

International Conference, Istituto Svizzero, Rome (Italy), September 18-20, 2008

Film – Kino – Zuschauer: Filmrezeption

Film – Cinema – Spectators: Film Reception

Film – cinema – spectateurs: La réception des films

Abstracts and CVs of the conference speakers and moderators (in alphabetical order)

Giorgio De Vincenti

Giorgio de Vincenti is Professor of Film History and Film Criticism at the University of Rome III and the Director of the Department of Comunicazione e Spettacolo. His main focus lies on modern film. He is the editor of *Storia del Cinema Italiano (1960-1964)*. Among others, his books include: *Il cinema e i film. I Cahiers du Cinéma; Il concetto di modernità nel cinema; Jean Renoir. La vita, i film*. Contact: devincen@uniroma3.it

Thomas Elsaesser

Attention, Attraction, Bodily Presence, or: What does the Spectator Know?

Attention has become one of the scarcest commodities in the field of audio-visual perception, whose 'deficits' are being countered by ever more enticing promises of 'interactivity'. The fact that spectatorship has become a) reflexive in relation to consciousness, b) reflexive in relation to temporality, and c) reflexive in relation to embodiment and situatedness, poses paradoxes for conventional notions of spectatorship that my paper will try to address.

Beyond – or next to – the spectator as voyeur, witness, participant, player, zapper, consumer or 'prosumer', a new paradigmatic figure is needed, in order to understand the current situation. My proposal is to go back to one of the oldest figures, and to revive the 'Rube'. This 'first' viewer of the moving image is in turn naïve and sophisticated, absent and present from the 'scene', gullible and skeptical in equal measure. Within the surveillance paradigm of self-monitoring and permanent being-seen-ness (as opposed to being-looked-at-ness), three kinds of practices will be compared, where new Rubes make their appearance: mainstream Hollywood productions, avant-garde practices, and international art cinema.

Thomas Elsaesser is Professor Emeritus of Film and Television Studies at the University of Amsterdam. His essays on European cinema, film history and media archaeology, American cinema and contemporary media theory have been translated into more than 15 languages and published in over 200 collections. He has been visiting professor and research fellow at, among others, UC Berkeley, IFK Vienna, Sackler Institute Tel Aviv, NYU, and Yale. In 2006 he was Ingmar Bergman Professor at the University of Stockholm and in 2007 Leverhulme Professor at Churchill College, Cambridge.

His most recent books as (co-)editor include: *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?* (1998); *The BFI Companion to German Cinema* (1999); *The Last Great American Picture Show* (2004); and *Harun Farocki – Working on the Sightlines* (2004). His books as author include *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (1996); *Weimar Cinema and After* (2000); *Metropolis* (2000); *Studying Contemporary American Film* (2002, with Warren Buckland); *Filmgeschichte und Frühes Kino* (2002); *Terror, Mythes et Representation* (2005); *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005); *Terror und Trauma* (2007; English edition forthcoming); *Filmtheorie: eine Einführung* (2007, with Malte Hagener; English edition and Italian translation forthcoming), and *Hollywood Heute* (2008). Contact: T.P.Elsaesser@uva.nl

Mariagrazia Fanchi

“Tra donne sole”. Cinema, Cultural Consumption, and the Feminine Condition in Post-War Italy

The starting point of the process of female emancipation in Italy as in many Western countries might be addressed through the role of women in the public sphere during World War Two. Nevertheless, the post-war years mark a contradiction: while the new Italian constitution declares gender equivalence, women in Italy are progressively excluded from the public sphere. The female presence outside the domestic space is made difficult, or even forbidden, both in professional, political and social fields, and in the consumption of culture itself. A relevant device for such a change is the gradual, but undeniable decrease in female film consumption, precisely when film exhibition is at its peak. The situation of post-war female participation in Italian public life is rather critical, as a wide range of socio-anthropological research – which embarked on its pioneering epoch at the time – and reflections upon film and media consumption make evident. At the same time, this discovery might explain the reduced role played by cinema in female experience, in these as well as in subsequent years.

