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## European Critical Film Culture

### Italian and Western German Film Magazines in an International Context

#### Abstract

Italian “Cinema Nuovo” (founded in 1952) and West German “Filmkritik” (founded in 1957) were influential, perhaps even the most important film magazines in their respective home countries after the Second World War. With their staunch support of Italian realist cinema and their attacks on the Christian Democrats’ film politics and the illiberal political culture in Italy, “Cinema Nuovo” authors had early on become members of a transnational, mostly European network of critical film press, film historians, and film theorists. They also served as a role model for the younger “Filmkritik” authors, who adapted Italian critical realism to the devastated German film culture after 1945. Slowly, “Filmkritik” also grew into the transnational network of critical film culture. The latter worked by exchanging articles and letters, and by regular encounters at larger and smaller film festivals, also in Eastern Europe.

#### 1 Introduction

Film criticism in general, and film magazines in particular, are rich sources not only for film history itself but also, for example, in connection with questions on European social and cultural history after 1945. Film journalism offers an enormous amount of meaningful texts which can be discussed together with documents deriving from other sectors like film politics or the film industry. However, in most of the classic Western European film nations like Italy, Great Britain, or Germany, it has only rarely been the object of thorough historical analysis based on primary sources. France is a slight exception, considering the

works reconstructing the famous “Cahiers du cinéma”’s history.<sup>1</sup> But especially in Italy and in Germany, film culture in general remains largely unexplored as well.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will trace how the history of Italian and Western German film criticism is intertwined with larger historical contexts and developments. It outlines some of the results of a research project which revolved around two groups of left-wing film critics and their magazines founded in the 1950s: “Cinema Nuovo” and “Filmkritik”.<sup>3</sup> These film magazines were studied along two central questions. Firstly, the project interpreted the critics as early forerunners of a New Left which publicly emerged throughout Western Europe at the beginning of the 1960s. With their social criticism and their nonconformist writing, these authors shaped issues and prepared the rise of the 1968 movement, with regard to popular culture. Secondly, the transnational dimension of this left-wing intellectual film criticism was of interest. The combination of comparative history, transfer history, and entangled history showed that especially the younger German critics created a “Europeanized” film culture, adapted among others from their Italian counterparts. A European network of film criticism and film culture developed as an alternative to the often stated “Americanization” of European popular culture.

This outline sets out with a portrait of the Italian film magazine, “Cinema Nuovo”, and its main contributors. Already while presenting its foundation history and their basic and theoretical understanding of film and culture, cinema will appear as a highly politicized media. Hints at other important facets in their journalist activity – for example at their attitude towards the Christian Democratic governments – will underline that film matters and social criticism could not easily be separated in their works. By the following portrait of the “Filmkritik” group, not only their similar social criticism will become obvious, but also their perception and adaption of Italian cinema as one indicator for European film criticism’s transnational dimension. But its transnationality did not just manifest itself in reading and imitating foreign film authors. This paper will also describe the European network in terms of its members’ visits, direct contacts, and the role of international film festivals. Paying attention to the role which Eastern European film

1 As one of the more recent studies cf. Emilie Bickerton, *A Short History of Cahiers du cinéma*, London 2009.

2 With a few exceptions, cf. Paolo Bertetto (Ed.), *Storia del cinema italiano. Uno sguardo d’insieme*, Venice 2011; Wolfgang Jacobsen / Anton Kaes / Hans Helmut Prinzler (Eds.), *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, Stuttgart 2004.

3 The project’s results were published as Lukas Schaefer, *Kritik ohne Grenzen. Nonkonformistische Filmkultur in Italien und Westdeutschland nach 1945 in transnationaler Perspektive*, Stuttgart 2018.

culture played in these left-wing critics' thoughts, it will link the transnational dimension to their status as nonconformist intellectuals in the times of the Cold War.

## 2 "Cinema Nuovo": Critical Realism and Social Criticism

"Cinema Nuovo"'s first issue was published in December 1952. The history of the magazine and this group of critics is closely related to the history of Italian realist cinema. Already in Fascist times, Guido Aristarco, the future editor-in-chief, Renzo Renzi and others had taken their first steps in film culture. Born around 1920, as very young men they started publishing film articles in local newspapers or were members of the "Cineguf". This was the milieu where Aristarco and Renzi met, and here they joined other young critics in their disapproval of the official Fascist cinema.<sup>4</sup> Supported by the journal "Cinema", Italian realist cinema grew under difficult circumstances and finally culminated in post-war neorealism. In 1948, "Cinema" reappeared in Milan and Aristarco became its editor-in-chief. But in the same year, the Christian Democrats gained power in Italy and started to block neorealist film making. Now the attacks on film politics which Aristarco and others published were provocative. Eventually, like other left-wing critics in other magazines, Aristarco was dismissed from "Cinema" in 1952. He quickly gathered some of his former colleagues and managed to start his own magazine – "Cinema Nuovo".<sup>5</sup>

This journal presented itself in the first editorial as a platform for the continued struggle for Italian realism. It aimed to broadly "continuare il discorso" on the "nuova scuola del cinema italiano".<sup>6</sup> That programme was based on a mixture of several theoretical concepts. Italian philosophy and film theory were still dominated by idealism. Most of "Cinema Nuovo"'s contributors criticized the idealist focus on the artist's inspiration and on formal analysis. Instead, they discovered the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács, both then only selectively read and published in Italy.<sup>7</sup> Gramsci taught them

4 Cf. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del cinema italiano*, vol. 2: *Il cinema del regime 1929–1945*, Roma 1993, pp. 90–97, 213–230.

