

Writing about a Common Love for Cinema: Discourses of Modern Cinephilia as a trans-European Phenomenon

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Cinephilia, *cinéphilie*, a “love for cinema.” A passionate love, an *amour fou*. A love that doesn't merely concentrate on the act of watching films, but also articulates its existence through other channels of expression such as discussions or writings on cinema; a love for the glamorous stars on the silver screen, a fascination for certain genres or directors, a concentration on the act of viewing and on the rituals of movie going, but also a critical analysis of the film productions. It is a love which, in its most excessive forms, seems already to be gone; as Susan Sontag proclaimed in the *Decay of Cinema* in 1996, she was not only mourning the disappearance of certain kind of films, but of a cinephilia, that, as she put forth, “was both the book of art and the book of life” (60) or, as Peter Wollen noted, was an “obsessive infatuation with film, to the point of letting it dominate your life” (5). This cinephilia, its proclamation but also its analysis and commentary, often took place within the pages of specialized magazines. It was indeed, in its *classic* form during the 1950s, specifically a textual phenomenon that came to life in the articles of journals or books; these were the best forum for a reflection on the particularities of the collective experience of enjoying the moving images in a large darkened room.

Ironically enough, the academic discussion on different forms of cinephilia seems to have flourished following the *death of cinephilia* often declared during the 1990s. This seemed to put an end to an uneasy relationship between academic film studies and cinephilia dating back to the 1970s, when the discussion of an obsessive film pleasure was considered conservative and bourgeois. International conferences celebrated at the departments of Film and Media Studies of the Universities of New York (2002), Amsterdam (2003) and London (2004) are one proof of this trend, which was also reflected in the publication of different essays (Sontag, Jovanovic, Cheshire and various contributors to Valck and Hagener) and books (Keathley, Valck, Balcerzak and Sperb or Rosenbaum and Martin) dealing with the subject. In most of these texts, the discussion on cinephilia is preeminently a discussion on the authors' own fascination for film, on their own cinephilia – thereby often mourning its disappearance.

In this text I would like to distance myself from most of these examples and propose an approach that analyzes cinephilia as a cultural phenomenon of film reception that flourished under specific social and political circumstances and in a particular historical

period (beginning by the late 1950s and extending for almost a decade until the mid-1960s, although at some points I will also consider later facts in order to lighten the evolution of an original cinephilia).

In this respect, I understand this essay as a contribution to the research line enunciated by the film Historian Antoine de Baeque, who defined cinephilia as a set of cultural practices characterized by a fascination for the moving image, “a way of watching films, talking about them and spreading these discourses” (11), and analyzed its development from 1944 until 1968. De Baeque therefore dates the birth of this fascination in the last days of the World War II in Paris when, after the *libération*, French moviegoers enjoyed a renaissance of their love for cinema after the restrictions dictated by the years of the German occupation. He sees in this period following the end of World War II the blossoming of a film culture that would prepare the way for the dawn of the European New Waves and diverse forms of Modernist Cinema fifteen years later. In order to mark the difference from the first French examples of cinephilia, which can be dated back to the 1920s, I suggest calling this period of fifteen years the *classic* era. It is characterized by a passionate, untheorized and unsystematic fascination both for European and for classic Hollywood cinema production; by the defense of the author-director (*auteur*) as a central figure of the film *art*; and also by a textual production about film that can be categorized, in its lack of systematization, mainly as film criticism and not theory. Parallel to the emergence of the different (New) Waves on the European continent during the late 1950s and early 1960s and their challenge of an “Institutional Mode of Representation” (Bordwell 95) by modernist aesthetics, this *classic* cinephilia now turned out to be intellectualized (often open to theoretical debates from other disciplines such as linguistics or semiotics), and also increasingly concerned with ideological aspects of film production and reception. Its relationship with Hollywood production also changed, becoming more critical in its response and often connected with already existing European discourses of anti-Americanism. Considering these changes in its nature, I propose the term *modern* for this era of cinephilia, which would dominate film culture during the 1960s and a great part of the 1970s.¹ In a broader cultural context, this *modern* form came to full development within a period known in contemporary Historiography as the “long 1960s,” an era characterized by the transformations to modernity as a “life-form”; this postindustrial society took off in the late 1950s as a consequence of the economic boom after World War II, as well as the social and cultural changes that went with it, and lasted until the oil crisis in 1973 (Schildt and Siegfried 181).

