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REVIEW OF BOOKS

Sensitive choices

Reviewed by

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Only in the Soviet school, in which since the nineteen twenties filmmakers fulfilled a pedagogical labour parallel to the creation of their films, can a complete affiliation between masters be sought. If we begin with Eisenstein or Dovjenko's classes, and we follow the subsequent disciple filmmakers who were later teachers, we would arrive, for example, at Sokurov, in an uninterrupted line of transmission. But it may only have been in France where criticism of the cinema fully developed, where it understood that it ought also to include an active and interventionist role in society, propitiating a film's premier, the discovery of a filmmaker or political action by means of the transmission to the public, as critics, teachers or programmers, of the works they had to defend.

The experience of Alain Bergala, since his young cinephilia in the south of France to his *Cahiers* years and the commission given to him in 2000 by Jack Lang, the Minister of Culture and Education, acquires its full aesthetic dimension in the vital incumbency he found in the cinema, and the sensitive choices it arouses: "it cannot be taught, it cannot be found, it is experienced, it is transmitted".

This book is his sentimental autobiography, and in it, his object of passion, the cinema, is always something flowing and unpluggable. An art which always tests, renders possible, is able: when it does not become a possession, merchandise, illustration or decoration, the cinema astonishes because its *powers of revelation* are always alive and it arouses very strong feelings in our relationship with the world. There is a beautiful transparency and tidiness to this book, in which the pedagogy of the cinema is not petrified, and is the air through which the light flows and emulsifies a film: a driving task, a transmission.

It is the inventory of a teaching experience, of tentative internships, of a job with the cinema: to defend “the emotion and the thought that are born of a shape, of a rhythm, that could only exist in and for the cinema”, and propitiate the sedimentation in the school of those most unprotected films. The invitation and the stimulus of this treatise – a pedagogy for filmmakers too- is to conceive the transmission of the cinema in such a way that films can be seen as outlines of the creative processes, an art that originates. Throughout his work, Bergala has tried to devise his films on the basis of creative gestures, of the concrete questions that the filmmaker faced up to: this essay is the synthesis of his career, and hence it is full of personal and generational evocations, and of quotations that are integrated as vivid dialogues or that have resonated in his head for much time. It belongs in the tradition of books such as *Perseverance*, by Daney, or *L’homme ordinaire du cinéma*, by Schefer.

Over a century of cinema has elapsed, and that word, *transmission*, is the one that paradoxically best defines the anarchy, the untidiness, the beauty of the cinema. The way in which, with faith or trust, filmmakers and spectators felt that the cinema moved through them. It might be the moment to look back to discover that, in the cinema, the story from which we can most learn arises from that interweaving of transmissions and filiations, *our music*. And if, as shown by *La hipótesis del cine*, to go back in time is to go in favour of the flow, it is because it shakes us towards those places that William Faulkner imagined in *The wild palms*: “They say that love dies between two people. They’re wrong. It doesn’t die, it just leaves you, goes away, if you are not good enough, worthy enough. It doesn’t die: you’re the one that dies. It’s like the ocean”.