5 Cf. Lorenzo Pelizzari, *Il cinema pensato. La guerra fredda delle idee*, in: Luciano De Giusti (Ed.), *Storia del cinema italiano*, vol. 8: 1949/1953, Venezia 2003, pp. 514–533, at p. 518.

6 *Continuare il discorso*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 1, 15, 12, 1952, p. 7.

7 Cf. Stephen Gundle, *The Legacy of the Prison Notebooks. Gramsci, the PCI and Italian Culture in the Cold War Period*, in: Christopher Duggan / Christopher Wagstaff (Eds.), *Italy in the Cold War. Politics, Culture and Society 1948–58*, Oxford-Washington DC 1995, pp. 131–147; Piero Lucia, *Intellettuai italiani del secondo dopoguerra. Impegno, crisi, speranza*, Napoli 2003, p. 112.

social commitment by popular intellectuals in a “nuova cultura” – seen as a contrast to, for example, Benedetto Croce’s distant position. Lukács formed their Marxist, sociological view on art and culture – seen as tightly linked to capitalist society. His 1930s literary theory had established the dichotomy between “describing” and “narrating”, i. e. between naturalist and realist novels. In “Cinema Nuovo”, these categories were transferred to film criticism.

That meant, films should not only collect detailed impressions of everyday life in episodes and anecdotes. If so, they remained at the level of naturalism. According to Lukács, however, films were expected to enter deeper into the historical developments and the social mechanisms behind the plots; films should draw “typical” and complex protagonists. If so, they would equal historical novels and reach the level of critical realism. Thus, the “Cinema Nuovo” staff judged films predominantly by their content and their narrative structure. They rejected and ignored most of the cinema which did best at Italian box offices in the 1950s anyway. For example, the magazine’s authors did not spend much time nor many lines on American or Italian adventure films, on the western genre, or popular comedies. The “neorealismo rosa” films like “Pane, amore e fantasia” were deemed as superficial, perpetuating the status quo in Italian society.<sup>8</sup>

1940s neorealism itself underwent a reevaluation in this journal. Depicting misery and injustice had been a welcome contrast to Fascist film making. But in the 1950s, in the eyes of most of these critics, a further step was necessary to deal with the slowly recovering Italian society. In many articles, it was especially the editor-in-chief who claimed the passage from a “realismo oggettivo” to the already cited “realismo critico”. Guido Aristarco summarized it as follows: “La civiltà del nostro cinema è arrivata, nel dopoguerra, tolte le solite eccezioni (Visconti), a una fase oggettiva del realismo: alla cronaca, al documento, alla denuncia. Tutto questo costituisce soltanto la prefazione al vero realismo, il quale, per la sua natura, non può essere che critico, storicistico.”<sup>9</sup>

Now, the neorealist pioneers and younger, related directors met severe verdicts. For “Cinema Nuovo”, Roberto Rossellini had become a political conformist who shot boring films spoiled by religious reasoning. And for “Cinema Nuovo”, Cesare Zavattini’s and Vittorio De Sica’s “Il tetto” was an old-fashioned attempt without any clear line of action. Finally, Federico Fellini was harshly attacked for “La strada” and its subjectivism, irrationalism, and even mysticism.<sup>10</sup> At least Luchino Visconti met their standards. His

8 Cf. Guido Aristarco, *Pane amore e fantasia*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 13, 15. 6. 1953, pp. 379–380.

9 Id., *Amore in città*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 27, 15. 1. 1954, pp. 27–29, at p. 29.

10 Cf. as examples Guido Aristarco, *Il tetto*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 2, 15. 10. 1956, p. 217; id., *La strada*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 46, 10. 11. 1954, pp. 311–312.

1954's "Senso" was set during the Italian unification and was reviewed as the optimum of a cinematic novel and as a historical film. Visconti perfectly connected the main characters' love affair to the historical incidents, and he touched the latter's causes and essence: "Nasce il rapporto con l'esterno, con gli altri individui, e in questo rapporto, in questo interesse per un determinato periodo della vita nazionale, 'Senso' assume il suo carattere di film storico ... non si fermava ai fenomeni ma di essi ricercava le cause, l'essenza".<sup>11</sup> As a consequence of "Cinema Nuovo"'s strict realism, hardly any appreciated director was left by the end of the 1950s.

