Christian Metz and the Codes of Cinema: Film Semiology and Beyond

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Chapters seven and eight study the technological evolution of sound and colour and how they have a strong influence on spectators. For that reason, some techniques are described in order to exemplify the psychological impact of the techniques used in horror. The last chapter deals with the advent of digital cinema which has widened technological possibilities thanks to techniques such as CGI. Nonetheless, found footage (a fictional work that pretends to be shot in real life, for instance, *The Blair Witch Project*, Eduardo Sánchez and Daniel Myrick, 1999) has oversaturated the market.

This rigorous study addresses diverse approaches that could be complemented with different historical studies that focus on the relationship between social, economic and political history and horror (W. Scott Poole's works delves into this field). Moreover, understanding the transformations of the monster figure in different historical moments helps us grasp the mutations of the traits of the genre.

Finally, this book is highly recommendable because this author does not write a close discourse but he is able to question readers so that they can reach their own conclusion. On the one hand, undergraduate students can delve into this complex world through a comprehensive reading of what the genre means and what scholarly methodologies exist in relation to this genre. On the other hand, fans can enjoy horror theory thanks to its understandable language and, furthermore, anyone interested in a specific theme can use this book as an initial guide in that aspect.

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Christian Metz and the Codes of Cinema: Film Semiology and Beyond
MARGRIT TRÖHLER and GUIDO KIRSTEN (eds), 2018
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Christian Metz (1931–1993) is French film theoretician. His film research and analysis contributed to placing film studies amongst academic disciplines and inspired generations of film researchers. *Christian Metz and the Codes of Cinema* is a compilation of contributions and discussions at the conference held by the Department of Film Studies of the University of Zurich in 2013, intended as a tribute to 'the father of modern film theory' (p. 17).

This book offers an extensive, encompassing reflection and analysis of Metz's oeuvre in English. Contributors place Metz's ideas and concepts in the context of twentieth-century film research and investigate the genesis of his ideas.

In the extended introductory chapter to the book Margrit Tröhler, film theoretician, historian and student of Christian Metz, offers a comprehensive overview of Metz's oeuvre. Tröhler describes three creative periods of the 30 years of his career: semiology (inspired by linguistics), psychoanalysis (the imaginary in the cinematic and theoretical discourse) and enunciation (approaching the spectator). This approach is reflected in the structure of the volume: after the first part places the oeuvre of Metz within the tradition of film theory, articles on form and aesthetics in modern cinema follow; the third part discusses the concept of the cinematic code, and finally the fourth part theorises the role of narrative in film referring to Metz's last book on enunciation in cinema.

In his essay opening the first part of the volume, Raymond Bellour speaks of his friendship with Metz that enriched both his field of research and his life. He states that in the area of film studies Metz is one of the founders of discursive practice in the understanding of Michel Foucault (p. 71). Bellour describes the two ways of thinking about film, which features Metz's and his own writings: theoretical (defined by a desire for ideas) and analytical (inspired by desire for objects). Bellour shows how textual analysis of a film, even a short film as a quickly containable complete textual system, opens an infinite realm of the total textual system (pp. 76–77).

Michel Marie sees Metz as the founder of a research discipline called cinema or film studies, who contributed to the birth of textual analysis of film (p. 88). Roger Odin explains why Metz's legacy is valid today at the level of methodology, at the level of the relation between theory and cinema and at the level of the aims of research (p. 112). Frank Kessler describes the 'canon' of film theory in Metz's writings that includes Balázs, Bazil, Eisenstein, Cohen-Séat, Laffay and Morin, and discusses Metz's appreciation of Mitry and systematic reading of Rudolf Arnheim (p. 118).

One of the editors of this book Guido Kirsten discusses Metz's epistemological attitude to film studies via the history of concepts that Metz used. His terms 'diegetic' as equivalent to everything denoted in the film and 'pro-filmic' as everything placed in front of a camera are crucial notions in film studies (p. 132). Metz strived for the independence of film research from film criticism and film history by introducing a filmic-linguistic approach (pp. 130–131). Kirsten's hypothesis is that Metz was influenced by articles on semiology by Roland Barthes ex negativo: whereas Barthes believed that signification is marginal in film, Metz argued for the specificity of cinematic language in the predominance of codes rather than signs (Kirsten, p. 143). The epistemological distance to film as object and technical terms offered by filmology benefited Metz's semiology of cinema that, according to Kirsten, is a success remembered also today (Ibid).

Martin Lefebvre examines the place expressiveness, stylistics and poetics occupy in Metz's writings. Metz's belief in cinematicity as an affective quality and source of filmic pleasure determines his treatment of aesthetic concerns (pp. 163–164). Francesco Casetti devotes his essay to the articles Metz wrote in the late 1960s on the 'modern cinema' debate. These articles are Metz's contribution to a historical approach to films: the development of cinema is expressed in graduate abandonment of certain filmic figures, flexible variation of maintained ones and

evolvement of new expressive figures Casetti, p. 192). André Gaudreaut and Philippe Gauthier concluded the discussion on Metz's ideas on forms placing these in the history of theories of film editing and forms of alternation.