Regarding these changes, Film History has tended to explain the evolution of the different European film cultures principally on a national basis: reception, as well as production and distribution of films, has been seen mainly as a national issue. Specifically, Spanish and (West) German cinephilias, which are considered as a main point in this paper, are regarded in their development as having existed in relative isolation from those of other Western European nations (Betz 29). I believe though, that phenomena like the rise of Modern Cinemas in these countries during the 1960s and 1970s can not be understood without the previous emergence of a mass of critical moviegoers who was prepared to consume these films, discuss their ideas and cherish their creators. And this was however not only a national but a trans-European phenomenon.

Hence, the first aim of this essay is to explain this change from a *classic* to a *modern* form of cinephilia. The analysis focuses on the film critic discourses and specifically discussions on formalism and realism as evaluation criteria for film productions. My intention is to stress some of the discursive similarities and to explain differences that can be observed in the cinephilic discourses in Spain and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) at the beginning of the “long 1960s” (eventually relying on examples of other European film cultures like France, Italy and the German Democratic Republic – GDR), analyze them regarding their different cultural and political environments and intellectual traditions and, at the same time, interpret them as part of the process of constitution of a common European film culture parallel to the appearance of the first political traces of a future European Union.

Before the Waves Crashed: Building Europe on Film Reception

However, before the works of Modern Cinemas helped spread the cinephilic debates from the late 1950s onwards, there were other signals, mainly on an institutional level, that urge us to trace the beginning of this Europeanization of film reception back to the second half of the 1940s.

The founding of new film festivals, a process already started in the 1940s and successfully continued along the 1950s (e.g. Cannes in 1946, Edinburgh in 1947, Biarritz (*Festival du Film Maudit*) in 1949, Berlin (*Berlinale*) in 1951, San Sebastian in 1953 and Leipzig in 1955; Venice founded in 1932 (can be considered an exception as the festival must be seen as part of the Venice art *Biennale*) helped not only to structure the distribution and reception of films beyond national or American productions, but also assisted the creation of a trans-European community of film spectators which shared similar experiences.

The flourishing of new film clubs, film societies or *ciné clubs* (film cultural organisms created to “provide a framework for viewing and discussing films, for developing theories and for distributing and making films” (Hagener 78), whose beginning can be traced back to the 1920s received a fresh stimulus towards internationalization since the late 1940s. A good example of this tendency is the founding of the *Fédération Internationale des Ciné-Clubs* (FICC) on September 16, 1947 in Cannes. Brought into life originally by French and British film-club members, it also showed an international character in its leaders, including the French film historian Georges Sadoul and the Italian film theorist and scriptwriter Cesare Zavattini, during its first years. This organization was intended to be a forum to promote the cultural exchange of film art, specifically through the cooperation with film archives and other cultural organizations. Its founding can also be seen as a reaction and protest against the proliferation of American commercial films in Europe in the years after World War II (Becker and Petzold 83).

While the founding of film festivals and societies reflected a growing importance of an associative film culture in this period and provided active networks and platforms for the exchange of ideas, the launching of new magazines was the clearest signal of a growing Europeanization of film discourses. A good example of this tendency (often structured among the Franco-Italian axis) was the journal *Cinema Nuovo*, an editorial adventure started by Guido Aristarco in 1952 to defend contemporary Italian (neorealist) cinema. Cesare

Zavattini published some of his texts here, as did French authors like André Bazin and Jean Renoir, the Germans Siegfried Kracauer and Rudolf Arnheim, and the Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lucáks.

Meanwhile, in France, periodicals like *La revue du cinéma* or *Positif* also argued for a new, more serious and systematic approach to cinema. However, regarding its role in the future development of film criticism and theory, one publication stands out among the others: *Cahiers du cinéma*, founded by André Bazin, Jaques Doniol-Valcroze and Joseph-Maria Lo Duca in 1951. Considered a culmination of former and weaker editorial adventures, this journal was not only a reference due to its film criticism, for it also gave to a new generation of critics like Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette the first opportunity to publish their articles before they launched their careers in the late 1950s, and they shot their first films as part of the French New Wave.

The Franco-Italian axis, as a central aspect in the development of a common European film culture, also had its pendant on the production level: Italian Neorealism embodied like no other the illusion of a new European cinema after the *débâcle* of World War II; its aesthetic audacity and the humanism of its subjects were rapidly praised in specialized magazines published in both countries. But also among the mainstream productions one can find proof of this growing Europeanization process: in 1949, the Franco-Italian Agreement of Rome marks the beginning of a consistent increasing trend in the co-productions by these two countries which would achieve its zenith in the early 1960s (Betz 76).

