

Joachim Paech:

Some Notes on History and Structure of Film Studies in Germany, GFR and GDR

I

By means of the following notes I will try to give an insight into the state of present-day film studies in West-Germany, its subjects and institutional conditions. I will start with some remarks about the history of theoretical studies of the film and the beginning of their institutionalizations in Germany and I will finish with a short glance to our neighbour GDR and problems in the development of film-studies there.

Three relevant publications, which were written in the years 1985 to 1987 at the West-German universities of Frankfurt and Wuppertal and the German Filmmuseum in Frankfurt, give me the opportunity to look a little bit closer at some traces of early film studies in Germany. The titles of these books are 'The Beginnings of Film Criticism in Germany since 1909' by Helmut Diederichs, a republication of early film-theoretical writings of Herbert Tannebaum, edited again by Helmut Diederichs and Heinz B. Hellers book on *The Reactions of literary intellectuals to the challenge of the Film in Germany between 1910 and 1930*.

In contrast to France and the USA, in Germany, the following factors had been determinant for the beginnings of theoretical reflections on the new medium film:

1. In Germany no film industry of any significance had been established till the first world war (with the exception of Oskar Messter), which means, that there could not exist a unity of common interest between commercial and ideological interests of the producers of film art as there was in countries with a more developed film industry. The future chances of research in the area of film would always be dependent on the short-term success and long-term failness of the German film industry.

2. Film and cinema in Germany had been attacked by cultural critics more violently than in other countries; they were vigorously fought by the traditional media theatre and literature, which tried to exclude the popular and reputedly trivial film from the institutions of bourgeois art; if the film is at present about to assert itself in the academic field, then because there were constant crossings of the of border-line between high and low culture and art once and again. Film studies in Germany are based on this line between two cultures.

3. Since 1917, when the german film industry was established during the first world war out of military, largescale industrial and political-propagandist interests, film research, insofar as it was promoted by the state, has remained the object of propaganda research for political and/or commercial means.

All attempts to establish film science analogue to traditional scientific research in literature, art or theatre and drama have to reckon with these factors.

The first 'institution' which served as medium of discussion of the aesthetic character and value of the film, were the film journals, which appeared from 1907 on, e.g. the *Kinematograph*, the *Licht-Bild-Bühne* or *Bild und Film*. In the beginning, Film criticism was nothing but an extension of theatre- or literary-criticism; all the more important is the contribution to an early theory of the film by Herbert Tannenbaum with his article *Theater und Film* in 1912; together with the first dissertation on (a sociological scrutiny of) the cinema by Emilie Altenloh, which was supervised by Alfred Weber in 1914 in Heidelberg, the writings of Herbert Tannenbaum included the first adequate descriptions of the film as autonomous medium, which followed rules by its own. Tannenbaum as well as Altenloh had no prejudices against the cinema; Tannenbaum's connections with the art-reform-movement in Mannheim, which considered art as a means of popular education, made him see in the popular cinema an art-form for the people as well. His way of describing the relationship between technical and aesthetic aspects of the film points forward to Walter Benjamin's emphasis of the apparative origin of an esthetic in the technical epoch; and by stressing the visual character of the film and the superiority of the image he anticipated, what Béla Balázs in 1924 made the center of his theory of the visual man.

Later on, the cooperation of highly esteemed writers like Gerhard Hauptmann, Arthur Schnitzler or Hugo von Hofmannsthal and popular actors like Albert Bassermann and Paul Wegener who came from the Max-Reinhardt-Theatres, and the fascination of Asta Nielsen, supported the gradual crossing of the borderline between high and lower popular art and the establishment of the film as an accepted part of the institution of bourgeois art, which was the condition of the establishment of film research as well. Between 1922 and 1924, at the end of the first heyday of the german expressionist film on the ruins of the national economy after the first world war, the hour of the philosophers had come.: Rudolf Harms, a student of the idealistic philosopher Johannes Volkelt, wrote a book with the title *Philosophie des Films. Seine ästhetischen und metaphysischen Grundlagen*; a book by

Georg Otto Stindt was entitled: *Das Lichtspiel als Kunstform*. All these theoretical efforts intended to integrate film into the system of the traditional arts, to claim it on the esthetic level for the bourgeois institution of art. Only Béla Balázs, who fled from hungarian fascists to Germany, where at this time democracy was being tried out, recognised, that 'film is a totally new art and as different from all the other arts as music is from painting and painting from literature'. Thus Balázs explicitly called for a special theory of film.