The "Senso" director leads to another important aspect of "Cinema Nuovo"'s journalist agenda. The critics often attacked the design of Italian film politics. Film control and financing were in the hands of the "sottosegretari dello spettacolo" – along mechanisms which Giulio Andreotti as the first office holder had established and perfected for the Christian Democratic Party.<sup>12</sup> In these polemics, "Cinema Nuovo" regularly documented how secret consultations with functionaries changed or threatened to stop films like Visconti's works. The critics were usually well-informed because of their close ties to critical film-makers. Furthermore, "Cinema Nuovo" attacked the far-reaching influence the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico and the parochial cinemas had on Italian cinema, and the monopolies and the conservative dominance in documentary film and in newsreels.

As mentioned, their critical realist approach and their polemics in film politics were embedded in general social criticism and a nonconformist attitude towards Italian politics and society. In their articles, the staff complained about social inequality and the neglect of southern Italy. Moreover, for "Cinema Nuovo", the still dysfunctional democracy and the restricted cultural and intellectual freedom threatened to turn Italy into a second Spain. The buzzwords were "destinazione Spagna" or "spagnolizzazione".<sup>13</sup> Aristarco and his fellows applied an anti-Fascist Resistenza rhetoric to the young Italian Republic and connected it to the fight for filmic realism.<sup>14</sup> They saw realist film making as a means to criticize the presence of former Fascists in Italian society, politics, and administration, also to further analyse the history of fascism and to destroy myths about Italian warfare alongside Nazi Germany. So "Cinema Nuovo" launched a couple of film proposals re-

11 Id., *I leoni fischiati*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 43, 25. 9. 1954, pp. 167–170, at p. 168; id., *È realismo*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 55, 25. 3. 1955, pp. 226–228, at p. 226.

12 Cf. Barbara Corsi, *Con qualche dollaro in meno. Storia economica del cinema italiano*, Roma 2001, pp. 46, 50–51.

13 Cf. among others *Destinazione Spagna*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 33, 15. 4. 1954, p. 199.

14 Cf. *Il cinema e la Resistenza*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 57, 25. 4. 1955, p. 287.

volving around the recent Italian past. For one of them, in 1953, Guido Aristarco and Renzo Renzi were even accused of vilifying the armed forces, arrested in a fortress near Lake Garda and finally given suspended sentences. Fascist military law still in effect made that possible. The case of this film idea on the Italian occupation in Greece is often referred to as an example of the country's quarrels on the freedom of the press and the arts in that decade.<sup>15</sup> "Cinema Nuovo"'s important involvement in such discussions and in debates on Italian filmic realism has repeatedly been described. Meanwhile, its influence on younger critics abroad seems less known among film historians. The following chapter will, therefore, present some proof from primary sources.

### 3 "Filmkritik": Critical Theory and Italian Realism to Refresh German "Wasteland"

"Cinema Nuovo" debates mostly revolved around domestic cinema and film theory. Some core inspiration came from abroad – Lukács' critical realism –, but these critics could build on a rich and sophisticated film culture in their home country. For the "Filmkritik" staff, it was quite different. These young men were born around 1930 and spent their adolescence in post-war ruins and reconstruction. After the national socialist grasp and facing the GDR's rivalry, West German film culture was rudimentary, too. Hardly any ambitious film journals and film literature were left. The future "Filmkritik" founders turned to the film club movement which had been initiated among others by the French occupying forces. As students, a couple of them spent some terms in Paris. Here, they further learned about cineaste habitus and the richness of film history and other countries' cinemas. They got to know each other as contributors for the film club magazine or for cultural journals like the "Frankfurter Hefte". In 1957, they started "Filmkritik", their own magazine with a simple title and a simple layout, but with a determined, polemical language.<sup>16</sup>

Film historian and theorist Siegfried Kracauer was the idol of the early "Filmkritik".<sup>17</sup> The young critics adopted his critique of ideology and transferred it to 1950s Federal Republic. Kracauer aimed at deducing collective mentalities and political moods from film plots and from stylistic devices. "Filmkritik" writers fused this critique with

15 Cf. Nello Ajello, *Intellettuale e PCI. 1944–1958*, Roma-Bari 1979, pp. 296–302.

16 Cf. Enno Patalas, *Vor Schluchsee und danach. Aus dem Leben eines deutschen Cinephilen*, in: *Filmgeschichte* 19 (September 2004), pp. 61–69.