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Sabine Hake

Film, Folk, Class: Béla Balázs on Spectatorship

Film reception and spectatorship are historical in a double sense: in relation to the historical conditions of movie-going and in relation to the social imaginary of film theory. There are few works better suited for exploring this relationship than the early writings of Béla Balázs. Conventionally known as a proponent of camera aesthetic who wrote enthusiastically about the formal possibilities of the close-up and the beauty of the human face, Balázs in fact based much of his theory of visual culture on the centrality of spectatorship to the dynamics of visibility and visuality. As I will argue in my presentation, his writings not only engage two radically different models of the audience, namely as folk community and class society. In his critical, literary, and filmic work, he also repeatedly used scenarios of spectatorship to work through the underlying contradictions that defined cultural life in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and found expression in the combination of Marxism+folklore, thereby distinguishing his contribution to early German film theory. Central to the underlying negotiation of cinema, tradition, and modernity is the dream of film as a new folk art (*Volkskunst*), with the belief in communicative immediacy and social harmony referencing visions of a preindustrial folk community and a future communist society.

Sabine Hake is the Texas Chair of German Literature and Culture in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of five books, including *German National Cinema* (2008, second revised edition) and *Topographies of Class. Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (2008). She has published numerous articles and edited volumes on German film and Weimar culture. Her new book project deals with the fascist imaginary in world cinema. Contact: hake@mail.utexas.edu

Gianni Haver

Reception of Italian Cinema in Switzerland Throughout the Fascist Epoch

Like in numerous other countries, Italian cinema was noticeably present in Switzerland in the 1910s. The arrival of fascism, however, entailed the progressive departure of cisalpine productions from the screen. Apart from the distribution of films intended for the Italian community in Switzerland – and favoured by the fascist consulate authorities –, it took until the Second World War before Italian titles became significant outside the Canton of Ticino, and before LUCE-newsreels began appearing here and there.

My paper, while aiming for a panoramic presentation of Italian cinema in Switzerland, mainly through film import and programming statistics, focuses on the reactions of the press and censorship authorities and, where possible, on audience responses towards Italian wartime cinema.

Indeed, the very positive reception in the press of productions like *L'assedio dell'Alcazar* (Augusto Genina, 1940), *Uomini sul fondo* (Francesco De Robertis, 1941), *Alfa Tau* (Francesco De Robertis, 1942) and *Bengasi* (Augusto Genina, 1942), and the permissive attitude of the censorship authorities, hardly correspond with the way comparable productions from other countries involved in the war were received.

Following the research conducted in my book *Les lieux de la guerre*, my analysis will combine three discourses to provide insight into the modes and processes of reception: the press, censorship, and programming.

Gianni Haver is Professor of Visual Sociology at the University of Lausanne. His research focuses on the cinema between the two World Wars and during the Second World War, and highlights reception in particular. He is the author of *Les lieux de la guerre. Écrans vaudois 1939-1945* (2003) and (co-)editor of several books on these topics, including: *Le cinéma au pas. La production des pays totalitaires et son impact en Suisse* (2004); *La Suisse les Alliés et le cinéma. Propagande et représentation, 1939-1945* (2001).

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Knut Hickethier

The Reception of Homeland Portrayals (*Heimatfilme*) and War and Crime Films in 1950s West Germany

This paper tackles film reception in relation to genre, thereby assuming film reception to be genre-specific. Genres are constructions of groups of films that regulate both spectator expectations and film offerings, and define standard situations. Thus, genres not only require spectators to have specific media competency, but stimulate and regulate emotions.

These issues will be examined by focusing on three dominant genres of 1950s German cinema. One focus lies on analysing various reception materials. On the other hand, the paper aims to outline a theoretical framework for reception history. It considers three genres: the *Heimatfilm* (homeland portrayal), war film, and crime film – the third genre will be approached with the concepts derived from analysing the first two. The paper thus elucidates how 1950s cinema created models and modes (*Dispositionen*) subsequently adopted by television in the following decades.

