

Luca Caminati: My name is Luca Caminati. I am an associate professor of film study at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University in Montreal and today, we are here in Montreal at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, right above the John and Yoko room, just in case you didn't know and it's March 28. I'm sitting here because today we will be talking with Francesco Casetti who is Thomas E. Donnelly Professor of Humanities and Film and Media studies at Yale University and I think that Francesco Casetti doesn't need much introduction but there is a long list of publications and books that I could mention. I'm just going to mention the last one, *The Lumière Galaxy* that just came out with Colombia University Press. So, as you know, for these field notes, we try to reconstruct the career of our interviewees and at the same time, we try to reconstruct the history of our discipline, the history of particularly SCMS, the Society of Cinema and Media Studies. So, I'm going to start with the first question and then we're going to try to establish a dialogue with Francesco and first of all, thank you for doing this.

Francesco: Thank you to you.

Luca Caminati: All right. So, why don't we start from the beginning? Why don't you tell me how did you get interested in film and media and how did you become a media scholar?

Francesco: Well, it's a long path. I think it was a scholarly interest in the university, then when I was 11, 12, I used to go to the movies every week, maybe more than once a week, then also when I was 16, I organized the Cine Club in my city but now, quite recently, I realized that likely the real interest in movies starts from a memory when I was four years old. Suddenly, I remember a few years ago, the first time I went to the movies and it was *Snow White* and I was watching the movie and taking part so patiently, I started to shout, to cry, at the point the owner of the film theater asked my mom to bring me out of the film theater and we went out and at one point, I was so excited that I left the hand that my mom was giving to me and I started to run into the street and I remember, suddenly, the huge truck stopping in front of me and I had this idea of the danger. That's interesting because after so many years I spent with Lacan, I realized that the symbolic, the imaginary and the reality as a trauma, they are so well present in this memory. Maybe it's a fake memory. I asked my mom before she died if it's true or fake and she refused and this refusal means likely it was true.

Luca Caminati: So, there is an original trauma of the-

Francesco: No doubt about that but cinema is a place of trauma and we are playing with trauma, no doubt about that and it's interesting because if reality is traumatic, okay, that's cinema is more real than reality.

Luca Caminati: That's a good start. Listen, tell me, I want to ask you, what was the first class you took as a student in film and the first class you taught as a film scholar?

Francesco: The first class was when I was freshman. It was film semiotics taught by Gianfranco Bettetini, who has been one of my mentors-

Luca Caminati: This is in Milan?

Francesco: In Milan and he was also the founder, in Italy, of the film semiotics and the book that definitely decided me to go to study movies as being *Éléments de Sémiologie* by Roland Barthes. I want to apply this book to the movies and once again, it was a way of cooling down the strong passion, the strong link with the movies. It was a way of cooling down this so strong relationship with images on the screen and now, I often tell to my students that this pedagogical attitude is to cool down for being hot later.

Luca Caminati: So, tell me, what is the first class you taught?

Francesco: Oh, it was by chance because I was not expect to teach that class but my mentor Bettetini dropped the teaching and asked me to teach. Italy is not like the United States, especially at the time, to teach was a serious thing. You had to be accepted by the entire faculty. It was also a question of power. So, at one point, he decided that I was ready and he asked me to teach the class he wanted to teach. It was about the American musical. I have no culture in music, so I was so shocked that the idea of teaching that class but nevertheless, I discovered and I worked six, seven months before teaching, how rich not only the mise en scene but how rich was the address to the spectator and my book, *Inside the Gaze*, was born exactly during this class.

Luca Caminati: Okay.

Francesco: And the idea of interpretation came out on address or even French, interpellation, came out on one side by Althusser and on the other by musical, which is nice, Althusser and musical. That's a good combination.

Luca Caminati: It is. So, since you mentioned your book, let's start from the beginning. You started, I want to say, at least as far as object, quite traditionally. You wrote your first book on Bertolucci.

Francesco: Yeah.

Luca Caminati: Which was 197-

Francesco: Five, I guess.

Luca Caminati: 1975, yes. The first book on Bertolucci and you can continue to work on Italian authors with essays on Visconti and so on. So, tell me a little bit about these first publications and about the methodology that you were using at the time.