17 Cf. Enno Patalas, Siegfried Kracauer, in: *Filmkritik*, Nr. 1, 1967, p. 5.

Frankfurt School's concept of cultural industry. It taught them increased awareness of manipulative political influence on entertainment in Western capitalism. Consequently, like their Italian counterparts, they criticized West German film politics and the domestic film industry. "Filmkritik" condemned most of contemporary West German cinema since it spread blind obedience to authority, passive belief in fate, and the related doctrine of political abstinence: "Der deutsche Illustriertenroman und der deutsche Film lieben es, ihre Helden als Getriebene des Schicksals oder ihrer Leidenschaften darzustellen. Die Emotion 'kommt über sie', lähmt ihnen Verstand und Willen und treibt sie hin und her ... jede kritische Reflexion auf das Leben und das eigene Verhalten [wird] verächtlich gemacht".<sup>18</sup>

How, the critics wondered, could such films help the public to become mature and reasonable citizens? They feared the return of a Prussian sense of duty as a threat to the still young German democracy. "Filmkritik" criticized Chancellor Adenauer's authoritarian appearance and that the growing affluence in the German *Wirtschaftswunder* covered unresolved problems with iron conformism and consumerism. As early as in the 1950s, the student authors attacked the smooth integration of even high-ranking Nazis into the Federal Republic and the myth of the innocent *Wehrmacht*. Instead of reducing National Socialism to a criminal clique around Hitler, they urged to discuss the role of petty-bourgeois followers.

Next to this social criticism and to Kracauer's and the Frankfurt School's cultural theories, the "Filmkritik" group had a constructive filmic program and a clear aim: realist cinema. Several showcase reviews or articles from their magazine will now illustrate that "Filmkritik"'s writing was deeply influenced by Italian concepts, especially by "Cinema Nuovo"'s thinking and writing. In 1958, for example, one of "Filmkritik"'s main authors, Ulrich Gregor, published an account of neorealism's history and of Italian debates on cinematic realism. For Gregor, Guido Aristarco's concept had proved to be the most fruitful: advancing from chronicle to narration.<sup>19</sup> Thus, via "Cinema Nuovo" and "Filmkritik", Lukács' terminology emerged in West German film culture. "Filmkritik" readers often found his key terms – "narrating" and "describing" or rather "erzählen" and

18 Wie ein Sturmwind, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 4, 1957, pp. 61–62, at p. 62.

19 According to Gregor "hat sich das von Guido Aristarco ... vorgebrachte theoretische Konzept wohl als das Fruchtbare erwiesen: es besagt, daß der Neorealismus 'von der Chronik zur Erzählung' gelangen müsse. Damit gemeint ist das Fortschreiten vom bloß beschreibenden, 'objektivistischen' Naturalismus zu einem vertieften Realismus, der sich nicht damit begnügt, bloße 'Blöcke der Wirklichkeit' vor uns hinzustellen, sondern die Widersprüche der objektiven, d. h. historischen Wirklichkeit mit Charakteren und Handlungen verschmilzt, die im Extrem das Typische erfassen." (Ulrich Gregor, Neorealismus – Ende oder Anfang?, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 1, 1958, pp. 89–99, at p. 94).

“beschreiben” – and the dichotomy between realism and naturalism in reviews of films of any provenience and genre.<sup>20</sup>

Italian realism was the standard by which almost every movie was judged and compared in “Filmkritik”. Stanley Kubrick was praised for his early films, creating an authentic atmosphere and precisely integrating the characters in their social environment – like the neorealist masters. Ulrich Gregor praised some modern soviet films since they abstained from spectacular plots in favour of depicting every day life’s depth – like the neorealist masters.<sup>21</sup> Reviewing the harshly criticized West German cinema, the young authors often raised the question of how neorealist directors would have dealt with the topic, without adding sentimentality. “Filmkritik” also adapted “Cinema Nuovo”’s opinion about the neorealist pioneers’ recent works. For them, Rossellini had become conservative and dated; Fellini was reproached for mysticism and subjectivism, as well; and finally, they repeated that Visconti’s “Senso” was 1950s realism’s masterpiece. Theodor Kotulla praised the picture in more or less the same words Guido Aristarco had used in “Cinema Nuovo” a couple of years earlier: “das Risorgimento bleibt nicht Hintergrund; private Entscheidung, gesellschaftlicher Zustand und Notwendigkeit des geschichtlichen Augenblicks bedingen einander und verschränken sich zu dichtem Geflecht.”<sup>22</sup>

These cultural transfers from Italy to West Germany took place on the level of film theory and cultural theory. But authors and filmmakers from other European countries and their public position also served as role model for the “Filmkritik” circle. Whereas they saw German intellectuals as elitist and isolated, they envied France and Italy since there culture would be widely received and discussed.<sup>23</sup> The following quote shows that the “Filmkritik” staff identified with an international generation of “angry young men”, with other nonconformist writers and directors similarly opposed to 1950s affluent society:

20 “Wenn der Film doch weit vor der Endstation ‘Realismus’ auf der Strecke bleibt, so deshalb, weil er dem Irrtum des Naturalismus verfällt, daß mit der korrekten Oberflächenbeschreibung der Wirklichkeit bereits genügegetan sei und sich die Kunst in Darstellung, Kameraarbeit und Montage erschöpfe.”; Enno Patalas, Noch minderjährig, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 12, 1957, p. 190.

