers are recruited, engaged and managed. National assessment and evaluation systems have been suspended or redefined in their uses by school actors The ways through which institutes were managed and organized had to be rethought, passing in a very short time through an on and off of dematerialization and hyper-normativity of time and space. Within schools, managers and teachers have been called to redefine the role of digital technologies in their didactic, as well as in their relationships with families and students. In some cases, these set of changes led to experience novel and unexpected daily proximities, in other prevailed a context characterized by distance and unsatisfactory relationships. Managers and teachers have been asked to re-invent their professionality to rethink their organizational, didactic and relational competences. Students and families, on their side, have been called to rebuild and reimagine new way of being at school, re-inventing the spaces and time of schooling and the way in which they relate among each other and with teachers.

The pandemic emergency has been a lens revealing intersections and structural tensions among various level and actors of the education system, but also allowing opportunities of changes thanks to the exogenous shock. At the same time, it must be considered that the emergency is interacting on pre-existing inequalities and contradictions. The pandemic clearly revealed the deep disparities of educational opportunities associated to students' life and housing conditions, beyond their access and uses of technological devices. Remote teaching and the enactment of an 'emergency didactic' has exacerbated learning difficulties for underprivileged students (children facing material deprivation, students with migratory background, students with special needs or disable, etc.). The interaction between the pandemic and pre-existing inequalities created different contextual conditions for actors' agency, orienting toward different directions the pandemic's transformational potential.

Higher education systems have been affected too: in constant evolution due to constant transformations of society and changed functions of knowledge, universities have undergone a structural change along with pandemic times. Simultaneously, the growing relevance of knowledge for the economic development of the capitalistic system has profoundly affected higher education systems, characterized by the neo-liberal approach which his subject of increasing critical analysis.

However, Higher education systems are starting to be affected by other somewhat inevitable changing processes due to the evolution of knowledge and the consequent forms of its transmission. These forms have to be necessarily new both because of the availability of new instruments and the increased need to develop interpretative models of a constant and often unpredictable change. In this juncture the university might assume a renewed central role. At Higher Education System level, the growing use of digital instruments is envisaged in order to cope with the rising of the management rates of the training offer as well as to answer to the growing differentiation of user categories. A feasible consequence could be the increasing of the already pressure for the differentiation among the universities, with the related social implications.

At individual university level, it is foreseeable the demand for university involvement in tackling the problems of society and the economy will increase. And this at global, national and local level. From an organizational point of view the most significant feature is represented by the accumulation of traditional and new tasks that do not seem to be possible to manage. Whatever form the higher education systems will come to take, it remains that a central point to be clarified concerns the management of change. It will be the market that will impose its rules and the universities will organize themselves individually within the invisible enclosures that will guide their policies (with predictable growing social and territorial differences), or instead the State will choose incentive policies to direct its training system. It remains that in a condition of uncertainty and constant change the university's roles multiply and become - at least potentially - more and more central. It can therefore be argued that the university is not only called upon to respond to the demands of society but by elaborating answers and solutions to the problems it progressively affects the functioning of society.

We are fully aware that each educational experience produces specific results and definitions of teaching-learning practices. The well-established model of the magister teacher, based on a one-tomany transmission of knowledge, is complemented by new configurations of teaching-learning practices. There are teaching practices that cultivate the ambition to combine the technological innovation with the psychological and pedagogical issues. Educational technologies, such as the Interactive Whiteboard, incorporate a new grammar and pragmatic in which the emphasis is placed on the involvement and the participation of the student, as well as on a "reverse teaching", compared to the traditional one. The diffusion of online educational platforms, based on algorithmic architectures and data-driven approaches, also draws attention to a personalized way of learning and a datafication of teaching. Digital technologies are therefore stimulating a series of transformations in the socio-material order of the class affecting the spatial and temporal configuration of teaching. At the same time, they are embedded in the complexity of the educational contexts that rework their practical and symbolic value.

In the European framework of strengthening the relations between the labour market and education, we also witness the implementation of teaching practices associated with the idea of knowledge as an economic and social investment. Recently, a large field of critical investigation has highlighted how teaching aimed at improving the employment prospects of students is deeply affecting public values in education. At the same time, different points of view in the educational field claim to postpone the transmission of skills related to the labour market to broader educational objectives of social inclusion and civic participation.