Cinephilia Surfing the Waves

Nevertheless, it was the international reception of French films like *Les 400 coups* (Truffaut, 1959) or *À bout de souffle* (Godard, 1960) which provided a broad basis for the acceptance of the discourses of a trans-European (and mainly French in its roots) cinephilia. Personal connection played a key role in this retrospective process of recognition; the British film critic Richard Roud, referring to the work of former film critics at *Cahiers du cinéma* and relating the success of their films² to a reevaluation of their former career as critics, puts it this way in a 1960 article for the British film magazine *Sight and Sound*:

One's first reaction might be to conclude these men must be very foolish. And indeed, until a year or two ago, one might have got away with it. But today it would be difficult, I think, to maintain that film-makers like Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast, and Jean-Pierre Melville are fools. (167)

This reappraisal of film critical discourses (e.g. the defense of the *politique des auteurs* or of the *Cahiers du cinéma* itself, which was now becoming a publication of reference in cinephilian circles all across Europe and in the USA) was a crucial process that would influence Film History until the present day. Many contemporary debates in the field are based on the values, names and arguments formulated in this period within cinephilian discourses, in a process that came from the margins of the “official” film culture.

Cinephilia was indeed always a culture of outsiders, an oppositional movement battling a “cultural dominant order” (Williams 57–86) in each of the national film (reception)

cultures in which it flourished. In the period herein analyzed it went through a process of group-building and specialization that rested upon the following paradox: while during the 1950s it showed a very democratic cinematic taste (helping to implement works considered as mere genre productions without any artistic value), it also combined this attitude with snobbishly aristocratic views while defending its critical tastes. I interpret this process as a reaction against the discourses, tastes and works praised by a greater group of moviegoers and an “official” criticism: the prestigious films of the “traditions of quality” in different European countries that combined production values of well-done-entertainment, stars of the national cinematography, the acceptance of the great public and the praise of mainstream film critic publications. The feverish defense of American genre products or of the first films of the New Waves (which were usually produced and distributed under difficult circumstances and couldn't collect relevant success at the box-office) has to be understood within this process of “differentiation through tastes”; their consumption provided the “distinction” (cf. Bourdieu) which cemented the cohesion of the group. In a broader cultural context, this reinterpretation of the status of cinema went together with and was a reaction against the rise of television. Confronting the threat proposed by the new medium, passionate moviegoers reacted stressing the artistic nature of cinema (opposite to television that was “only” a mass medium).

The material basis supporting this process of cultural alienation against a mainstream was surprisingly narrow. In a period of general crisis in the film industry – due specifically to the rise of television, i.e: West German cinema lost 75% of its spectators during the late 1950s (Faulstich 171), – cinephilia demanded, through its oppositional character, secession within these already shrinking audiences. Sales figures of the most relevant magazines of this period reflect this outsider status: *Cahiers du cinéma* sold not more than 10,000 copies in the late 1950s (Hillier 302); *Nuestro Cine* about 3,500 in Spain; while in the FRG the *Filmkritik* began its editorial adventure in 1957 with just 1,000 copies.

The Emergence of Modern Cinephilia

The different cinephilian debates combined the European film culture tradition with the new aesthetic and theoretical frame proposed by the production of the New Waves and primarily concentrated on two issues: they proposed a reconsideration of the artistic status of cinema but also a reinterpretation of the role of film criticism.

The artistic nature of cinema had been a main subject in European film theory and criticism since the birth of the new medium (e.g. Ricciotto Canudo's *The Birth of a Sixth Art*, published already in 1911, Rudolf Arnheim's *Film as Art*, but also the writings of philosophers like Walter Benjamin or film-theorists like Siegfried Kracauer had already stressed the artistic character of cinema) and the *classic* French cinephilia of the 1950s continued this discussion not only on a highly specialized, but on a broader, film critical basis and applied its arguments to very different kinds of films. Not only were the works of the European *avant-garde* subjects of discussion – and therefore understood as the artistic creation of an author with a worthy world view –, but also the genre products of Hollywood studios (e.g. the works of film-makers like John Ford, William Wyler, Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks) were elevated to a higher level, to the category of art. *Auteur* film criticism became in this manner the order of the day during the late 1950s.