In France, the film-theoretical or film-esthetic debate between the two world wars was always connected to filmmaking: so was the discussion about the 'cinéma pur' of Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Abel Gance or Louis Delluc (the only film-journalist among them) as well as the cinema enthusiasm of writers from Apollinaire to the surrealists, who made the film part of their literary manifestos and whose literary writing was affected by their film experience. While in France cinema became the center of the debate about the development of a modernist theory and practice of art, film theory in Germany continued to be left to the philosophers or to the film-critics: the most important representatives of film criticism like Siegfried Kracauer and Rudolf Arnheim wrote their articles for newspapers like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* or journals like Carl von Ossietzky's *Weltbühne*. The subjects of a few dissertations treated mainly economic and (juridical) legal problems in the field of the cinema.

Only at the beginning of the 30s in Germany and at the same time in many other countries was the institutionalization of film research started simultaneously with the establishment of filmarchives and libraries as the precondition and basis of any film science: The London British Film Institute was set up with support from the government in 1933; the Museum of Modern Art became the center of american film research at the same time; in Rome the fascist Government made a film institute part of the Cinecittà (1935); lateron the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia became one of the foundations of the neo-realism in Italy; a similar function was fulfilled by the IDHEC (from 1942 on) for the development of the french post-war film. Nazi-Germany opened a film-academy in 1937, which did not survive the thousand year Reich. Film archives were set up to provide a link between film training and research: in 1938 the FIAF was set up by a union of the film archives of the cinémathèque française, the London National Film Archives and the *Reichsfilmarchiv* in Berlin, which had existed since 1935.

The question, why just at the beginning of the 30s such a broad institutionalization of film research commenced, is certainly justified; two arguments seem to me to be especially plausible; 1. a rising interest of the state in film as a means of propaganda can be identified since its early experiences during the first world war and class struggles. In Germany the prosperity of the film industry owes much to this combination of military, industrial and political interests, which led to the foundation of the Ufa. And the revolutionary class struggles after the war were also struggles over the cinema (and the radio): When Willi Münzenberg, president of the Worker's International Relief said: 'Fight for the cinema', action was taken by Alfred Hugenberg, who became the first Minister of economic affairs in the Hitler government. But it is not only in countries with trends to totalitarian societies like in Italy, Germany and the USSR that film research was organized under the aspect of mass-persuasion. On the eve of the second world war the same is true of English, French and American societies.

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But of still greater fundamental importance is the fact of the introduction of the sound film between 1927 and 1930, which for the first time caused a deep caesura in the history of films and produced the consciousness of a film-history, that means for the first time the recognition of a past in the development of the cinema. Up to this point film was characterised by its ahistorical presentness. Individual films were celebrated, consumed and forgotten as a momentary event; beyond the stories the films told, they could hardly constitute a film-history. Only after people became aware of the break between silent film and sound film could a past epoch of a film history be distinguished. And only as a historical object can film start really to become an object of film science.

After the war was finished and fascism in Europa destroyed, the losses, which were effected by the nazis in the field of film and cinema, and therefore film theory und film research, too, could be felt in Germany. Early essays in film theory had been suppressed, their authors had been persecuted, killed or exiled (see Chris Horak: Vanishing point Hollywood). Rudolf Arnheim still could publish his book 'Film as Art' 1932 in Germany, before he went to Italy and then to the USA, where he changed to gestalt-theory in the psychology of art. Béla Balázs fled to Moscow in 1931; Siegfried Kracauer wrote his symptomatic history of the german film 'From Caligari to Hitler' and after the war his 'Theory of Film' in the surroundings of the Museum of Modern art in New York. The exiled film journalist Lotte Eisner wrote the most important books on the german film-expressionism and its directors in the french language in the Cinémathèque in Paris.