Philipp Rosen focuses on the applicability of linguistic concepts to film. The concern of cinematic specificity developed in classical film theory is both a ground to break from it for semiotics, inspired by research in language by Saussure, and a ground to dismiss concepts suitable for linguistics as inadequate to deal with cinema (Rosen, p. 230). Semiotics allows analysis of complex signifying systems that resist some of the conceptualizations of linguistics (Rosen, p. 232). The relativisation of specificity of cinema was formulated by Metz as a set of discourses and thus it allows distribution of the concepts to digital regimes and media mixtures (Rosen, p. 247).

Selim Krichane also examines application of Metz's notion 'code'. He argues that the concept of code is rooted in information theory. Similarly to Rosen in the previous article Kirchane sees Metz's ideas discussed in the present video game theory. The video game specificity is partially established in a negative manner to distinguish the gaming temporality from Metz's cinematic temporality of narrative (Kirchane, p. 268). Marc Vernet interrelates Metz's semiology born in the analogue era with two photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson arguing Metz's definition of an image of film semiotics has an operational strength for an isolated image (Vernet, p. 283).

Similarly to Vernet, Mary Ann Doane argues that the image for Metz lies beyond analogy. She discusses Metz's concept of the 'imaginary signifier' through all of his writings, where he struggled with the image's resistance to dissection and its adherence to its referent refusing to be reduced to a signifying function (Doane, p. 286). The author demonstrates how his concept was developed along binary oppositions: the imaginary/the real, and the imaginary/the symbolic.

D.N. Rodowick analyses the perceptual character of expression and belief in Metz's and philosopher Stanley Cavell's writings (Rodowick, p. 303). Rodowick concludes that examination of the conditions and styles of knowing, that is of how images move audience to thought, are the common ground of philosophy and film theory (Rodowick, pp. 322–323). In her article Anne Goliot-Lété claims that Metz developed 'the structural analysis of actual narrativity'. Introducing the concept of enunciation Metz aims at lifting the theoretical border between the enunciation and the narration in film. She argues that spectators are more sensitive to the flow of images rather than to the images taken individually. Goliot-Lété's analysis of Atom Egoyan's film *Exotica* (1994) shows how narrative depends on images and even on analysis of these.

Dana Polan analyses the function of film citation in Metz's last book. He suggests that in the later works Metz is interested in the phenomena, not in a tabular finality or enumerative codification of cinematic figures and of enunciation (Polan, p. 366). Polan concludes that Metz's cinephilic affect gradually shapes his doctrinal apparatus, meaning that the object of desire precedes the conceptual procedure in the late intellectual explorations by Metz.

Whereas Polan discusses the last works of Metz, Allain Bouillat analyses the question of filmic enunciation in his earlier works and enunciation of Metz's writing itself. It is important to consider the process of filmic enunciation manifested in impersonal conception applied to materials of cinematic expression, when they are displayed as artefacts (Bouillant, p. 388). Instances of these cinematic materials

are recordings from a surveillance camera in Steven Soderbergh's film *Contagion* (2011) and shots obtained by protagonists of horror films (Bouillant, p. 371). The degree of enunciation depends on the context: the specific audience, time, and space. He refers to Metz's own accurate location of writings within the enunciative situation that they belong to (Bouillant, p. 372).

Dominique Bluher continues the theme of enunciation in Metz's writings discussing autobiographical cinema. She extends Metz's conception of impersonal enunciation by resorting to Vivian Sobchak's semiotic phenomenology of film experience. From this perspective Bluher carefully analyses films by Jonas Meka, Ross McElwee, and Agnes Varda.

The fourth part of this book concludes an essay by Nico Baumbach, who examining Metz's film theory and Deleuze's film philosophy within film studies in Anglo-American context concludes that both authors insisted on the political implications of the analysis of cinema (Baumbach, p. 431). Two interviews with Christian Metz and his handwritten note form conclusive chapters of the book. The interview by Elena Dagrada and Gugliemo Pescatore focuses on semiology of cinema as foremost a structuralist approach to thinking on cinema. The interview by Margrit Tröhler and Dominique Blüher concerns both semiology and filmic enunciation.

This book is of interest to scholarly readers requiring a deeper understanding of film theory's origins and path of development. The introductory chapter by Margrit Tröhler allows undergraduates to keep up with experienced readers. Most of the articles written in French and German are consistently translated to English. The adherence of translators to the theory of Metz is beneficial for those familiar with his works, but might pose some difficulties for the newcomers. The complexity and thematic variety of contributions grants this book the potential of becoming core reading both for film students and film theorists.

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Michael Curtiz: A Life in Film
ALAN K.RODE, 2017
Lexington, University Press of Kentucky
pp. ix–xix + 548, filmography, notes, $47.50 (hardcover)

Alan Rode's biography, the first full-length study of Michael Curtiz's life and career, opens with a bold declaration that what follows is the case for the film director as 'anti-auteur' (p. xvi). As he explains, there were occasions during