The new proxemics imposed by the current pandemic challenge traditional spatial configuration, from the arrangement of desks to the mobile use of chairs, from the forms of communication in virtual environments to the interaction in the classroom. Therefore, this is to register the need to re-elaborate the ecology of the educational practices, starting from the socio-material space of learning.

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The Process of Crossbreeding in Contemporary Artistic Production. New Routes in Aesthetic Education

Raffaele Tumino

Università di Macerata, raffaelino.tumino@unimc.it

ABSTRACT: This contribution analyzes the different ways in which the transcultural dimension acts in some contemporary artistic practices linked to experiences of migration, exile, diaspora. The artistic practices that will be examined are intertwined with each other as they propose a critical reflection on the complex and stratified interconnections between the cultural, geographical, historical, economic and social contexts of Europe and the contemporary world, with particular attention to the Mediterranean area, recognizing the global migration processes and their historical formation an essential element for understanding the present. The hope is that the point of view adopted for the understanding of artistic processes allows us to grasp an often underestimated aspect: on the one hand, the creativity of métissages, that is, the original configurations to which they can give rise; on the other, the infinite and unprecedented forms of relationship with the Other that art produces. Glissant's (1990) theory of relation seems to us indicative for understanding the productive and creative sense of mixing and wandering: the poetics of relation is a form of philosophical nomadism that emphasizes the importance of being in the middle as an ontology of non-unity, of non-purity, of non-origin, reconnects us to the living chaos of the world and to the possibilities of transformation that are inscribed in it. This contamination has repercussions on a social, cultural but above all educational level: for example, in its ability to reduce prejudices towards the foreigner or the different; to rethink the identityotherness opposition, to build new spaces of 'participation' and 'coexistence'.

KEYWORDS: art, aesthetic education, transculturality.

Introduction. Art means movement, the crossing of spaces and territories

In this article, we will look into the artistic practices emerging from experiences of migration and cultural hybridism. They will be analysed in terms of active practices, of processes in the making through constant contamination between art and theory (Grosz, 2008). I, therefore, considered it worthwhile to accept Guattari's idea of art not as an Institution but starting from its techniques, from the processes of creation, from its practices, making it pour in other domains to play with it from the 'outside', on the edge of or across, the space designated by the art as an Institution (Guattari, 1991).

The artistic practices analysed in this study are placed in a decisive period of time in contemporary art, the first twenty years of the 21st century. They are intertwined with each other in proposing a critical reflection on the complex and stratified interconnections between cultural, geographical, historical, economic and social contexts of the contemporary world and in recognizing the global processes of migration and their historical origins as essential elements to understand the present and in order to create new dimension of 'coexistence' and 'belonging'.

This argument is connected to the acknowledgement of the unavoidable resort to 'implicit aesthetics', which can be found both in the declarations of the artists and in the artistic practice itself, as well as 'in the dominant concepts and in the *vox populi*', in the common tastes, trends and costumes. (Tatarkiewicz, 1979). Indeed, as Władysław Tatarkiewicz properly observes: «if the historian of aesthetics were to source his material solely from aestheticians, he would not be able to provide a complete picture of the past thought on art and beauty» (ivi, 12).

Today we face a 'new course of aesthetics' related to a vast range of issues, objects, events, activities that affect everyday life in its various manifestations: from nature to the urban environment, from craftsmanship to industrial design, to the beauty of sport (Welsch, 2017). From this point of view, Yuriko Saito – one of the most renowned voices within this line of research – highlights that there are virtually no limits to what can become a source of an aesthetic experience: it is an extension or indeed, as she claims again Saito, an expansion of the field of aesthetics, rather than the opening of a new field of study (Saito, 2015).