Francesco: I wrote this book basically because I got a contract and I needed to make a book and on the other side, because I met Bernardo but the first meeting was not that good. At the end, he said, "You do not have to write a book on me." But after a few months, we met again, and I was supposed to make an interview and he was working, it was after the craze on *Last Tango* and at one point, he asked me, "Why don't you turn on your record?" And say, "Why don't you sit down and take me seriously?" And just put provocatively but say, "Make a good question." And I did a good question. It was about his relationship with Pasolini and that was a fantastic interview. The book came out very quickly and he called me saying, "My dad loved this book." That's the way and it was the beginning of a long friendship that still lasts.

Luca Caminati: So, just a methodological question, how did you bring about this interest in semiotics and this early work on Italian authors?

Francesco: Right. The attempt was exactly to make what we can call a close analysis but inspired by semiology. Even though the book on Bertolucci is not so heavy, it's a light semiology but the interesting thing ... So, basically, it was the structure of the movie. So, take the movie, try to understand the key points, etc. and to detect any sort of ... let's go to the surface. The principle of construction of the movie. That was the idea and that's funny because at the time, it was impossible to have video cassette or these kinds of things. So, I went to watch the movies several times in the film theater taking notes in the dark but it's quite interesting that for example, in the analysis of *The Spider's Strategy*, I claim in the book that the essential sequence is that at one point that I describe very well and that sequence doesn't exist in the movie.

Luca Caminati: Do you remember which scene was it?

Francesco: Not really but a few years later, the great representative of the close analysis in Europe, Raymond Bellour, confessed to me that he did the same with Vincent Minnelli in one of his analysis on Vincente Minnelli. He invented completely a sequence that didn't exist.

Luca Caminati: This takes us, obviously, to the next question, because I wanted to ask you about technologies and doing research and teaching in the pre-VHS era and in particular, the fact that you were one of the first, at least in Italy, to precisely do this kind of close analysis. Did you develop any specific skills? Any specific techniques? Were you teaching something to your students about how to take notes?

Francesco: It was not only on me, it was fantastic team working at the time with Bettetini and at one point, we invented what we called at the time, *transcrizione grafica*, Graphical Transcription. So, using an old flatbed that was in the basement of the University, we started to basically rent movies and to take a picture of any single shot and we had this sort of, like the music. Instead of the pentagram, was a line with a double, is sound and on the other side was visual and to transcribe that second by second. Still exists one example of that but you have to imagine, it

was the only way to quote a movie. Just to take one page of that and include a little bit Eisensteinian if you want but anyway, we did that with one of the movie of the time of Taviani brothers and they were so shocked about that, they contacted us and they wanted us to work on their movies because that's fantastic to say it's not only a respectful work on a movie instead of blah, blah-ing, but also it's a perfect way for us to understand the logic because once again, it freeze down the flow, is a perfect way of understanding the logic of movies and we had a strong relation at the time.

They were championing this system and who did that, especially at the time, in the team was a Jesuit. German Jesuit that later brought almost impossible semiotics books, so rigged, that they were fantastic and useless.

- Luca Caminati: But you keep on talking about this idea of cooling, freezing. So, I could tell by the language that you're using that you come from the time when movies couldn't be stopped.
- Francesco: Yeah, exactly.
- Luca Caminati: One you're in the theater, you are trapped in the machine, you are trapped in the apparatus let's call it-
- Francesco: Exactly.
- Luca Caminati: And therefore, the roll of the scholar was precisely to be able to stop time, to be able to stop the narrative.
- Francesco: This is why in Bellour, but not only in Bellour, the question of stopping, freezing the image as being so important and that's funny because now, the same question comes in Laura Mulvey, for example, last book and for us to freeze was not the real way of watching movies. The attempt to capture the sense of flow came. Of course, we did this graphical transcription, was 100% freezing the movie but otherwise, we were used to going to the movies and use, for example, I still have dozens of audio cassette that I took during the movies in order to remember and I still have I guess 20 pads with the note that I took in the dark during the movie. I had a project to make a book on Risi that I never did. So, all the movies by Dino Risi, they were seen and registered this way.
- Luca Caminati: I want to ask you about this, do you still teach your students how to take notes while watching a film?
- Francesco: No because in fact, no. The question of taking distance from the movie that was the great question of this. It was the moral question of semiotics, not the methodological one.
- Luca Caminati: Yeah.