II

The new start after 1945 came from the universities, especially of the Institute for Journalism (Publizistik) in Münster/Westfalia, where film-seminars were led by Walter Hagemann, author of the first filmtheory in Germany after the war (*Der Film. Wesen und Gestalt*. Heidelberg 1952). Some of his students, among them Enno Patalas and Theodor Kothulla, founded a journal for film criticism in 1956 (*Film 56*), which became the later famous *Filmkritik*, after the staff had moved to Munich and was joined by Wilfried Berghahn and Ulrich Gregor. At this time, *Filmkritik* was a result of the common enthusiasm for film of younger people, who were organized in film-clubs in the

communities and highschools. The *Filmkritik* continued to be most important 'institution' for the discussion of film criticism, film theory and film politics, which was oriented towards the *politique des auteurs* in West-Germany over a long period (till 1984 at least). Today there is no theoretical-analytical film-journal in West-Germany anymore except perhaps *Frauen und Film*, publishing feminist film theory.

Filmkritik started programatically with the reproduction of *Amusement and culture-industry* from Horkheimer/Adorno's *Dialectics of Enlightenment* in the *Number 2, 1957*. But the negative dialectic of Frankfurt-critical theory, which had its enormous influence on the later theory of mass-communication e.g. in Dieter Prokop's *Massculture and spontaneity. Changing forms of commodities of masscommunication in late capitalism* was less suited to the demands of theoretical and practical devices for film-criticism. Therefore, the aesthetics of cinema-realism, defended in the *Filmkritik* first of all by Wilfried Berghahn, were influenced by the critical theory and its analysis of the everyday-consciousness, dominated by the products of the culture-industry, but drives its theoretical cutting edge from Kracauer's cultural anthology: The culture-industrial products of Hollywood's dream-factories are realistic, not because they reflect an outer reality, but because they assimilate the wishes of their consumers. The crucial sentence, which could as well be part of Kracauer's writing, goes as follows: "A grave error of ordinary criticism about films for entertainment is to believe, that they are alien to reality because they are unrealistic. This is only the case, if you expect a real image of a reality. [...] It is true, that cinema-goers demand dreams, but not any sort of dreams, but those, which take account of their social situation." (421)

To prefer the Italian neorealism of directors like Visconti, De Sica or Rossellini is of André Bazin and the criticism of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* as well. Since 1962/3 and the director's of the so called young german film Oberhausen-manifesto the *Filmkritik* also speaks of the *Politique des auteurs*, the author's cinema. All in all, the *Filmkritik* is until then the only place for discussions of film-theory and film-politics together with critical film-analysis.

The first institution of film-science in the more literal (closer) sense, which was founded after 1945 in 1947 was the Marburg Archive for Film Science (*Marburger Archiv für Filmwissenschaft*); it was renamed in 1949 as German Institute for Film Studies (*Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde -DIF*) first in Wiesbaden and now in the Frankfurt Filmuseum. The DIF is member of the FIAF and primary a collection of film-related materials and an archive. Moreover, from the beginning of the young federal republic there were efforts to establish a central academy for the training of the rising filmmaking generation as well as film research programmes. For their plans Erich Feldmann and Walter Hagemann used the 'Institut de filmologie' of the Sorbonne in Paris as a model; because of its close relationship to filmpractice this future academy was not installed at one of the universities but as special institution of its own. Originally the academy was to be set up in Munich, which had replaced Berlin as film-capital after the war; but when Berlin also put forward a claim to the academy, two of them were finally established in Munich and Berlin. Of the originally intended relationship between theory and practice at the Film- and Television-Academy in Berlin only an institution for the training of filmmakers in left - here, filmtheory or scientific approaches to film and cinema are deeply distrusted; on the other hand, in Munich you will find remains of film-research activities because of the neighbourhood and closer relationships to Munich University.