Knut Hickethier has been Professor of Media Studies at Hamburg University since 1994. He has been a visiting professor at Marburg University (1990-1994). and a member of SFB 240 *Bildschirmmedien*, a major publishing project (1989-1994). He has published numerous articles on media theory, history and analysis. He is the author of *Film- und Fernsehanalyse* (2007, 4th extended ed.); *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft* (2003); *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens* (1998); *Geschichte der Fernsehkritik* (1994). His most recent books as (co-)editor

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Frank Kessler

Viewing Pleasures, Pleasuring Views: Forms of Spectatorship in Early Cinema

As semio-pragmatic approaches to film spectatorship have forcefully demonstrated, there is more than one way that viewers experience films. Different reading positions can be constructed by taking into account both specific textual modes of address and institutional constraints. With regard to early cinema, however, such an approach leads to the additional problem of having to historicize, and reconstruct, such forms of spectatorship on the basis of various types of traces that early film viewers have left in contemporary sources relating the experience of going to moving picture shows, forms of address in cinema programs, catalogue descriptions, and in the films themselves, as well as other documents pertaining to movie-going at the turn of the century. In my contribution I will try to sketch out some of the forms of spectatorship that emerge from these sources and argue for an historical-pragmatic approach to film viewing in the early period in terms of specific historical *dispositifs*.

Frank Kessler is Professor of Film and Television History at Utrecht University and the former president of Domitor, an international association for the study of early cinema. He is a co-founder and co-editor of *KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films* and has published widely on issues of film history and film theory. Together with Nanna Verhoeff he has recently edited *Networks of Entertainment. Early Film Distribution 1895-1915* (2007). Contact: Frank.E.Kessler@let.uu.nl

Helmut Korte

***Wunschkonzert* (D 1940) – Reconstructing Historical Effects**

The debate on reception history in 1970s (German) literature studies and – even more – cultural studies and similar approaches brought about a decisive paradigm shift in media analysis. Approaches that analyse works or try to lay open their author's intentions have now given way to the study of audience reception as a process that constitutes meaning. With the focus on reception and the respective socio-historical context, though, the elaborate and detailed analysis of products (for example, movies) seems to have become obsolete. However, based on the notion of "structured polysemy" (Stuart Hall) inherent in each *Kommunikat*, and envisioning the highly complex process of cinematic perception – determined by factors internal and external to the film – the academic discussion of "media texts" has to be regarded on principle as a methodological entity of product, context, and reception analysis. Context and reception analysis, in this case, have a function in reconstructing the respective historico-culturally induced contexts of the film's formation and reception – ideally, including tangible ways of reception. Product analyses, then, aim at revealing the receptional potential, that is, the dominant or oppositional readings that are laid out in visually, acoustically, and chronologically structured cinematic presentation.

Using the example of the NS-'entertainment film' *Wunschkonzert* (Eduard von Borsody, D 1940), this essential combination of analytical approaches to the reconstruction of historical effects will be outlined.

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Michèle Lagny

Constructing Film Function and Reception in the Long-Term

How to construct a film reception history nowadays? In the current communication landscape, movies are viewed in different institutional settings, and particularly through various kinds of media. We can no longer consider spectators only as collective audiences but also as collections of individualized characters. On the other hand, reception theories are evolving and suggest new prospects to try and conceive shapes and consequences of these new uses.

Let us begin with an example from Golden Age Italian cinema, *C'eravamo tanto amati* (Ettore Scola, 1973), which reveals the deterioration of the relationship, often seen as a love affair, between film as a spectacle, its actors, and its spectators. This traditional point of view, reflected by the "cinophilic critic", produced a lot of studies about organization and modes of reception. Their criteria and analyses gave rise to the notion of differential groups of spectators – culturally, socially and sexually determined – and to the narrative of a diachronic evolution where filmic reception depends on context changes.