21 Cf. Theodor Kotulla, Der Tiger von New York, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 4, 1959, pp. 100–102, at p. 102; Ulrich Gregor, Wenn die Kraniche ziehen, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 7, 1958, pp. 141–143, at p. 143.

22 Theodor Kotulla, Der Geist des Widerstands, in: film 56,3 (1956), pp. 145–146, 149–150, esp. p. 149.

23 Cf. Ulrich Gregor, Der Film und die Intellektuellen, in: magnum, no. 24, June 1959, pp. 56–58.



“Kubrick gehört, wie die jungen englischen Dramatiker, wie die jungen polnischen und ungarischen Lyriker, wie einzelne junge russische Schriftsteller, wie ... der Engländer Lindsay Anderson, der Spanier Bardem, der Franzose Alain Resnais, der Pole Andrzej Munk, der Italiener Francesco Maselli (und schließlich wie unsere Freunde aus den Redaktionen von ‘Film Culture’, ‘Sight and Sound’, ‘Positif’ usw.) ... zur Generation der ‘Angry Young Men’, die, aufgewachsen bereits im Angesicht einer restaurierten bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, von einem Gefühl der Malaise erfüllt sind und denen unsere Sympathie gehört”.<sup>24</sup>

On another transnational level of film culture, “Filmkritik” scrutinized Italian and West German film politics. The magazine regularly reported about the problems which critical directors had with censorship or export bans in Italy. Furthermore, its contributors noted that only a few of the 1940s neorealist movies had been shown in West German cinemas. Among others, Roberto Rossellini’s “Roma, città aperta” and “Paisà” were still missing. “Senso” and other films were decisively changed by additional cuts and their synchronization during import.<sup>25</sup> Learning about such interferences, “Filmkritik” acted as Italian realist cinema’s lobbyists in the West German public. Their position as German experts on international cinema correlated with their increasing participation in the transnational network of critical film culture mentioned above.

#### 4 An International Network of Critical Film Culture – and a Turn to the East

As early as the first half of the 1950s, the “Cinema Nuovo” group had become an important part of an international network of film critics. Most of them were of European origin and held left-wing opinions. For this paper’s transnational approach, it is of interest how this network operated and how its manifold links were generated. In its early years, “Cinema Nuovo” regularly published reports by “Cahiers du cinéma”’s famous leading critic André Bazin and some of his bilingual colleagues.<sup>26</sup> Due to divergent opinions about Roberto Rossellini’s contemporary films or the younger French criticism, their

24 Preface to Franz-Josef Spieker, Stanley Kubrick. Jahrgang 28, in: Filmkritik, Nr. 1, 1958, pp. 113–114.

25 Cf. Francesco Bono, “Kein berühmter Film, sondern ein Torso”. Die Eingriffe westdeutscher Verleiher in das Werk Luchino Viscontis, in: Filmblatt 20,58/59 (2015/2016), pp. 3–21.

26 Cf. Jean-Louis Leutrat/Suzanne Liandrat-Giugues, Il cinema italiano visto della Francia, in: Bertetto (Ed.), Storia (see note 2), pp. 492–504, at p. 493.

cooperation waned over the years, and “Cinema Nuovo” preferred articles by authors of the film club journal “cinéma” or the leftist “Positif”. In return, Aristarco and his colleagues appeared in French magazines and spread their version of Italian realism. “Positif” contributors constantly supported “Cinema Nuovo” and its struggle for a critical Italian cinema and so did the group around the British “Sight and Sound”.<sup>27</sup> Although hardly conscious of a historian’s transnational approach decades later, in a 1956 “Cinema Nuovo” article, “cinéma” critic Pierre Billard already delivered a noteworthy description of European film culture’s entanglement:

“Questa vigilante e simpatica attenzione, il continuo riferirsi alle migliori opere del neorealismo per giudicare i film francesi costituiscono una forma d’influenza indiretta che non è da trascurarsi. Citando ad esempio Zavattini, De Sica, Visconti, De Santis, Fellini o Antonioni, i nostri critici determinano negli artisti nostrani, al di là di un’irritazione passeggera, una riflessione che rende più profonda l’influenza specifica delle opere stesse. È in questo senso che la critica cinematografica francese ha contribuito – per lo più inconsciamente – ad una maggior penetrazione tra i cinema nazionali dei due rispettivi paesi.”<sup>28</sup>

The transnational network of nonconformist film culture also included film historians, film theorists, and filmmakers. This became apparent in “Sight and Sound”’s regular polls on film and film history. In 1952, for example, the “Cinema Nuovo” editor-in-chief Guido Aristarco was among the participants, as were André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Rudolf Arnheim, and Paul Rotha.<sup>29</sup> Many of the network’s members were involuntary cosmopolitans who had had to flee from National Socialism and the Second World War. Aristarco used the network exchanging letters with emigrated cineasts like Arnheim or Hans Richter. As authors, they often helped each other to introduce their books to the respective markets.