But there was a second strategy to enhance the status of film, which was also widely employed in the cinephilian discourses of this period: the realist question also opened very fruitful discussions that tended to point out the role of the film work in a social context and redefined the goal of film criticism.

Contrary to the formalism implied in an *auteur* oriented criticism, realist discourses often tended to focus on the “content” as analytical criterion. Apart from it, these discourses had also been characterized since the end of World War II by an increasing ideologization of their positions. In the late 1940s, the reaffirmation of Zhdanovist socialist realism as the official aesthetic doctrine of the Communist parties in a period of growing political tensions culminating in the Cold War, augmented the distance between a formalist (based on the analysis of style; politically conservative) and realist (concentrated on the analysis of the film content; widely leftist) criticism all over Europe. This chasm lasted for most of the 1950s and marked the *classic* cinephilia, maintaining the distance between two clearly separated sides that rarely merged. In France they were embodied in magazines such as the communist *Les Lettres françaises* of Georges Sadoul and the leftist and surrealist publication *Positif* (Ciment and Zimmer 204) on one the side of the ideological spectrum and the formalist, apolitical (or overtly conservative), and *auteurist Cahiers du cinéma* on the other. Regarding its weight in late film Historiography it can be affirmed that it was the *Cahiers*, and therefore the formalist path, that won the ideological-aesthetic battle during these early years. Only after the rise of the Modern(ist) Cinemas works like Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960) or Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura* (1960), which proposed significant aesthetic challenges to traditional film criticism, did the division existing up to this point seem suddenly obsolete.

Based therefore on the already existing discourses on authorship but also on the overcoming of the traditional division between realist and formalist film criticism, the discourses of a *modern* cinephilia started to spread all over Europe. The challenges proposed by different national film cultures would force it to different adaptations.

In France itself, the modifications taking place in the editorial line of the *Cahiers du cinéma* delivered a good example of this process: the evolution from a formalist (wholly apolitical, if not openly conservative) standpoint towards a rethinking of the relationships between reality, representation and ideology were best exemplified by the “rediscovery” of Bertolt Brecht. The special number of *Cahiers* dedicated to the German playwright in December 1960 marked a turning point in this development towards a modernist program on film criticism which would cope with the challenges of New Cinemas during the following years: the formal experiments proposed by the more unconventional new works couldn't be interpreted based on the traditional distinction between formalist and realist criticism. The often quoted passage from *The Three Penny Trial* is exemplary in exposing Brecht's approach to the realist problematic and the limits of a “naïve” realism:

The situation has become so complicated that a simple “reproduction of reality” says less than ever something than that reality. A photograph of the Krupp factory or of the electrical conglomerate AEG yields almost nothing about these institutions. The actual reality had slid into the functional. (Silberman 450)

Brecht's premise was considered a promising way of approaching the relationships between film and reality in a new and more complex manner while, at the same time, classic realism was starting to be attacked as idealist. However, the assimilation of Brecht by *Cahiers du cinéma* was not easy; it catered for discussion in the French cinephile community since the political left *Positif* considered *Cahiers'* approach to the theories of the German author as a way of reconciling themselves with Marxism. Further evolution of *Cahiers* during the 1960s towards a "political modernism" (Bordwell 93), which would culminate in its flirtation with Marxism-Leninism and Maoism in the late 1960s, had already started at that point.

European Variations on Aesthetics and Politics

With the launch of the film journal *Film Ideal* in Madrid in 1956, the debates and discussions that germinated in the Italian and French film cultures after World War II and wholly matured in the metropolitan Paris area during the 1950s started to gain a foothold in other European nations and suggested new ways of overcoming *classic* cinephilia. For example, only one year later, in the FRG, the writers of *Filmkritik* argued for the first time since the end of the war over a serious form of film criticism that had been missing in its national film culture.