Furthermore, the most relevant fact that has emerged in artistic production since the 1990s is the configuration of art as a 'relational experience'. This has radically changed the nature of the place of art as well as of the artistic object itself (Bourriaud, 2010). An art capable of creating space-time interweaving, areas of contact between global and local, proximity and distance, of creating itself new relational spaces, activating meeting points in which the interaction of the public is a substantial part of the art piece, and where the aesthetic act implies not only a formative dimension but a social dimension as well (ivi). Again, it is a way of making art that developed during a period of transnationalism of migrants, of artists, a period of diasporas and cultural nomadism (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996). Thus, it is art itself a producer of new meanings, of a 'migrant' feeling, not exclusive, possessive, but open and plural.

In this work, I will suggest some artistic examples chosen in the field of digital cinema for an aesthetic education program in secondary schools.

1. Elements of digital aesthetics in transcultural cinema

Given the potential that digital technology offers to the artistic works presented in this contribution, it is necessary to build a critical framework of the digital technology field, comparing it with the cultural complexity of contemporaneity.

Digital technology represents a new possibility for artistic production and experience that has its roots in the artistic experiments of the late twentieth century, and it focuses on the event, on public participation or on the importance of collage as opposed to the display of isolated and structured objects (Weibel, 1999; Manovich, 2000).

In *Digital Art* Christiane Paul tries to clarify the terminology used for art forms using technology: what is now known as 'digital art' was also called 'computer art', then 'multimedia art', and now it is enclosed in the umbrella term 'new media art', which at the end of the twentieth century was mainly used both for film and video and for the so-called 'sound art' and other hybrid forms (Paul, 2003).

It must be said that the novelty element contained in the expression 'new media art' is the fact that technology offers previously unknown possibilities for artistic production and experience. The name 'digital art' refers to a wide range of artistic practices that could hardly be classified in a specific aesthetic field. In *The Digital Film Event* by Vietnamese director Trinh T. Minh-ha, which we will deal with later, the director operates on the borders among documentary, fiction and experimental cinema and suggests that the digital format is not only more flexible and versatile than the analogue format but also allows to cross the boundaries between film and video, breaking the continuity of the narrative (Minh-ha, 2005).

In the field of cinema and new media studies, the work of Laura U. Marks: The Skin of the Film deserves to be remembered for its relevance to the topic and the times. For those artists that she herself defines as 'intercultural', the skin of the film is seen not so much as a screen, but as a membrane that brings the audience into contact with the material forms of memory (Marks, 2000). 'Intercultural cinema' is described by Marks as a movement between the second half of the eighties and the end of the nineties, expressed by artists who belong to the new cultural groups of the West, emerging from migratory and diasporic flows. It is a cinema that expresses the political issues of displacement and hybridity, and which in some cases has been defined as third world's cinema, marginal, anti-racist, postcolonial, Third Cinema. The artists involved live in the metropolis but come from or have their origins in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Latin America. Some of them are: Hanif Kureishi (M_Y Beautiful Laundrette, 1985; The Buddha of the suburbs, 1991); Mira Nair (Monsoon Wedding, 2001; The Reluctant Fundamentalist, 2012), Julie Dash (Daughters of the Dust, 1992), Trinh T. Minh-ha (Reassemblage, 1982; Surname Viet Given Name Nam, 1985), Michel Khleifi (Fertile

Memories, 1980; *Wedding in Galilee*, 1987; *The story of the three jewels*, 1995). Whether it is short experimental works or longer films, this wide production is defined by Marks in terms of 'cinema', not only because it consists of time-based audiovisual works, but also because it concerns the experience of an audience gathered in a room (Marks, 2000). Now, the fact that the release is rarely in traditional cinema and more frequently in cultural centres, galleries, museums, festivals and, we hope, in schools and university classrooms, can only make the displacement of the cinematographic paradigms of representation and enjoyment of the work stronger (ivi).

In this cinematographic production, formal experimentation cannot be separated from the political conditions in which the pieces were produced: experimental forms of art suspend the norms of representation and realism, trying to recall the experience of living through two or more cultures, or within a minority group. Many of these works evoke both individual and collective memories, through some kind of non-visual knowledge. In particular, Marks rethinks cinema produced with new media in connection to multiple sensorialities and developing the concept of «haptic visuality» (ivi, 22). As a form of vision and knowledge that involves the senses, haptic visuality offers a method of sensory analysis that involves directly the body of the beholder.

