

Marc Cerisuelo,
Fondus enchaînés.
Essais de poétique au cinéma,
Seuil, Paris 2012, pp. 309

As a sort of homage to the “Poétique” series, let us start from the paratext and, more precisely, from the book’s back cover, where we can read: “Avec ces *Fondus enchaînés*, la collection ‘Poétique’ s’ouvre au septième art.”

This evocative claim should be slightly corrected: this time, cinema goes through the “main entrance.” This means, of course, that cinema had already entered the series, although it passed, if I may say so, through the “service entrance.” Indeed, it has been one of book series’ founders who has been the one “smuggling in” cinema from the very beginning, and who is also the first reference we can find in the book’s “Ouverture,” significantly titled “Un art des relations” – which also affectionately hints at Gérard Genette’s teaching in its concluding lines.

Genette’s poetics is one of the main references of Cerisuelo’s book, and of course this is not surprising. On the one hand, it is worth mentioning that another book by Cerisuelo, *Hollywood à l’écran* (“a study of historical poetics of films”, 2001), guided Genette’s largest “incursion” into the field of cinema – namely *Métalepse* (2004), where the borders between narratology and poetics tend to blur. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that Genette has recently (see *Figures V*, 2002) referred to cinema, to a certain extent, as the “art of relations” par excellence, in order to discuss why the question “can we love a genre?” should be replaced by the more appropriate question “can we really love something different from a genre?”

However, Genette’s poetics is not the only reference in *Fondus enchaînés* – nor, as we will see, the main reference. What Cerisuelo is really interested in is, as he defines it, is an “expanded poetics” (“poétique élargie”). Of course the

main features of Genette’s poetics, considered as the starting point of the overall project, are reaffirmed, such as the focus on transcendence, the effort of clarification, and the attention to how artworks function. And yet, Cerisuelo adds something more.

According to the challenging project developed into the book, an “expanded poetics of films” must also include the classical film theory (as becomes evident in the section titled “La fin du grand sommeil de l’introuvable dame du Lac,” where Cerisuelo refers to Christian Metz and Albert Laffay, among others, to discuss the issues of showing, narrating, and the particular features of the viewing experience), history (we will return to this) and interpretation, which seems to be strictly connected to the fact that an “expanded poetics” cannot but interact with philosophy.

Given this aim, the book does not provide something like a linear, systematic discussion; and although it is clearly divided into three main parts (“Poétique des films,” “Cinéphilosophie” and “Transferts culturels”), the three parts continuously overlap and intertwine. Thus, rather than a linear treatment, what we can find is a series of in-depth analyses of individual topics which gradually start to appear as profoundly interconnected and manage to show the overall theoretical project of an extended poetics “at work.”

Let me provide some examples. Starting from the well-known field of film remakes (Part One), and passing through Douglas Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), the author comes to address (Part Three) the wide topic of “cultural transfers” – that is not a matter of “influence” and, indeed, explains quite well how poetics can cross history. In the more general context of the work of European filmmakers based in Hollywood, Cerisuelo discusses how American Transcendentalism has been imported into films (see the section “Les cinéastes européens à Hollywood et le transcendantalisme”). And it is in

this way that we enter the field of “Cinephilosophy” and we meet Stanley Cavell, who had a broader and fundamental role in regaining the transcendentalist heritage, and who largely (although not exclusively) based his interpretation of films on transcendentalist philosophy.

Stanley Cavell (especially for his well-known book about the “comedy of remarriage,” *Pursuits of Happiness*, 1981) and poetics (for its traditional attention to the issue of genre) also meet each other in what Cerisuelo defines as the “seconde comédie américaine,” which has Preston Sturges as its leading figure and which particularly interests the author due to its “post-classical” features.

As a matter of fact, Stanley Cavell can be regarded as the true core of the book – the center (the two sections “La philosophie et le cinématographe” and “Stanley Cavell, un philosophe au cinéma”) of the central part (“Cinephilosophie”). It is in this part that we clearly understand that the relationships between cinema and philosophy do not consist of a process by which cinema would illustrate or provide examples of philosophical concepts – this is actually the worst way to conceive these relationships.

In opposition to this perspective, Cerisuelo’s proposal is in tune with Francesco Casetti’s idea (*The Eye of the Century*, 2008) of considering cinema as a form of thought and a place where philosophical investigation can be developed;

and indeed, it is not by chance that both Cerisuelo and Casetti refer to Gilles Deleuze (to whom Cerisuelo devotes the section “Deleuze et la comédie: petite forme et grande santé”) and, of course, Stanley Cavell.

Cavell’s “philosophical criticism” remains the focus of Cerisuelo’s research, perhaps one of the best examples of “cinephilosophy” and, I would add, a “forerunner” of the “expanded poetics.” As Cerisuelo writes (pp. 196-197), “plutôt que de considérer la philosophie comme une activité qui consisterait dans la ‘création’ de concepts et dont le cinéma montrerait en quelque façon le théâtre des opérations, Cavell semble procéder à rebours en préférant un geste plus rigoureux qui aboutit à un gain en terme de liberté. Assez proche en cela de la critique, Cavell organise une interprétation centrifuge qui part du film, toujours minutieusement résumé, et propose une ‘lecture,’ certes autonome du film en question mais rejoignant inévitablement des questions qui le dépassent et aussi [...] que le cinéma contribue à régler (ultime tour d’écrou wittgensteinien).”

In this perspective both cinema and poetics, besides being (although on different levels) “arts of relations,” are definitely aimed at becoming (p. 197) “un laboratoire inappréciable pour l’étude de notre relation au monde.”

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Gertrud Koch, Volker Pantenburg,
Simon Rothöhler (eds.),
Screen Dynamics.
Mapping the Borders of Cinema,
Österreichisches Filmmuseum/Synema
Publikationen, Vienna 2012, pp. 184

in previous years with the arrival of the digital age. The launch of the iPad marks a decisive step in the delocalisation of audio visual contents and the relocation of the viewing experiences, especially in terms of cinema.

Screen Dynamics collects together essays from a conference called “Cinema without Walls,” held towards the beginning of 2010. It is a valuable document on the way film and media studies approach the issue of cinema’s