In 1952, the film-archive as part of the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz started working; most of all for contemporary history the Bundesarchiv is the most important west-german film-archive. A *Kinemathek* was only established in West-Berlin in 1963; the scientific evaluation of their filmhistorical collection is the task of the *Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek*. Other institutions like the *Institut für den wissenschaftlichen Film* in Göttingen with its great collection of ethnographic films and nazi-newsreels or the *Münchner Institut für Jugend, Film, Fernsehen* founded by Martin Keilhacker in 1949, are still working today.

Summarizing what I said up to here about the development of the institutional part of film research in West-Germany, it seems to me to be characterized first by the fact, that education and training for film and television have been cut off from film research since the foundation of the academies; when they started working, cinema was not at the center of film-training any more, but was replaced by television. Apparently training for a career in the television networks needs no theoretical ability; a critical consciousness might only be embarrassing for a future career. On the other hand, archives and institutions for film-research in the 60s remained hermetically sealed to any not-insider approach; not only was the film ousted by television from the entertainment-market but also from the main interest of film-scientist; a film science, which had hardly begun after the war, was at the beginning of the 60s replaced by mass communication research, an empirical-pragmatic mass-media-effects research in the interests of political and commercial advertising. Film science was put asleep like *Sleeping Beauty* in the fairy tale. Neither in scientific communication nor in university education could film research play a noteworthy role.

III

Following the student-movement at the end of the 60s and changes in the social strata of the west-german society on the one hand and deep changes in the media situation at the beginning of the 70s with its introduction of the so called new media video, cable television, home computer et al. on the other hand, new conditions and chances for film research programmes in West-Germany have arisen. The following developments I suppose to be most important:

1. The student-movement popularized a broad alternative use of the new electronic media systems, first of all video. (see Enzensberger: *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien*, Kursbuch 1970 and Negt-Kluge: *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* -public sphere and experience-) The reception of the media-theories of Brecht and Benjamin for a reciprocal use of the communication-media caused a historical consciousness of the relationship between media and society.

2. In the area of education technical innovations were introduced in schools and universities. In locations, where in former times only the idealistic spirit was blowing, now despite the heavy resistance of some teachers children grew accustomed to the use of modern communication systems. Even today, there is a remarkable inequality between the everyday experiences of children with cinema, television, video, computer-games etc. and the response of the school to the changed behaviour of the pupils; and even today, there is no systematic training of teachers (in their preparation-seminars) in the new media: they learn how to teach reading a book, but not how to see a film or television program.

3. Following the student-movement there is a new interest in the so called second culture, its forms and media; under the key-word 'trivial culture' new sorts of texts like pulp-magazines, television series or films become objects of advanced (progressive) school lessons and university-seminars.

4. One reason, why films could not easily become an object of school lessons was, that it was nearly impossible to gain access to films for their use in schools or universities. Though film and cinema are mass-media, only a few copies of each film were left in archives; and for educational institutions financial and legal obstacles to the showing of films were often insuperable. Today television is the greatest distributor of films; and videotape recorders allow everybody to record any film and put it into a private or institutional archive. Nowadays a film can be read on a videotape recorder like a book on a desk. This is a quite new situation leading to a new approach to film analysis and film history. Many books about films were written on the basis of other books, without having seen the films in question, because it was impossible to gain access to these films. Now a great deal of films from the whole of film history can be acquired and analyzed on videotape recorders; it is quite clear, that not only the means of film analysis, but also its objects, the films have changed, because there is a basic difference between seeing a film projected in a cinema and on a video-monitor.