For their theoretical starting point these critics distanced themselves from the Franco-Italian realist tradition, where realism was initially characterized by mystic-Christian undertones or the Lukácsian reinterpretation of Marxism, respectively. Additionally, they proposed a new approach which took into account the contemporary philosophical postulates of the Frankfurt School (specifically of Adorno and a "rediscovered" Benjamin), but also the German film critical tradition, which was interrupted in 1933 by the Nazi dictatorship and was now exemplified by the writings of Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer's 1947 book *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* tried to understand German Film History from 1895 until 1933 as a reflection of the path leading this society to Nazism. Influenced by the work of these theorists, the question of the relationship between reality and its representation soon left the traditional realist course (e.g. Bazinian (2005)) and incorporated ideological aspects in its analysis. Films started to be read as seismographs of a society, as Kracauer reflected in his book about 1920s German Expressionism. He claimed that the task of the film critic is to unveil images and ideologies hidden in mainstream films, "mass dispositions," which show, in a psychoanalytic manner, the collective mentality of a social group. The co-founder of *Filmkritik*, Enno Patalas, would comment retrospectively in 1967: "Kracauer's Interpretation of the German film of the Republic of Weimar became a model, by which we were guided in our film criticism of the Republic of Bonn" (5). It was on the "content" and not the "form" that critics concentrated most of their attention. Also, the publication of a fragment of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* in the second number of *Filmkritik* symbolized the critical approach of the magazine. Questions about the Marxist concept of Ideology and its criticism, the position of the film within mass society, and the role of film critics and criticism were often addressed in these early years. In spite of some theoretical differences to the postulates of the Frankfurt School regarding the consideration of cinema as a part of the culture industry, *Filmkritik* soon established itself as its film critical heritage.

The critical success of modernist European film makers like Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni or Alain Resnais modified part of these critical premises. Confronted with Antonioni's *La Notte* in his *Transparencies on Film*, Adorno distanced himself from his critical positions regarding film and television (as part of the "culture industry" thesis) of the 1940s and 1950s and proposed a new analytical approach, which defended the individual subjective position of the film critic as a central aspect of his work (81). These changes also modified the editorial line of *Filmkritik* during the 1960s, provoking a division which culminated in 1969 with the group within the magazine known as the "political left," which argued, based on a classic notion of realism, for an analysis of films as images of reality. The "aesthetic left," on the other hand, dismissed this approach as a reduction of films to their content, which ignored the aesthetic challenges proposed by Modernist Cinemas. This later group would assert itself combining the formalist approach with the political interests associated with the realist tradition (cf. Kessen).

In an atmosphere of a growing internationalization, the authors of *Filmkritik* understood their work as part of a broader tendency that also included film journals like *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound* from England and the French *Positif* (Berghahn and Patalas 1961). They distanced themselves from the passionate (and unsystematic) approach characteristic during the 1950s of "formalist" magazines like *Cahiers du cinéma* or *Presence du cinéma* in France or *Film Ideal* in Spain. The evolution towards a *modern* cinephilia therefore implied questioning some of its most joyful apolitical principles. However, the later development of the magazine during the 1960s showed more connections to the political and aesthetic program of *Cahiers*. Beyond these film specific debates, it is not difficult to recognize some similarities between the evolution of *Filmkritik* and the controversy taking place in France some years later as, in parallel to the rise of structuralist linguistics and semiotics, Roland Barthes attacked an "old" academic literary criticism (2002). It was indeed through the writings of *Filmkritik* that some of these theoretical debates started to be received in Germany while in other more institutionalized disciplines like philosophy and linguistic this process would still take some years.

The assimilation of structuralism reveals itself, in spite of the theoretical problems it proposed for the analysis of the cinematic medium, as another example of the fascination for French culture which accompanied the international success of French New Wave films. France was, and remained during the period of this analysis, the land of cinephilia, exercising a fascination over the film cultures of other countries like Spain, England or FRG. The influence of structuralism and linguistics, the increasing politicization of film criticism, and the analysis of the relationship of cinema with other art forms were all debate topics in French film culture that would, with some delay, conquer other European countries. The peculiarities generated by the "German heritage" of the Frankfurt School in the writings of *Filmkritik* started to be left behind in this period; the discourses, the names, the films reviewed on the pages of the journal – they all seemed to be increasingly European, interchangeable with other international publications like the ones already mentioned.

This evolution was not merely ideological (according to the growing interest in questioning the different ways of representation of reality) but also overtly political. Lukács, Brecht, Adorno or Kracauer: the *modern* cinephilia was, in its political views, a clearly left cinephilia. It was also, as it has already been pointed out, a phenomenon of outsiders, of film

