



4. From Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* to Adam McKay's *Don't Look Up*, cultivating a meeting ground for communicating the Anthropocene: will we speak Eggplant?

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Abstract

In the 1980s, American ecologist Eugene Stoermer and Nobel laureate and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen initiated discussions on the definition of a new epoch: the Anthropocene. Since then there have been debates on the most varied topics related to this new definition, which seems to be elusive and multifaceted every time we try to approach it. It is precisely this need to define and communicate the era in which we live, its characters, urgencies and needs, that requires thoughtful reflection to identify a minimum common denominator to analyze, describe and communicate the Anthropocene. It is no coincidence that in recent years the definitions, more and less popular, of the time in which we live have multiplied: Capitalocene, Eremocene, Plantationocene, Plasticene and the more recent Koinocene. The Anthropocene is too often perceived as an immeasurable and distant problem, impossible to embrace in its entirety, especially for those who are not insiders and struggle to relate to it, receiving from this comparison a nauseating sense of unease and guilt. But the Anthropocene, other than being a problem, is a condition of existence, which questions our way of being in the world, of dwelling it – according to Martin Heidegger's definition of dwelling (Heidegger, 1976), taken up by Tim Ingold (Ingold, 2016) – and which questions it by asking us to be responsible, response-able, that is, able to respond to the present (Haraway, 2019). It is in this need to identify a common language and imaginary, translatable and assimilable, that some cinematic experiences proposed here have moved. Few and firm principles, footholds of the real, imaginary and shared stories that cinema tries to promote in order to create a common ground of experience with which to face the Anthropocene and create a reference vocabulary. There is an urgent need to communicate the emergencies and disasters of the Human Epoch, projected on big screens by Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky's trilogy, and to avoid the fragmentation and the communication barrier exalted by the recent *Don't Look Up* proposed by the American giant *Netflix*. The article attempts to analyze and highlight the efforts made by the movie medium in establishing a shared dialogue about the Anthropocene. An inclusive human-non-human, past-future language needs to be identified, such as the semasiographic writing of Ted Chiang's heptapods staged by Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival*. The article reflects on the collective imagery that cinema proposes today with respect to the present and possible futures: generally represented by the image of the Ecological disaster, the Techno Fix and the Ecotopian solution, as Robert Crumb perfectly illustrated in *A Short History of America*. Because, as Donna Haraway states, it matters what thoughts think thoughts, what stories we tell to tell other stories with (Haraway, 2019). And maybe indeed, if we cultivate a meeting ground not only between humans, but also between humans and non-humans, one day we will speak *Eggplant*.

Keywords: Environmental science, Anthropocene, Cinema, Human-Non human, Dystopia.

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