5. With its claim to be a universal science, semiotics conquered west-german universities during the 70s. Film semiotics granted Film science some dignity at a moment, when a new interest in film research was growing. Even before Peter Wollen's 'Signs and Meaning in the Cinema' (1969), a book, that made film semiotics popular in England, Friedrich Knilli published the issue *Zeichensystem Film* of the journal *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* in Germany. Knilli's access to film semiotics was more pragmatic, he was interested in culture-analysis and didactics, which supported popular effects of filmsemiotics in Germany. In this country, the linguistic turn came after the popularizing of filmsemiotics; presently research in filmsemiotics is located in West-Berlin (TU and FU, Posner, Bentele, Möller, u.a.) and Mannheim (Klöpfer, Narrativik); the former center of filmsemiotic-research in Münster (*Münsteraner Arbeitskreis Semiotik*) has lost influence, after Möller and Wulff moved to Berlin. Filmsemiotik is organized as a section in the German Society for Semiotics.

Representative books in this area are: Karl Dietmar Möller-Naß: *Filmsprache. Eine kritische Theoriegeschichte*. Münster 1985 or Günter Bentele (ed.): *Semiotik und Massenmedien*. München 1981.

Film research you will find located in west-german universities first of all in Drama-Departments, e.g. in Berlin and Frankfurt. In Marburg recently new courses in media-studies have started, the director of which is Thomas Köbner. Film and media studies at the university of Osnabrück have been terminated by the government; in place of that the politicians of the ruling party established a school for journalism for the training of their own journalists in Hannover, the capital of Lower Saxony; as you can see, film science is still within the scope of political influence in Germany.

6. There is no doubt that the comparison between literature and film and the analysis of film-adaptions is the central subject of film studies at west-german universities. A lot of film-analysis and theoretical writings in that area have been done. One center for such work is the Institute for German Philology in Munich; its director, Klaus Kanzog and Karl Nikolaus Renner among others have published interesting studies on methodological problems in the analysis of film-adaptions of novels by Heinrich von Kleist. [Kanzog (ed.)] *Erzählstrukturen – Filmstrukturen*. Berlin 1981 – K.N. Renner: *Der Findling. Eine Erzählung von H. v. Kleist und ein Film von George Moorose. Prinzipien einer adäquaten Wiedergabe narrativer Strukturen*. München 1983) – A film semiotic oriented theory of film-adaptions of literature was published by Irmela Schneider (*Der verwandelte Text*. Tübingen 1981) and a history of literature related to film in France was published by Franz-Josef Albersmeier (*Die Herausforderung des Films an die französische Literatur*. Heidelberg 1985). A survey of analysis, theory and didactics of film-adaptions of literature will be found in a reader which was edited by myself: *Methodenprobleme der Analyse verfilmter Literatur*, Münster 1984.

An annual survey of all related activities in film and media research at west-german universities is compiled in: *Film und Fernsehen in Forschung und Lehre*, edited by Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek. (No 10 will be published in the autumn 1987.)

7. Under the impression of the electronic turn; that means changes in production and reproduction of films and audio-visual media a new break in film history can be noticed comparable the one between silent film and sound film but with still more consequences. This break can be detected in the special aesthetics of recent postmodernist films by Cop-

pola, Spielberg or Lucas or nostalgic remakes of Godard's *A bout de souffle* (1959) by Jim McBride or de Palma's *Scarface* (1983) and many more. And there is a new interest for film history or rather film archaeology, suggesting the end of a cinema oriented film esthetic. Leaving aside Kracauer's history of the German film from Caligari to Hitler, the first complete history of the German film is now being prepared in Stuttgart; three related publications I already mentioned at the beginning; exhibitions like that on the film-city Berlin are as well expressions of that archaeological trend in the opening of a new film-museum in Frankfurt 3 years ago. The subject of the next annual congress of our society for film and television science will be the writing of film history.