2. Analysis of the case studies.

The preliminary acquisition of some elements of digital aesthetics certainly does not go in the direction of a complete and cohesive theorization, but it is an essential way of understanding the artistic practices emerging from digital cinema, which ends up enclosing the concept of 'beauty' and the way of living the aesthetic experience, also in light of what we affirmed about the 'haptic visuality'.

In the works analysed in this article, the emphasis is not on the representative power of the images, but on their material presence which is perceived before any logical understanding. Since there is no narrative to follow, the experience of watching/listening/hearing pushes the public to expand the meaning of the images and the sound, not with the purpose of isolating and understanding them, but in order to feel close, to 'speak nearby', as the film says. *Reassemblage* (1982) by Trinh T. Minh-ha: «I do not intend to speak about/Just speak nearby».

2.1. First case study. Night Passage by Trinh T. Minh-ha, 2004.

This provoking digital tale tells the story of three young friends who travel for a brief moment on the train between life and death. Their journey in and out of the land of 'awakened dreams' takes place during a long journey on a night train. Director Trinh T. Minh-ha and artist Jean-Paul Bourdier ingeniously frame through the train window, whimsical and sensual oneiric landscapes, accompanied by an equally beautiful and otherworldly soundtrack. Minh-ha challenges and provokes her audience, changing the way she engages with the spirit and the forms of cinema.

From the very first sequence (the passage of a train), Night Passage presents itself in its formal setting, that of a digital journey. Technology has a major impact on the creation of the film: first of all, it facilitates the director's work on the fluidity of time, because it allows the audience to go back and forward easily. In that sense, digital technology enhances an effort extensively made by independent film-makers in the previous years, that of breaking with the linear time dominion. In the experience of *Night Passage*, time multiplies in the proliferation of crossed events and spaces. Furthermore, another aspect of technology influences the experience of the spectators: without a logical narrative structure, the magic of a film like Night Passage captures the spectator and leaves him/her to jump in and out of the screen and to interpret the meaning according to his/her expectations. In an evocative and poetic way, the film shows the limits of multiculturalism and interculturalism and emphasizes transient states and trans-cultural differences, in which the prefix 'trans' doesn't refer to the achievement of a fixed abode or the integration of diversity into society, but to the processes of identity construction that challenge the monolithic constitution of national and cultural identity.

2.2. Second case study. The nine muses by John Akomfrah, 2010.

A visual essay on mass immigration to the UK after WWII. Through nine chapters called as the muses daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the director mixes archival images on the topic of immigration with footage of Alaskan scenery and quotes from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, The *Odyssey* by Homer, *Richard II* by William Shakespeare, *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri, *The Unnamable* by Samuel Beckett, *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Song of Solomon* from the Old Testament, among many others. He does that with the intention of deconstructing the Western poetic and philosophical canon.

The journey becomes a key theme, with the emphasis on the route, on the transit and not on the final destination. In the digital montage of the film, ships arrive with migrants, while the voice reads passages from *The Odyssey*. The spectators contemplate the desolate ice, while the voice becomes a critical tool of interpretation.

As Akomfrah suggests, there are no local or universal realities, but connections between the local and the universal, in a constant dialogue between the two. In *The Nine Muses*, Akomfrah focuses on the creative use of archival images and materials, photos and quotes, radio and television excerpts, to reread the archive in its ambiguity and let it become an aspiration for the future, a continuous, concrete and incomplete project for the construction of memory. For a diasporic subject, the archive is meaningful because it is the space of the memorial, a tangible space in which memory proves the existence but also the battle between the official and the unofficial, the inside and the outside, the inclusion and the repression. After all, as Achille Mbembe reminds us, each archive in its architectural structure, in its organization and division, always recalls the cemetery, a place where fragments of lives are preserved but also buried, hidden, made invisible (Mbembe, 2002).

Akomfrah is the co-founder of the 'Black Audio Film Collective' in 1982, which is specifically looking for mass media forms of telling about the identity issue of the black people of England in the most appropriate way. And in this film, Akomfrah clearly pursues the path of poetic lyricism, which links memory (archive images, quotes) to a reflection on the need to find a new meaning for those same events, exploring roads not yet travelled (the wandering of men in the glacier). The invocation to the Muses can then be taken also as an indication of the reading that the author provides to his spectators: we are in the realm of poetry, drop logic and follow the sound, the image, their various and polysemous combinations.