Francesco: Is to have a tool to take a distance, a critical distance and to destroy the object and reconstruct with the knowledge of the object re-put into the object. That was the great idea of the semiological or the semiotic analysis. Now, no. Now, I do not need to do that. What I need to do with my students, maybe we'll come back later on this topic, is to get back the sense of pleasure of cinema. In the '70s, the pleasure was there and the problem was to take distance and now the object is here but there is no more pleasure. This is my question, how to make my students fall in love with cinema and the object of their study, how to really imply themselves in this object, not as a bureaucratic act but as an act of love. I'm falling fully warped in that thread.

Luca Caminati: So, do you ask, for example, when you teach, do you have screenings in the classroom and you ask your students to watch the films all together in the classroom, trying to re-create the theatrical experience?

Francesco: Yeah, I do that but especially what I do, since now I'm working not on films, I'm working on cinema as a social object and I ask them to retrace their own attitude towards cinema. So, one of the things I'm asking my students is to make a diary of their relation with movies or moving images and also, the key concept now I'm working on is no more spectatorship, it's film experience. So, my attempt is to retrace and to let them retrace their own experience, which is extremely pleasurable experience.

Luca Caminati: It is. You know, more and more programs now are trying to get rid of facilities for screening and one of the things that you hear people that are not in our business say is, of course, why don't you watch it on your computer? Why don't you let the student watch it at home and then you talk about it in class?

Francesco: I'm completely schizophrenic on this topic. I just wrote the book you mentioned in which I say, "Okay, the filmic experience could, might survive outside the dark room," but on the other side, what I teach my students and Yale is fantastic on that, is to go to the dark room and likely with a film strip, a real film strip.

Luca Caminati: Right, okay. Let's go back, once again, to how you start your beginnings. What were, let's call them the salient characteristics, of the context of which film studies and media studies grew, particularly in Italy in the late '60s, early '70s? What do you think were the main-

Francesco: It was not just Italy. It was France. It was also Germany. Alas, I belong to a generation, it's a very compact generation and even in United States or Japan and people that basically study semiotics in France. I did with Christian Metz, that has been the key figure in my scholarly life and a great, great friend. What we want, basically, we wanted to get rid of the film criticism, to find something, which was not to be a humanistic teaching literature and with an interest in cinema. To have a specific science of cinema, a specific approach to cinema able to capture. I don't want to say the essence of cinema because we are strongly anti-essentialist but to capture the way in which this object works. So, our attitude and we were against the world because we were against the film critics,

we were against the literature, the literature professors, we are sort of presumptuous young Turks group and the dream was that, was to have sort of common, which happened in reality for the worse or the best.

I do not think that David Bordwell is completely right about the grand theory. The grand theory has also been this lingua-Franca that lead a group of people to speak the same language, to use the same words, to do different things. So, basically the readings of the time were more linguistics and were more semiotics and to me, for example, Greimas and Derrida has been absolutely fundamental and then, at one point, in the '70s, came also Lacan, etc. and of course, also, the side of Althusser and the side of Marxism.

Luca Caminati: Yeah. So, it's kind of interesting because on the one hand, you had this desire to isolate film studies as a discipline and on the other, you were borrowing methodologies and techniques and philosophical approaches that were all coming from literature or the arts or even political thought.

Francesco: Let's say it this way Luca, we tried to reshape the field and to try truncate some rules and to find other connections. If I look back, I have to say that for many reasons the project failed. Of course, I'm happy to have been-

Luca Caminati: So, why would you say the project failed?

Francesco: Because now, my need is in some sense, the opposite, is to take back cinema and media to a humanistic culture and to ask cinema and the media the basic questions, not disciplinary question but even philosophical questions related to humanities.

Luca Caminati: Let's go back to this beginning of the discipline. On the one hand, the attempt that creating the science of cinema or the science of film but on the other also, the political and academic battles that you had to fight at the very beginning because as we all know, film studies did not have an easy access to academia, particularly in Italy.

