



















compare the art of language to other arts of expression, and try to see it as one of those mute arts". (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 46)

J. B. Pontails observes that Merleau-Ponty always relates language "to forms of pre-linguistic expression, like painting, where he sees meaning emerge, but in a less articulated way" (Quoted in Dillon, 1993: 80).

By "secreting its own signification", art without words – such as music and painting – communicates with its audience on the level of idea exchange demonstrating Merleau-Ponty assertion that "the fact is that we have the power to understand beyond what we could have spontaneously thought" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 219). In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language, thought and language are not absolutely relatable, language is not considered as a sign of thinking.

The matter of language is closely related to the notion of silence. Thought and language are joined in a certain transformative process which then leads to differentiating of *thinking language* and *speaking thought*. As silence envelops the language on the level of "thinking language" or is required before and after "speaking thoughts" Merleau-Ponty suggests that "language lives only from silence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 233). The meaning which signs of language enable emerges from the interval that comes between the words. Merleau-Ponty uses metaphor of footprint as a mark of body movement in order to imply the meaning of thought that language carries. Acknowledging his classification of two languages – empirical and creative, we should address the importance of silence in terms of creative language which "frees the meaning captive in the thing" (Johnson, 1994: 82), allowing us to probe the uninspected meanings that come from the unvoiced bodies of Japanese cinema.

Film director's position stands in the same platform as writer's or painter's, only to be installed in their fine middle – not on the "wrong side" (ibid) of the writer who only has to deal with language neither in the "silent world of lines and colors" of painter's expression.

Merleau-Ponty suggests that "we must uncover the threads of silence with which speech is intertwined" (ibid, 83-84) and the medium of both cinema and body appear to be appropriately most suitable for this task. Not just that silence enables the comprehension of what's been said but it offers communicative strategies which produce the meaning in equally ambiguous ambience. "There is no choice to be made between the world and art, or between "our and absolute painting, for they blend into one another." (ibid, 86)

When dealing with Japanese art, the same precondition follows – cinema and body are raveled to the degree that they should not be inspected separately. Drawing on a Federic Jameson's notion that the visual is "essentially pornographic" and that films in general "ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body" (Jameson, 1992:1), we are bound to uncover all the layers which conceal Japan's body and silently look at its undisguised flesh.

On a track of Tanaka Katsuhiko's impression that "the habit of pessimism towards the mother tongue" (Quoted in Yeounsuk, 1996:14) is unquestionable trait of Japan's cultural identity, and acknowledging the fact that Japanese language was never used (written) without the aid of Chinese, it is viable to suggest that in Japan, apart from language, other communicative practices are expected and desired.

As Susan Sontag remarks, Barthes views Japan as "aesthete's utopia", a "culture where aesthete goals

are central" which "liberates" the prosperity of signs. (Sontag, 1996: xxv) The comprehension of the affluence of signs does not occur firstly through language but, I argue, the communication and transgression of

ideas occur though both body images on the screen and in the "real" bodies of audience. In Japan, the body is the base that contrives the formation of the contact with the (outer) world.

#### ENDNOTES

- [1] The victorious outcome of Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) theoretician Kato Hiroyuki "explained" pertaining social Darwinism; in 1869 Fukizawa Yukichi ranked countries and nations on an evolutionary scale inevitably resulting in the primacy of Japanese racial and cultural qualities.
- [2] Benedict did not visit and conduct research in Japan, but based her work on interviews with Japanese-Americans and Japanese experts.
- [3] Look further the work of Tsunoda Tadanobu.
- [4] Hiragana and katakana are often referred collectively as kana.
- [5] During postwar period, within commanding self-orientalist discourse, Japanese language was also a subject of extreme criticism. It was considered "limited" facilitating only emotional instances and not providing any logical communicative agency. In 1946, famous Japanese writer Shiga Naoya published an essay titled "Japanese Language Problems" in influential journal *Kaizo* where he proposed replacing Japanese language with another language such as French. Such suggestions were also visible in the past when Mori Arinori recommended to establish English as national language. Mori defended his position with an attitude that the Japanese were eager to modernize their nation but such task would be unfruitful with a weak tool such as Japanese language (which was actually derivative from Chinese and therefore never autonomous). He proclaims a strategy of abandoning the linguistic amalgam of Japanese and Chinese, that is – a „weak medium of communication“, and infusing English language as a language of Japan which has had and will continue to have a great use outside Japanese territory. In Japanese language and its "incompleteness", Shiga found great danger to national prospects, arguing that possibly the war could have been avoided if this replacement occurred sooner. Shiga's radical proposal motivated Kindaichi to write *Nippongo*

- which leads to conclusion that Japanese language has been a subject of both empowering and disempowering ideologies.
- [6] Referring to a relation between speaker of the Japanese language and carrier of Japanese culture opposite from those par example of English or French domain differentiating various cultures and nations. Further look: Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*.

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