Aristarco’s correspondence with another emigrant, Siegfried Kracauer, was typical for this reciprocal help. It lasted for almost 15 years, and some quotes from Kracauer’s

27 Cf. *Réalismes*, in: *Positif* 5 (no date), p. 1; Gavin Lambert, *The Signs of Predicament*, in: *Sight and Sound*, no. 3, January-March 1955, pp. 147–151 and 166.

28 Pierre Billard, *Il cinema italiano, enfant chéri della critica e del pubblico francese*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 80, 10. 4. 1956, p. 206.

29 Cf. *As the Critics Like It*, in: *Sight and Sound*, no. 2, October–December 1952, pp. 58–60.

letters will illustrate the close relationship.<sup>30</sup> The first one, from 1953, shows their cooperation in translating and publishing Kracauer's main oeuvre "From Caligari to Hitler" in Italy: "First I wish to thank you for your great kindness in publishing two excerpts from my manuscript and referring to my Caligari book in so extensive and flattering a manner ... your magazine is really excellent, full of valuable contributions and a plethora of interesting illustrations ... When will Caligari be out? I am anxious to read your introduction." During the German emigré's occasional trips from New York to Europe, Kracauer and Aristarco tried to arrange as many personal reunions as possible, in "Cinema Nuovo"'s office in Milan or at the Venice Film Festival. In 1956, Kracauer referred to one of these visits in a letter to his Italian penfriend: "Throughout we were of the same opinion on films – a fact which I find very comforting. And finally, we recall with the greatest of pleasure the visit we paid to your elegant headquarters where I felt quite at home."

Kracauer also had a correspondence with Georges Sadoul. The French communist critic and film historian was another central figure within the network, with strong links to Italy and "Cinema Nuovo". He was able to organize public, international encouragement for like-minded publicists when they found themselves in dire straits. For instance, the Spanish director Juan Antonio Bardem was arrested in 1956 because he was allegedly involved in student protests in his home country. Sadoul sent missives all over Western Europe; that way, he initiated a letter to the "Times" by "Sight and Sound"'s Lindsay Anderson and a couple of statements by Italian cineasts.<sup>31</sup> "Cinema Nuovo" declared that they "associa alla protesta dei colleghi francesi, esprimendo la propria particolare simpatia a Bardem, con il quale ebbe occasione di avere ripetuti contatti personali".<sup>32</sup> In the same way, in 1953, Aristarco and Renzo Renzi received solidarity from abroad during their arrest for the film proposal on the Italian war in Greece. Sadoul and others sent letters to the fortress, "Cahiers du cinéma" published a plea,<sup>33</sup> and from overseas, Siegfried Kracauer expressed his compassion: "I often thought of you with the most vivid sympathy because of the ordeal you had to undergo."

For the young West German film critics publishing "Filmkritik", Kracauer was an important link to international critical film culture. One of their main authors, Enno

30 The following quotes from Kracauer's letters are all taken from the Kracauer collection stored in the German Literature Archive in Marbach a. Neckar.

31 Cf. Sadoul's correspondence stored in Cinémathèque française's Bibliothèque du film in Paris.

32 L'arresto di Bardem, in: Cinema Nuovo, no. 77, 25. 2. 1956, p. 99.

33 Cf. "Arrêtez-nous tous" (L'Affaire Aristarco-Renzi), in: Cahiers du cinéma, no. 28, November 1953, pp. 2–3.

Patalas, exchanged letters with him. Bearing in mind Kracauer's cited correspondence with Guido Aristarco, he was also one of "Filmkritik"'s links to "Cinema Nuovo" and Italian left-wing film journalism. Thus, it was a triangular relationship, and the letters show that they all met in Venice in 1958. And thus, "Filmkritik" members slowly became a part of the European network of critical film culture. Ulrich Gregor became friends with a couple of French critics and with "Cinema Nuovo"'s Guido Aristarco whom he visited every year after the Venice Film Festival.<sup>34</sup> "Filmkritik" published texts by their new cineast friends, while some of its authors started to write articles as German correspondents for "Cinema Nuovo" or French and British magazines during the 1950s. Of course, these articles were written with a critical impetus towards their domestic film making. Texts by these critics and by critical emigrants confirmed West German cinema's bad reputation at that time. It was Patalas who complained about the current German movies, but also decried the general "conformisme politique", the "mentalità collettiva coerente alla restaurazione sociale e politica", and the "tendency towards scarcely disguised expressions of admiration for Nazism" in his columns for "cinéma", "Cinema Nuovo", and "Sight and Sound".<sup>35</sup>

The "Filmkritik" case shows that the network's contacts and links were not only generated and cultivated by exchanging letters and articles, by reading and promoting each other's texts, but also in personal meetings and conversations. As soon as possible, "Filmkritik" members started to travel to the bigger European festivals. Especially the Venice and Cannes Festivals were common platforms for critics. In Cannes, "Cahiers du cinéma" organized their annual "déjeuner" for critics and filmmakers. "Cinema Nuovo" held a reception at the Venice Festival: The published photographs of their 1956 "cocktail" show the directors Luchino Visconti and John Grierson, publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, and some Soviet filmmakers, all absorbed in eager discussions.<sup>36</sup> Patalas, Gregor and the other German critics around "Filmkritik" were well-known in Venice or Cannes by the end of the 1950s.<sup>37</sup>

34 These hints are taken from Aristarco's and Kracauer's letters and from an oral history interview with Ulrich Gregor in 2012.