enthusiasts trying to achieve “distinction” through their “cultural capital” (Bourdieu) from other social groups not interested in cinema but also from the mainstream-moviegoer. This outsider status in a period determined by the bipolar logic dictated by Cold War politics often increased the influence of communist groups, which played a major role in these alternative cultural fields of countries like France, FRG or Spain during the 1950s. While in FRG this leftist determinant took shape specifically through the assimilation of writings of the Frankfurt School, the most important influence in Spain was wielded by the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). This organization had not only already infiltrated the State Film School (*Escuela Oficial de Cine*), and the Spanish New Wave (*Nuevo Cine Español*, especially after 1962) through some of its most relevant representatives like the director Jose Antonio Bardem; it also stood behind the foundation and the publishing line of the Magazine *Nuestro Cine* since 1961. The journal was not (for obvious reasons under the strong censorship of Franco regime) overtly political, but it managed to adapt to Spanish circumstances some of the aesthetic principles defended by communist parties in other European countries, specifically in Italy. *Nuestro Cine* was indeed realist following the Italian path that had assimilated the writings of the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács through the filter of Guido Aristarco's film criticism (even by publishing in Spain some articles of Aristarco which originally appeared in *Cinema Nuovo*) and some of the works of Antonio Gramsci. The “content,” and not the “form” (often dismissed as “idealism”), was the main criterion of an analysis often applied not only to the films of Italian *auteurs* like Michelangelo Antonioni or Luchino Visconti, but also to the works of directors belonging to the American Independent Cinema like Jonas Mekas or John Casavettes. This ideological approach also explains the animosity against Hollywood directors like John Ford or Howard Hawks, categorized as right-wing and militarists.

On an aesthetic level, its biggest competitor, the journal *Film Ideal* (founded in 1956), opted for a critical line that emphasized a formalist film criticism along the lines of *Cahiers du cinéma* (going so far as directly translating some articles of the French magazine during the early 1960s),³ leaning specifically on its extremism of the period between 1958 and 1961 and based on the defense of the *auteurs*, on the heightening of their *mise en scène* as analytical criterion and on an “almost hedonistic pleasure in visual delights” (Caughie, 13). It was indeed the defense of a radical formalism that situated *Film Ideal* beyond the parameters of official cultural politics. *Film Ideal* praised the big, already established directors of the American studio system and, in the tradition of *Cahiers*, names like Howard Hawks, Vicente Minnelli or John Ford belonged to its critical pantheon.

One finds clear resemblances to the critical battles which had taken place in France during the 1950s between the formalist *Cahiers du cinéma* and the left-wing *Positif*, but this interpretation would overlook a very important aspect regarding the specificity of the Spanish case: this was, above all, an ideological fight between a side, whose formalism blended out every political question (*Film Ideal*), and an alternative side very influenced by the communist party as the main political force in the resistance against Franco's dictatorship. The film critical field became during those years at the beginning of the 1960s a reflection of the problems inherent to culture under censorship. The founder and director of *Nuestro Cine*, José Monleón, explained in an interview in the late 1970s these oppositions and the dialectical logic of the discourses in a very clear way:

It was an ideological battle [...] the fact, that regarding some films the formalist [critics] left their formalist examination and started to accuse the authors of the films of being communist and homosexuals, proves in a very automatic way – very clearly – that in those formalist positions a very strong ideological component existed [...]. (Tubau 121)

These antagonistic positions would last until the late 1960s; whereas the French and the West German cinephiliacs were already pledging for an overcoming of two very narrow “form or content” approaches of the film critical work in the early 1960s (cf. *Cahiers du cinéma* – especially after 1963, as the filmmaker Jacques Rivette took over as the magazine's editor-in-chief – or the group of the “aesthetic left” in *Filmkritik*), the Spanish film culture, traditionally weaker and grown up under other, narrower, political circumstances, would wait for almost another decade, until about 1970, to achieve that developmental stage. A series of articles from Pier Paolo Pasolini published in *Nuestro Cine* in 1965 reflected the increasing theoretical weight of semiotics and linguistics and prepared the ground for that evolution during the second half of the 1960s.