Francesco: Yeah. I belong to the first generation that not only was raised in academic environment instead of media critics, etc. but also who fought for becoming professor. No, it was not easy and I got my first professorship but it was untenured when I was 30, a little more than 30-

Luca Caminati: Where did you start?

Francesco: At the Catholic University.

Luca Caminati: Okay.

Francesco: And I remember the first or the second faculty meeting. One of the most powerful professors, it was professor of philology, he mentioned in the meeting

the necessity of being extremely serious in the dissertations and in the thesis and say, "It's not like cinema." And I remember, I was not tenured but I wrote a long letter to him that I felt insulted and I gave him the proofs and the evidences that we were serious and he replied to me. He liked this act of bravery but he was a guerilla and then in the '80s, everybody wanted in Italy and in France and also in Germany to have film courses because the increasingly attitude of University and the need of University to earn more students, that was the kind of courses that were extremely popular. So, at that point, we had the boom of the professorships.

Luca Caminati: Right, which happened of course here in North America where Universities have discovered that film programs attract lots of students. So, we're now in the opposite situation. In fact, I think there are very few Universities and Colleges that do not have some sort of film program. So, we moved in the exact opposite direction. I want to ask you, since we talked about the beginning and the university, the early year in the university and your formation, is there one person, one individual, that you think had the most influence on the way you develop as a scholar?

Francesco: Yeah. Christian Metz. Christian Metz has been the real mentor of my life.

Luca Caminati: Can you tell us a little bit how you met him-

Francesco: I met him in '69. I was in Paris writing my BA thesis and I remember it was easy in some sense and I was eager to meet the great masters of-

Luca Caminati: And at this point, you had already read Metz?

Francesco: Yeah, almost by memory. I knew word by word and I met Greimas, etc. It was a funny situation. I want to meet Kristeva but the Kristeva's assistant say to me, "You have to pass the exam of Marxism/Leninism before meeting Kristeva." I say, "Oh, no, I don't need that." And I met Christian and it was a very long and very passionate meeting, at the end of which he asked me, "Oh, maybe you want to eat something." And in fact, I didn't have a penny in my pocket and I said, "Thank you." And he offered me the meal and I was so ... that's the touch of the maestro. That's the touch of the master. Then we became very strong friends and I'm touched that in the private notes that now Martin Lefebvre is folding, is collecting and reading. I discovered there were several lines about me and very, very sweet. He was a very severe man but very sweet. With me, he was always very, very sweet.

Luca Caminati: And of Metz's methodology approach, what is it that captured? What is that thing you stole from me that you said, "This is exactly what I want to do?"

Francesco: Mobility. Mobility in the sense that he wrote *Cinema language* then he moved and he write *Language et cinema* and the ending of *Language et cinema* is a part that contradicts the first part of the book, open up and now that kind of

vision, then he wrote his *Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, which is a masterpiece and the second part that nobody mentioned about metaphor/metonymia, is an exemplary part about that. The first is about the apparatus but the second is extremely interesting and this mobility and also the courage of ... he was extremely brave intellectually and at one point, after the failure, which was extremely traumatic to him, the failure of his book on les mots l'esprit, that has been refused for many reasons and he felt to have failed his own life but it came out and we started at this point, this interesting dialogue about annunciation and my book and his book, they were in dialogue. Of course, he was the great maestro, he was the great mentor but as a great mentor also, he wrote his book in response to mine, criticizing deeply but with a huge respect towards me. That's a great lesson of mobility, smartness, humanity.

This is not only a question of discipline, it's a question of ethic of discipline, ethic of teaching. That's the reason why Christian was extremely important and the day in which he retired, I was one of the 15, 20 people that he gathered with him and to me, still, because it's the last time I've seen him living alive but this idea of having people coming from South American, Japan, Germany, all over the world just to pay homage to him. That's so nice. That's what makes sense of what we are doing.

Luca Caminati: Are you going to have a similar ceremony when you retire?

Francesco: No. I guess not. For several reasons, why? First because I'm not Christian.