35 Cf. Enno Patalas, A propos du Dernier Pont. Tendances actuelles du cinéma allemand, in: *cinéma* 55, no. 4, March 1955, pp. 56–59; id., 08/15, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 73, 25. 12. 1955, pp. 453–454; id., The German Waste Land, in: *Sight and Sound*, no. 1, summer 1956, pp. 24–27.

36 Cf. *Petit Journal du Cinéma*, in: *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 109, July 1960, pp. 40–42; *Il cocktail di Cinema Nuovo*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 90–91, 1. 10. 1956, pp. 160–161.

37 "Cahiers du cinéma" critic Louis Marcorelles called Enno Patalas a "figure familière des festivaliers" – Louis Marcorelles, *Revue des revues*, in: *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 94, April 1959, p. 58. The Venice festival's sources stored in the Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee show that, for

However, the prominent festivals were not without controversy in the eyes of left-wing film culture. Cannes was reproached for its focus on stardom and film business. Venice often witnessed disputes on the influence of Christian Democratic politicians. Thus, the smaller European festivals were at least equally interesting for critical film experts. They were even more important for the “Filmkritik” circle in its early years since they had less obstacles to full participation and offered more possibilities to meet in quiet. At the international film club meetings in Southern Germany, they got to know French critic Chris Marker and Patalas and Aristarco arranged their first exchange of articles in Locarno, in 1955.<sup>38</sup>

As often as possible, left-wing Western European film journalists tried to meet at Eastern European festivals, too, and they constantly advocated broader Eastern participation at the Western festivals. The general openness towards Eastern European films and culture was a remarkable trait of “Cinema Nuovo”’s and “Filmkritik”’s social criticism and their nonconformist attitude. Some exemplary statements, issues, and encounters at festivals will follow. But before, it is necessary to clarify that both the “Cinema Nuovo” group and the “Filmkritik” group should not be simply understood as obedient apologists of the Soviet sphere. Unlike many critics of the communist “Unità” or “Calendario del popolo”, “Cinema Nuovo” authors had also criticized Soviet films for schematism or outright propaganda. In the middle of the Italian left’s crisis in 1956, Renzo Renzi started a long debate, readjusting the group’s attitude towards Eastern movies.<sup>39</sup> “Filmkritik” attacked some of the few GDR films which made it to FRG cinemas for one-sidedness and their low artistic standards. Such comments lead to harsh polemics by Eastern film magazines and even to police interrogations during their trips to Eastern Berlin.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, a certain critically differentiated openness towards Eastern popular culture was sufficiently provocative in the critics’ homelands governed by Christian Democrats. In 1951, Renzi lamented the absence of Eastern films at the Venice Festival

instance in 1958, Patalas and Gregor took part in organized trips to the laguna together with Guido Aristarco, many Italian or French critics and many other internationally well-known cineastes.

38 Cf. Patalas, Schluchsee (see note 16), p. 65, and the correspondence between Kracauer and Patalas.

39 Cf. Renzo Renzi, Sciolti dal “Giuramento”, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 84, 10. 6. 1956, pp. 340–342; Guido Fink, *Per una stelletta in più. Mito sovietico e mito americano nella critica cinematografica italiana*, in: Pier Paolo D’Attorre (Ed.), *Nemici per la pelle. Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell’Italia contemporanea*, Milano 1991, pp. 349–361, at pp. 357–359.

40 Cf. Enno Patalas, *Karlsbad. Zwei zu eins für die Scharfmacher*, in: *Filmkritik*, Nr. 3, 1958, pp. 320–325, at p. 325.

and in Italian cinemas – his text was one of the reasons for their dismissal at “Cinema”.<sup>41</sup> Stefano Pisu has, in fact, found evidence that for example the Italian Ministry of the Interior strictly controlled the Venice schedule to prevent communist influence.<sup>42</sup> When films from the East were admitted from 1953 on, “Cinema Nuovo”’s verdict was clear: “Nessuno che non sia viziato d’oscurantismo potrà negare che, senza la partecipazione che v’è stata dell’Unione Sovietica e dei paesi di nuova democrazia al festival, la Mostra di Venezia sarebbe naufragata.”<sup>43</sup>

