

Coral Cruz. *Imágenes narradas. Cómo hacer visible lo invisible en un guión de cine.*

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Waldo Salt, the screenwriter of *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969), among other films, who was trained in Hollywood's Studio Golden Age, and blacklisted by the same system during the witch hunt, referred to what he called "the art of the screenplay" like this: 'I believe we will notice one day that the screenplay is, in fact, a specific kind of writing, that consists on narrating with images. It is a different aesthetic, very far from theatre or novel. I don't like to make comparisons, but I think it has much more to do with poetic technique than with dramatic writing itself'.

In the classrooms of Columbia University's Film School in New York, I discovered that one of the most recommended books of the screenwriting courses is *The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri, a playwright and professor of dramatic writing. This fact demonstrates that the screenwriting is still considered and taught essentially from a narrative perspective, prioritizing the plot and the structure above the images and their poetic and symbolic capability, which usually are considered the director's terrain. This conception, extensively accepted in American Film Industry, based on the hierarchies and the consequent compartmentalization of the creative roles, is still prevailing in Europe, with the exception in many cases of the author films, as a result of the fusion of the figure of the screenwriter and the director.

It might be due to this convention that some years ago I was surprised when discovering that some of the most poetic and least narrative

works of authors such as Béla Tarr or Andrei Tarkovsky had been written in collaboration with screenwriters. Béla Tarr wrote his last four films, including *Sátántangó* (1994) and *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*, 2000), with László Krasznahorkai, a Hungarian writer and poet who adapted his novels to screenplays together with Béla Tarr; *The Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1975) by Tarkovsky, was co-written with the Russian screenwriter Aleksandr Misharin. It becomes almost impossible to think that both screenwriters did not participate in the creation of the poetic and symbolic framework that defines the movies of Tarkovsky and Béla Tarr, which forces us to rethink the limits of the screenwriter in the construction of the visual facts of a work, their contribution from the paper to the cinematic quality of these films.

Imágenes narradas, by Coral Cruz, defends the figure of the screenwriter as a filmmaker, gathering together and amplifying the new conception of the technique and the screenwriting lesson that Waldo Salt aimed at the eighties. Regarding the great amount of literature on screenwriting, Coral Cruz, stays away from the classical screenwriting manuals and steps aside from the structure, the three acts and the turning points, to write about poetry, signs and traces, about melodies, and rhymes, about symbols and metaphors. Along the twelve chapters of the book, Coral analyses excerpts of different films to ponder upon inherent resources of the cinematic arts, such as the ellipsis, the montage, the manipulation of time, the scenography or the

composition. The objective, as expressed by the author at the end of the book, is to present a series of tools to the reader so that they can make the most of the specificities of film language during the screenwriting.

I met Coral Cruz in January 2012, when she started to work as the Script Editor of *10.000 KM* (2014), film that Carlos Marques-Marcet and I were writing at the time. In that moment we found ourselves lost between different versions of the screenplay that had turned over-complicated, and Coral was a key element in the process that led us towards the structure the movie needed. But as opposed to what many screenplay teachers and analysts would do, she did not impose a classical structure as a type of mould to the story; otherwise she created a new structure that came out of the contents and emotions that were the core of the story from the beginning. In *Imágenes narradas*, Coral writes: 'The best poetic findings depend on the singular imaginary of each story' (2013: 138). This same concept was what Coral applied to the structure of *10.000 KM*, in a distilling exercise that was based on a conception of cinema and writing, both as an intimate and poetic act, binding form and content in the most organic way.

Imágenes narradas is the result of a deep knowledge of film language and years of experience of Coral as a teacher, screenwriter and script analyst. Though, as I have pointed before, the book was written with the intention of giving to screenwriters the tools to project their dreamed movie on paper, *Imágenes narradas* goes further away from its manifest purpose of being a book about screenwriting for two reasons: on the one hand, its meticulous study of the expressive resources of cinema makes it a work that alludes every artistic professional that contributes in the creative process of a film; and on the other hand, behind its defence of the screenwriter both as a filmmaker and an image creator, there is a deep reflection about the medium, a reminder that the infinite capabilities of the moving image art go beyond the narrative, deep into the terrain of poetry. Taking an argument that Coral uses in the book, in the heart of *Imágenes narradas*, as in the heart of good movies, there is a clear message, never expressed by words but latent in every page: Ignoring the intrinsic visual nature of cinema in the stage of conception and creation of the stories, what is being forgotten, is nothing less than the own essence of the cinematographic art. •

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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