Luca Caminati: Well, now that you are part of this field work series-

Francesco: Don't kid me please. No, really, Christian was-

Luca Caminati: A great intellectual figure of course. And you're not the first one of course to say that. So, let me go back to the politics of university, which I know you love to talk about. You started, basically, the idea of creating a science of film, tell me a little bit about the relationship with what we call now media studies, when you were-

Francesco: That's interesting because what is not that clear in the United States is the different histories in the different countries of the birth of media studies. In Italy, as you know, media studies started in the '70s. In Germany, there was media studies more inclined to the psychology but the media studies as they now are practiced is a little bit later and in France, they do not have such kind of media studies. They still are allergic to media. That's the présomptueux-ity of my French friends and we start media and especially television under two impulses. One was Umberto Eco writings about television and the second is that the public broadcasting company owned by State started in the '70s to pull money in research.

So, the first funds of my research, they came from that and it was a group of 35 years old people that later they became more or less professor and well established professor in Italy and we use that and in fact, it's interesting because I brought, as a parallel inside the gaze for movies and with this idea of interpolation, of the annunciation and the address and the response and I brought almost a few months later, I brought in a collective book with a team. We made an analysis of the Italian TV inspired by the annunciation theory. You can imagine a text inspired by annunciation theory, funded by the State television and I made a summary for the prestige, that's incredible. It doesn't work anymore that.

Luca Caminati: What's also incredible is the fact that if you look at your bibliography, you have these two texts. *Analisi del film*, film analysis and *Analisi della televisione*, side by side, seamlessly. So, thanks to, probably to semiotics. I mean, what keeps them together is the analysis of annunciation and the semiotic analysis of the text.

Francesco: Yeah, that's also something much more personal. I brought *Analisi del film*, film analysis with the most brilliant of my former student that he became the head of the research department of Berlusconi Television, before Berlusconi was in politics and we brought this book and a few years later, we said, "Why not write a book on analysis of television?" Say, "Okay, you know much better the topic than me." So, I have to say he was the leading figure for the second book and I was for the first and it was an act of friendship but also, I remember, he was marked. I didn't want to help him to be smarter than me. So, I did work a lot on this book.

Luca Caminati: So, are you comfortable as being a member of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies?

Francesco: Yes. I guess. I'm very happy-

Luca Caminati: So, you would have voted for the change of names from Society of Cinema Studies to the-

Francesco: At Yale, I guess, of course it was not individual, it was a group of people but we fought for changing our name from Film Studies to Film and Media Studies. [crosstalk 00:35:51]

Luca Caminati: Your support in that idea?

Francesco: Yeah and the endorsement of the University if you want, if I understand a little bit the politics in the states is they gave me this chair with the name of Film and Media Studies as a way of recognizing now that this is a solid field that is worth it to be.

Luca Caminati: I know you, mostly, as a film and cinema scholar, as you pointed out, cinema as a social event, as a social discourse. Is there somebody or something or some

text in American media studies that you find useful for your work? That you feel that you're in dialogue with right now?

Francesco: Yes. I guess there are but what I'm doing in this moment at Yale, I teach theory of media every year. It's to do with media what we did with cinema. So, to use theories in order to have an overview on the field and then, I welcome all the transferal approaches but there's a moment in which you have to gather all the main great theories and I started to teach that in a very historical way, starting with theory of '30s, theory of '40s, '50s, etc. I failed. There's no great sense of history. I mean, being a European, we have a sense of history that is stronger and now, it's a collection of the great figure Benjamin, McLuhan, Kittler, Flusser, etc.

Luca Caminati: Which one is the most contemporary of this?

Francesco: Flusser.

Luca Caminati: Okay, all right.

Francesco: Flusser, I find the Flusser book on technical images is so ... it's really speaking of what is happening now.

Luca Caminati: Yeah. Well, so, let me move towards the end of this conversation. You just published, as I will mention before, this *Lumière Galaxy* and the subtitle, if I remember correctly, is seven key words, right?

Francesco: Yeah.