8. I want to finish my survey of the historical development of film science in West-Germany by a short listing of institutions related to film research:

- das Deutsche Filmmuseum und das Deutsche Institut für Filmkunde in Frankfurt; (Schrift- u. Bildmaterial; Exponate, Filme)
- die Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin; (Bibliothek Lamprecht, filmhistorische Sammlung, Leiter: Werner Sudendorf)
- die zwei Film- und Fernsehakademien in Berlin und München mit ihren Bibliotheken und Filmbeständen;
- das Filmarchiv des Bundesarchivs in Koblenz;
- das Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film in Göttingen (Dokumentarfilmgeschichte)
- das Filmmuseum im Münchner Stadtmuseum (E. Patalas)
- das Sonder-Sammelgebiet Theater und Film der Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt.
- there is no film scientific journal in GFR.

IV

My information on film studies in the German Democratic Republic is based upon two articles in the journal *Filmwissenschaftliche Beiträge*, published by the East-German *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR*, located in Babelsberg: The first is by Peter Wuss: *Zur gegenwärtigen Situation der Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft in der DDR* (1982, 2), the other is by Hermann Herlinghaus, senior of the East-German film science: *Zur Perspektive der Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* (1983, 2)

Peter Wuss states in the beginning of his report, that in the GDR, too "social evaluation of film and television studies is totally inadequate in relation to the very high estimation, which the audio-visual media enjoy for entertainment as well as formation of a socialist consciousness of the inhabitants of the GDR."

There is only one single institution, which is prepared to organize film research and publish its results, this is the *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen* with its journal *Filmwissenschaftliche Beiträge* twice a year. It is located in Babelsberg, where all activities concerning filmproduction (the DEFA), film-administration, film-training and research are centralized; in the last years also a film-museum was added to it, one of the oldest institutions is the famous *Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR*.

It is rather surprising for a society, in which film and television are very important as ideological means for the formation of social identification, that Wuss comes to the conclusion, that in 1981 there was nearly no instruction in film science at the East-German universities, which in contrast to literature and art film is totally underrepresented. – Herlinghaus verified the statements of Wuss one year later, saying, that in the 30 years old history of science in GDR only film and television science is not integrated into art and social sciences at the universities [...] And because the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen serves in the first instance as an institution for the training of the rising generation in careers in film and television practice, it would be overburdened with scientific work.

I think, that in the GDR we find a situation, in which the state is actually much more interested in mass-communication-effect research than in history, theory and analysis of film as art. This situation will change and I think is about to change, when international film research is growing, and the institutionalized film science in East Germany finds itself challenged to compete on the basis e.g. of very rich material sources in film history.

Symptomatic for new efforts in film science on international levels with internationally related subjects is the dissertation of Peter Wuss himself. After having published some articles on film semiotics and cybernetics during a short semiotic oriented discussion in the 60s in GDR (the center of this discussion was the semiotician Georg Klaus), he now finished his scientific main work under the title: *Tiefenstruktur des Filmkunstwerks aus der Analyse von Spielfilmen mit 'offener Komposition'*. (Deep structure of the film as work of art by the analysis of feature films with 'open composition'.)

Theoretical and methodological center of the argumentation is not the reflection theory of a socialist realism, but the discussion of Eco's definition of the open structure of modern works of art. And the films which are scrutinized in a lot of interesting analysis are taken from the international field, including works with formalist innovations by Fellini, Antonioni, Welles, Bertolucci, Truffaut, Wajda, Panfilow and others. In a dialectical tension of surface effects and the deep structure of a film Wuss discusses actual film scientific problematics like *effet de realite* (what he calls 'Authentic-Effekt') and effects on the spectator subject. I found it somehow relaxing after Lacan-psychoanalysis and écriture-discussions along the lines of Derrida to read about aristotelian katharsis and alienation-effects as Brecht took it. Nevertheless, this discussion of films with open structure and more or less formalist attitudes may also have effects on the future filmproduction in the GDR, where perhaps more courageously new forms of film languages will be tried out. We will see what happens.

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