Censorship was not only a problem regarding the theoretical discussions in the magazines: it shaped a whole (film) culture of shortage. As the works of Ingmar Bergman, Luis Buñuel or Jean-Luc Godard were censored, *Nuestro Cine* published the scripts of the films which could not be screened. In a particularly productive period of Film History (with the *Nouvelle Vague*, British Free Cinema, *Cinéma-Vérité* etc. at their height), the Spanish moviegoers could only *read* (and discuss) but not *watch* these films. The way political circumstances increased Spanish cultural alienation can also be pointed out comparing it to the situation in other West European nations, but also to a country under similar conditions of censorship like the socialist GDR: publishing entities such as the journals *Deutsche Filmkunst* (founded in 1953 and dealing specifically with theoretical questions) or *Filmkurier* (founded in 1954 and conceived as a publication for a broader popular readership) showed almost no alternatives against the official doctrines defending socialist realism as aesthetic dogma – whereas since 1958 some of the excesses of Zhadanov's thesis had been openly questioned (Becker and Petzold 24). This official position towards the arts was clearer in the GRD since the 5th Plenum of the Central Committee of SED (Socialist Unity Party) in March 1951. In spite of some attempts following the 20th assembly of the Russian Communist Party, in which the excesses of Stalinism were for the first time denounced, this spirit of renewal didn't last long enough to significantly change the cultural politics of the East German state. The official doctrine stimulated even a hard critique of other “realisms,” for example the neorealist productions in Italy, although these were also clearly left-wing (Karl, 173). In this regard, the growing politicization towards the left of the West European cinephilia wasn't enough to facilitate the assimilation of these ideas in the socialist country. The aesthetic modernism typical of a cinephilian film culture, for example in the writings of Bertolt Brecht or in the films of Alain Resnais or Jean-Luc Godard, was in every way beyond the official cultural politics of the SED state.

Some resistance came from non-governmental organizations, like film clubs and their publication *Film*, but as a whole, the East German film culture stayed separated in its discourses from other forms in West European countries. The reception of international films, which had played a central role in the spreading of these discourses at the other side of the German-German border and could question the official aesthetic doctrines, was very

restricted in this period and very often limited to the works of other socialist-communist countries. And while Miloš Forman's *Cerný Peter* (1963) or Roman Polanski's *Nóż w wodzie* (1962) could be seen on the East-German screens in 1964 and 1965 respectively, the French *Nouvelle Vague* finally had its premiere in 1968 with François Truffaut's – aesthetically quite conventional – *Les 400 Coups* (nine years after its original release in France!).

As the 1960s went by, the different European variations of a *modern* cinephilia tended to a homogenization of principles that ran parallel to a process of increasing systematization. The original love for cinema was shifting in its different articulations towards the epistemological concision of a scientific discourse (often leaning on concepts and methodological approaches from other disciplines, specially literature), which would give birth to film studies as an academic discipline. The process of cinephilia leaving the cultural margins and taking over institutional positions at universities and film institutes at the end of the decade was based on a discursive production oriented again, following the process initiated in the change from *classic* to *modern* cinephilia, towards the French tradition. The publication of the works of Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Comolli, Peter Wollen or Geoffrey Nowell-Smith guided the first steps of the new discipline built on the merging of the original passion for cinema with the epistemological discussions accompanying the rise of structuralist linguistics since the early 1960s.

The extension of this politicized and theorized (*modern*) cinephilia was indeed directly determined by the different social and political landscapes of the European nations; this fact explains the different paces in its absorption. At the same time, its openness to theoretical and critical discourses coming from other disciplines robbed the film critical doctrines of some of their original joyous naivety and prepared their assimilation in the course of cultural changes taking place in these societies during the second part of the 1960s: the cinephilia started to become analyzed, explained, criticized and, in a process of growing theorization and politicization of film cultures, slowly dismissed as an approach to cinema which was passionate and joyful but certainly not scientific enough. The process of institutionalization of film studies launched in the late 1960s (cf. Andrew 343) therefore put an end to early passionate forms of cinephilia. Its influence would, however, survive in different forms for decades.

Trans-European Cinephilia and National Cinemas

Apart from these national particularities, the trans-European nature of cinephilian debates poses some other important questions regarding the development of different national cinemas during the 1960s. While traditional Film Historiography has tended to stress the national character of European cinemas usually based on film production (whether in economic terms or referring to the intrinsic characteristics of the films themselves – for example motives or style), *modern* cinephilia posed two main challenges to some of these considerations. On the one hand, it represented the best proof of the growing importance of the consumption factor while rethinking the concept of national cinema in broader terms. This concept developed to fulfill a “generic function” (Elsaesser, “Chronicle of a death retold: hyper, retro or counter-cinema” 167) that included production, distribution, consumption and interpretation of the films produced in a territory.