Luca Caminati: So, tell us a little bit, what are the major paradigms that you are using right now in your work or that you're-

Francesco: That's the thing. Two aspects. I want to do that for sake of clarity. One is the great paradigm that started from the '80s as being paramount-ing our field. One of course is the great theory that's been so important. I never belonged to the great theory in the specific sense, never belonged to the great theory as shaped by *Screen* journal. I was starting annunciation as a technical term in order to understand the different kinds of address. I was allergic to things, that the apparatus was really destroying this subject and the logic of gaze is framed by the apparatus. So, the first and around that, the last stage of semiotics has been basically in France, Jean-Paul Simon for example, Jost, Marc Vernet and of course Christian's last book *L'énonciation impersonnelle* was a theory of annunciation. How the film addresses and what does it mean to address? Which does mean to frame. That's what means address. Starting from that, it's not only personally, it's typical of generation, during the '90s, after *Inside the Gaze* in which I try to study the spectator as an addressee, I try to state it so that the spectator as an individual, if you want, and I try to put together the ethnography of consumption and semiology.

So, try to re-trace how people do with what they watch and how they speak about that and using narratology in order to understand what they say about their own experience. So, I add this long period about the idea of negotiation. Basically, the idea to have a conversation, to have an act of communication means to have a negotiation about the meaning, about the time. At one point you'll say stop please because we no more time. So, there's a lot of negotiations and I studied that. Then, I moved towards the cultural studies with this idea of negotiation and try to understand not the negotiation in communication but the negotiation in the cultural processes and I have the center is the book. Try to understand how film negotiated in the landscape of modernity and exactly from that book, now, I'm working on what I think is one element, once again, an element of our generation is the coming back of the phenomenology and the idea of experience, which is not experience in cognitive psychology sense. It's more phenomenological. So, basically, annunciation, negotiation and experience has bee the three paradigms in which I did work. Now, in the book, I try to do something less at that level, not at that level of paradigm is to rethink some of the concept. Apparatus, Canon, Spectatorship, some of the concept we are using.

Luca Caminati:

Sure.

Francesco:

Some of our tools and try to propose a little rethinking of this concept in order to grasp a quite paradoxically element that we are looking at is the transformation of cinema and in the mean time, its persistence. The cinema changes and it's still cinema. The question of *Lumière Galaxy* is which kind of key concept we have to use in order to grasp an identity based on change? Based on transformation? But nevertheless, keeping an identity.

Luca Caminati:

And if I may say, since I just heard your talk and it's in your book too, this distinction between the ipse-identity and the idem-identity. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Francesco:

I mean, that's typical of the other side of my dialogue with French and European side. Especially in France now, people like Raymond Bellour, they adopted a very radical idea. Film is only what repeats the same feature that was typical of cinema, of classical cinema. Dark theater, filmstrip, etc.

Luca Caminati:

The screen.

Francesco:

The screen, all that is necessary, otherwise there's no more cinema. That is the impossible desire that our identity is based on the repetition of the single feature, always the same. It's not true. My invitation to my friends in France, I say, "Oh, read again *La Recherche* by Proust." There are wonderful pages in which the narrator is recognizing somebody. It's so different, nevertheless, it's the same. That is the element of cinema today. This is how I want summarize the status of cinema today. How it's so different and yet always the same.

Luca Caminati: So, one of the key terms that you are interested in renegotiating is apparatus, as you just mentioned but also the idea of screen that was so essential. So, let's talk about, let's call it expanded cinema or mobile screen cinema, what is your take on it? How do you frame it?

Francesco: What I say is basically the screen is an old word. It starts in Italian with Dante *La donna dello schermo* screen women and then goes to France, always is the story and always has been defining a double, a strange reality. Something keep hidden something else and something which reveals something else. The essence of the screen as being a revelation and an act of hidden and when the screen came, technically is also a screen from a rear projection, front projection, that's a lot of question that are extremely interesting but this idea of a huge manifestation of what is absconditus, what is hidden is the concept of epiphany and I retrace in the early film theory several theories saying the screen is the place of the epiphany where reality reappears. That's beautiful. That's tied with the early obsession of cinema as a religious device. Now, of course, in my cell phone, that is no more epiphany. That's Flusser says, it's something that comes, a set of data comes, they stay for a while and they go away. So, in the chapter, I argue that the idea of screen and the idea of display, they are colliding in this moment and cinema has tried once again to negotiate between the two situations.