“Filmkritik” authors often underlined the qualities of the GDR director Konrad Wolf or of the films which Wolfgang Staudte had shot in Eastern Germany, precisely analyzing the Nazi past and its post-war echoes. In contrast, these films were not appreciated by the major part of the Western German film press.<sup>44</sup> The Western Berlin Film Festival met constant criticism in the “Filmkritik” reports as it excluded pictures from the Soviet Union, the GDR, and other Warsaw Pact countries until the 1970s. The European counterparts of the young left-wing critics shared this view. “Sight and Sound” called the Berlinale “the lame runner among the international festivals” because of “its political discriminations”, and “Cinema Nuovo” spoke of a “politica di barriere culturali assurda e dannosa”. In the 1950s, and not exclusively in left-wing journals, readers could find a lot of comments attacking the Federal Republic’s contribution at international festivals or the Berlin festival, sometimes even combining it with reproaches for Nazi and militaristic nostalgia or West Berlin’s ugliness.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike Berlin, Karlovy Vary was favoured in the international network of critical film culture for its relatively liberal atmosphere. In tense Cold War years, attentive participants noticed a changing tone in the speeches or in the seating arrangements, but in general, as “Sight and Sound” put it, the Czech Festival was seen as an “opportunity

41 Cf. Renzo Renzi, *Passaporto per Karlovy Vary*, in: *Cinema*, no. 55, 1. 2. 1951, p. 29.

42 Cf. Stefano Pisu, *Stalin a Venezia. L’Urss alla Mostra del cinema fra diplomazia culturale e scontro ideologico (1932–1953)*, Soveria Mannelli 2013, pp. 191–223.

43 Tommaso Chiaretti, *Lo smoking delle coscienze*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 19, 15. 9. 1953, pp. 179–180, at p. 179.

44 For Staudte’s reception in Western Germany cf. for instance Ulrike Weckel, *Begrenzte Spielräume. Wolfgang Staudtes Filme und deren Rezeption im Kalten Krieg*, in: Thomas Lindenberger (Ed.), *Massenmedien im Kalten Krieg. Akteure, Bilder, Resonanzen*, Köln 2006, pp. 25–47.

45 Quotes taken from David Robinson, *The festivals. Berlin*, in: *Sight and Sound*, no. 6, autumn 1958, pp. 287–288, at p. 288; Luigi Fossati, *140 chilometri di pellicola*, in: *Cinema Nuovo*, no. 111, 15. 7. 1957, pp. 40–41, at p. 41; cf. also Jean Douchet, *Festivals. Berlin*, in: *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 110, August 1960, pp. 48–51.

for international encounters hardly possible elsewhere". For the French "Positif" clique, it was a festival without vanity and tricks.<sup>46</sup> Guido Aristarco regularly represented the "Cinema Nuovo" staff in Karlovy Vary, where he also met his "Filmkritik" friends. One of them, Enno Patalas, similarly described the festivals benefits, i. e. the lack of privileges or the concentrated debates:

"Anders als Venedig, Cannes und Berlin, die repräsentationsbeflissenen Film-(kunst-) messen, ist Karlsbad ein Diskussionsfestival. Alle Teilnehmer sind in vier benachbarten Hotels untergebracht; alle speisen gemeinsam, wenn auch an national getrennten Tischen; die alltäglichen Mitternachtsempfänge kennen keine Privilegien: jeder Teilnehmer wird eingeladen. Kein Portier, kein Agent schirmt die Großen ab gegen neugierige Frager. Gelegenheit zu Unterhaltungen bietet sich allenthalben ... Das sind keine Pressekonferenzen, wie man sie von den anderen Festivals kennt ... hier muß sich ein Regisseur vor hundert Zuhörern scharfe Kritik gefallen lassen und seine Arbeit rechtfertigen."<sup>47</sup>

To summarize and to return to this paper's essential questions: Seen from Germany, transnational film culture still was a one-way street, and "Filmkritik" worked on closing the gap on the international network of film critics, film historians, and film theorists. It was "Cinema Nuovo"s urge to proudly export Italian realism and the related critical writing which next to the precious and nutritious international encounters substantially fueled "Filmkritik"s dynamic. "Filmkritik"s early, and dynamic opposition to West German mainstream cinema helped to push it towards the 1960s renewal. And it was one of the early contributions to a general renewal of West German society in this decade. This is what transfer history and entangled history can reveal as an international dimension of German history after 1945.

46 Cf. John Gillett, *The Festivals. Karlovy Vary*, in: *Sight and Sound*, no. 6, autumn 1958, pp. 286–287; Raymond Borde, *Karlovy-Vary. Du nouveau à l'Est*, in: *Positif* 25–26 (1957), pp. 27–32, at p. 27.

47 Enno Patalas, *Dieses Jahr in Karlsbad*, in: *Filmkritik*, Nr. 7, 1962, pp. 297–299, at p. 297.