2.3. Third case study. Babel – Judgment Day, 2018, documentary film produced for the web by Manuel Coser, Gianluca De Serio, Andrea Grasselli, Giulio Zingari.

Babel is a collective and polyphonic work. It is a fragmented overview told in the first person. It is a plot of stories, confessions, visions, contemplations. It is a multi-handed diary. The centrality of the physical place from which the film is born, the 'Reception Centre' where the protagonists live, is the hub from which every story, every escape, every path starts and returns. The story is told by heterogeneous sources: photographs, audio recordings, videos, home movies, video calls and telephone calls. The linguistic and iconographic explosion of the film allows for a permanent search, between immersion or dispersion, between description and disorientation, between geography and doubling, of a common ground, of one's own gaze. This fragmentation of languages gives the opportunity to each protagonist-creator, as well as each spectator, to move freely in the territories, real or imaginary, near or far, that made up his/her city.

A solemn Turin unfolds to the eye in the early hours of a warm autumn day. We explore the city with David Ewere, Frank Makata and Alle Mbaye, three asylum seekers living in an Extraordinary Reception Center on the edge of the northern suburbs. Starting from this place, through fragments and glimpses of life, a hidden, unpredictable, personal and collective city is gradually created. We wander as adventurous captains, immersed in the emotional geographies of a territory made up of encounters, ties and connections with other languages, other cultures and other traditions in a game of differences and similarities, of clashes and encounters. Cultures are entities with extremely unstable and 'porous' boundaries (Chambers, 2007, 9). The gaze of the Other reveals another Turin, un unknown Turin: the workers, the friendships, the projects, the affections, the civic commitment, the stories, the conflicts, the claims, the forms of solidarity that animate the city behind a composite and rigid facade. A magmatic universe of a small community of young people is outlined in the maps drawn by the walk of the protagonists, who have just landed in a new world, over which the Day of Judgment inexorably looms over. They will have to contend with the bureaucracy for the change of rules produced by the 'Decreto Sicurezza bis' of 2019. Will they get a residence permit? Or will they be rejected?

Conclusions

The works of the directors mentioned here can be an opportunity for growth as they present guiding themes that can be found in a diverse range of cultures: travelling, pilgrimage, nostalgia, roots, the stranger. However, what makes tangible the transcultural device created by these works are the following discoveries.

The first: the value of melting pot and hybridism as coexistence among different cultural identities, as an increase of internal dialogues, as a work of listening and of integrating the different selves. Listening to internal otherness represents a training process that promotes the creation of a richer and more articulated identity, able to integrate, and unable to exclude, the different concepts of humanity developed by various cultures. The educational value of the transcultural, a dimension evoked by the artistic examples in this article, lies in the fact that it challenges every monolithic identity drift by inviting it to welcome the Other and doing the same with the internal 'others'.

The second: the transcultural dimension gives to Otherness a crucial role in the construction of identity, promoting authentic relations among cultures (against any form of synthesis) and fostering a greater ability to explore one's own experience. This perspective urges us to decolonize the monocultural mind, rewrite the 'history of the other' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2015; de Certeau, 2005). In particular is in the field of social, anthropological, educational sciences, in psychology and transcultural psychiatry (Devereux, 1975; Leff, 2008; Goussot, 2014), that the crossing of cultures with the loss of some codes and the acquisition of others, fosters processes of inclusion and contrast of every form of 'assimilation' of the 'cultures of origin' to the dominant culture. Over the last three decades, these areas of study and intervention have made it possible to break down borders, to embrace cultural changes and to open spaces where to think of new meanings for 'law', 'health', 'coexistence' and 'sense of belonging'.

My proposal cannot but present itself as movable and nomadic to the 'multicultural mind' (Anolli, 2006) of a 'border operator' (Ancora, 2017), capable of synchrony with a world in motion and able to cross the disciplinary borders that often block our thinking and acting. The current situation seems to suggest that it is not enough to stick only to a 'neutral' and 'institutional' mandate, ignoring the internal and external movement that every cultural process requires and produces.

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