On the other hand, this “generic function” also played a pivotal role regarding the conceptualization of nation. While cinephilia was one of the main intellectual forces supporting the rise of quality art cinematographies since the early 1960s (for example the French and British New Waves, the New German Cinema or the *Nuevo Cine Español*), proposing through them a reinforcing of the traditional “national” understanding of Film History/ies, it also helped to produce a form of national cultural specificity (art cinema), which was also trans-European in its marketing and consumption (for example, through an active network of film festivals including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and Edinburgh, and through its reception in specialized magazines). Thus the sum of different European national cinemas mutated into a new whole which also stood for that generic function mentioned by T. Elsaesser: European art cinema proposed a trans-European understanding of the “genre” European film. This reduction of the trans-European cinematographies to the terms of quality art cinema (usually structured around anti-Hollywood discourses) would also unfortunately cause the critical discrimination of other popular cinema production (Higson 37).

The later evolution of cinephilia during the 1970s showed the first traces of that decay which would be mourned by Sontag and her peers twenty years later. While already damaged by the confusing theoretic ramblings and political radicalization following May '68, the change of consumption parameters forced the greatest modifications in the cinephilian practices and discourses since the 1950s: the commercialization of VCR at the end of the 1970s helped to popularize new, private forms of film-consumption, which at the same time fostered re-readings of traditional art cinema canons. Subsequent technological developments like DVD, Blu-ray, services of Video on Demand or Streaming on the Internet increased the variety of consumption practices enabling at the same time an heterogeneity which jeopardized the constitution of socially relevant cinephilian discourses, as in the *classical* and *modern* forms of a “first-generation cinephilia” (Elsaesser, “Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment” 36). I would like to designate this new form, especially characterized by its emphasis on private forms of film consumption, as a *postmodern* cinephilia.

The loss of relevance of canonical forms of cinephilia which stood behind the emergence and critical recognition of a trans-European art cinema during the 1960s is best illustrated by the evolution of film magazines, originally strongholds of the cinephilian discourses. Not only were many of them forced to close during the 1970s (*Film Ideal*, *Nuestro Cine* or *Filmkritik*), the ones remaining had to cope with a general loss of cultural presence. The example par excellence is *Cahiers du cinéma*. Following the publication of long and confusing texts on highly theoretical subjects, which provoked a distancing from a great part of its readership as reflected in sinking sales (3,000 in 1973) and erratic publication dates (only four issues in 1974) (Bickerton 88), the reorientation of the magazine from the late 1970s onwards towards more popular content was also a reaction to changing defining qualities of now more mainstream film culture. Cinephilia had lost its alternative elan.

Conclusions: A Glimpse at the Present

It would, however, be mistaken to interpret the decline of the most relevant examples of a traditional form of cinephilia (like the close of film magazines or the decay of

the film club movement during the same period) as a negation of cinephilia in a broader sense, as a denial of a love for cinema. It rather occurs to me that the changes proposed in the late 1970s by the home video market, the individualization of the consumption practices, the diversification of alternatives and the negation of a *one* grand film historical narrative (which in this case includes the cinephilia discourses about film *auteurs*, the defense of the New Waves or the traditional canon of European art cinema masterworks) have been augmented and radicalized with the emergence of an active Web 2.0 cinephile community that provides a challenge of the original thematic homogeneity, breaks up the geographical concentration and disperses the discourses of traditional cinephilian forms. Following this logic, this movement is a follow up to the proclamations expressing the necessity for rethinking most of our relationship as an audience to the consequences of a successful implementation of *classical* and *modern* cinephilia. The French Film Historian Michel Lagny noted in this sense: “we should work more with articulations of detailed investigations and offer alternative perspectives to auteur cinema. We are too closely attached to the tradition of the cinephilia.” (1996)

The richness and heterogeneity of these new, alternative approaches to Film History and to the tradition of cinephilia propose simultaneously a local and global perspective on film cultural debates and a reconsideration of the traditional relationship between cinephilia and national art cinemas already mentioned above. The enforcement of transnational dimensions in recent works analyzing European cinemas during the last years (cf. Gemünden, Higson, Hjort and MacKenzie) shall and should therefore be interpreted as part of this growing tendency towards liberation from traditional cinephilian narratives.

The first cinephilian generation may have influenced popular and academic film discussion like no other phenomenon in the history of film theory; it had also established an interpretation of film history which today can be considered canonical. And while it is true that film magazines don't have the cultural presence they used to, a rich, varied cinephilia not only maintains its position at film festivals or film institutes, it also has conquered the Internet (cf. Scott and Sperb) as a place to discuss and spread ideas. An old cinephilia may be gone; this new one seems still very much alive.

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