Luca Caminati: Okay.

Francesco: It's not by chance that a lot of recent movies, they have their key moment in which one character tries to grasp images somewhere, to stop somewhere in order to have, again, a sort of revelation.

Luca Caminati: So, you're going back to Kracauer, the ability of cinema to investigate and-

Francesco: Yeah, but on Kracauer, the late Miriam Hansen wrote one of the....

Luca Caminati: Yes, of course.

Francesco: Fantastic pages but that book is nostalgic. I want not to be nostalgic.

Luca Caminati: Well, I mean, if mobility applies to Christian Metz, it certainly applies to you in the sense that one of the things that I can say this very frankly, one of the things that I admire the most of you is that you were very comfortable full professor in the best program in Milan, at the Università Cattolica. You had, at that point, a full on career as a researcher. You had plenty of students who wanted to work with you and all of a sudden, you decide to move to the United States and accept a position at Yale University. So, I don't know if there are personal reasons for it but I'm not going to ask you that. I want to ask you about the intellectual trajectory. Why did you decide that it was time for you to move to the new world?

Francesco: Okay. I tell you the story is not common. It's not official. It's not public but from now it's public. I came to Yale as a visiting professor in 2002 and I have the manuscript of *Eye of the Century* with me and after one month, I realized that the book was bad and I threw the book in the bin. So, my move to the United States was an attempt, maybe pathetic, to put the bar at the right position.

Luca Caminati: To raise the bar.

Francesco: Yeah. To raise, to put. To raise, of course, at the moment was to raise but to have that. It was the last challenge of my life. I hope. Maybe in the future there are other but-

Luca Caminati: I'm sure there are others.

Francesco: But it was an attempt. So, I tried to be a respected professor in the United States.

Luca Caminati: You felt the need to engage, particularly since you're moving, your work is now very much about cinema as a social discourse and cinema as part of a large media discourse. It was also your desire to change your addressee. You thought it was time for you to have different kinds of conversations with different kinds of people?

Francesco: I guess. Once again, it's a little bit private but I can say at this point, I do not know why but I do and I asked the professor, "Why are you recruiting me?" And he said, "Because you're able to speak with many people and make people speak among them." Yes, the challenge now is to cross the borders.

Luca Caminati: Right.

Francesco: And I try to do that.

Luca Caminati: And so, my last question is-

Francesco: And I'm old enough to be able to do that without any personal reason.

Luca Caminati: Right, that's good. Yes. So, where is the discipline going? The final question. Where is our discipline going?

Francesco: I have two kinds of worries and this could be useful to express that in the SCMS conference. One is the fragmentation of the field. We have to resist against the idea that there are single caucuses, single groups, etc. just speaking to each other, saying the same thing, etc. without any connection. We have to avoid that and the second is I completely agree on putting film and media but I'd like the media scholar, I'd like to remind them that cinema has been historically a reality that at one point let the development of the new technology. I do say that in a larger sense than Manovich, that really did great work on the topic, is

not just the language of cinema. It's the relevance, it's the cultural relevance, it's the revival of images, revival for the record, the re-questioning of the subject and the reality. All these great questions of modernity, of the 20th century modernity was on the shoulder of cinema and now, if we do that, if we are able to do what we do and we are inclined to open to the media, we have to remember that the great question is still there.

Luca Caminati: Okay. I'm going to ask you one last question that you asked me not to ask but I'm going to ask you anyway, what's your favorite film?

Francesco: Oh, there are many. There is a single movie that endless I go and watch again is *Roma città aperta*, Rossellini. And maybe I have a project in my drawer and it's a book on two frames. I write books that are on the top. I like to end up with a book on two images, just on two images that has been so disturbing. Maybe as disturbing as *Snow White* at the beginning of my life.

Luca Caminati: There you go. Well, I want to thank Francesco Casetti for-

Francesco: It's me to thank you.

Luca Caminati: For this wonderful interview and I think that next time we're going to see each other, we're going to look forward to the new book on Rossellini. Thank you.

Francesco: Okay, thank you so much.