Exploring new perspectives through new approaches, reception studies are now more interested in the different functions performed by the cinema (for instance, not only as artwork or entertainment, but also to enhance educational or memory skills). The old question of audience taste is explored from the point of view of film release organizations (distributors) or from the spectator's "cultural expertise". How audiences "use" movies is now a central issue. All these changes give a better idea of the complex temporality of reception and make less linear the narrative of an evolution, which is determined less by a context now seen as heterogeneous.

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Stephen Lowry

Movie Reception as Part of Popular Culture in the Third Reich: Reconstructing the Context of Cinematic Meanings in Everyday Life

Movies reached a mass audience during the Nazi period. This was not only the result of film policy and the lack of other forms of entertainment culture, but because the movies gave the German audience something it wanted. Nevertheless, approaches to this cinema have tended to be based on models of effects, rather than reception. Admittedly, it is impossible to determine the real historical reception of films. Documents are rare and anything but objective, and the retrospective memories of audience members are distorted. A purely textual interpretation can only reveal possible meanings.

The paper suggests that contextualization in texts of everyday life – including newspapers, popular magazines, fiction, advertising, as well as more film-oriented sources such as production and business documents – may be a way to reconstruct not the real reception, but at least some of the discursive networks within which this production of meaning took place. These may be political; more often, however, they have to do with proto-political patterns of behavior, feelings and affects, subjectivity, taste, and all that made up the habitus of the audiences. This may provide a mediating factor that can help elucidate the attraction of the films for the audiences and the ways they may have responded to them, without employing a simplified concept of media effects.

Stephen Lowry teaches media and communication studies at the Hochschule der Medien in Stuttgart, Germany. His publications include *Pathos und Politik. Ideologie in Spielfilmen des Nationalsozialismus* (1991) as well as various book and journal articles on German film history, film theory, and popular culture. Contact: lowry@hdm-stuttgart.de

Fabrice Montebello

From 'Reception' to 'Expertise': Is a History of Movie Consumption Possible?

Audience Studies have been propagated as an alternative to textual film analysis. They have favoured the study of spectators' interpretative capacities and how they accept, reject or make compromises with filmic messages within a social frame, whether preformed or not ("race, class and gender", "interpretive communities", "fields"...). But such a perspective reduces the interaction between film and spectator to questions of ideology, thereby neglecting technical aspects of film reception (film formats and types: short, medium and feature films; movie or TV-films; series, news and features; works of art or entertainment) as well as its aesthetic dimension (corporeal engagement and individual experience, film culture). It also misses the spectator's evaluation of a film's quality (*expertise*) and the pursuit of pleasure, which inform the interaction between films and spectators.

The perspective of 'cultural expertise' (*expertise culturelle*) allows us to renew the history of the cinema by shifting the focus from films to screenings, thus privileging a history of screenings instead of films – that is, a history of the frames (*dispositifs*) of film consumption becomes inseparable from both national and transnational studies on film production and circulation.

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Forthcoming: *Actes du colloque: Antonio Gramsci. L'intellectuel aujourd'hui, politique, culture, globalisation* (Luxembourg). Contact: fmontebello@internet.lu

Leonardo Quaresima

Distribution and Diffusion of German Films in the United States in the 1930s

Which and how many German films were distributed in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s? Did these include only the masterpieces of the silent era, or also so-called 'mediocre' films? How were they received by the American press? Were films produced in the Nazi era distributed, and did distribution also include propaganda films? And how did American film reviewers react towards them? An investigation of these questions will shed light on the situation and produce unexpected answers.

Leonardo Quaresima is Professor at Udine University and director of the DAMS –PhD programme; he is the founder of the *International Film Studies Conference* in Udine. He has taught as a visiting professor at Paris III and the Universities of Bremen and Salzburg. He is the co-editor of the journals *Cinema & Cie* and *Bianco e nero* and of numerous book series. His research focuses on Italian, French, and German film history. Numerous publications, among others on German cinema, consider the Cinema of Weimar, Edgar Reitz, Leni Riefenstahl, Walter Ruttmann as well as critical new editions of Kracauer (2004) and Balázs (2008). He has also co-edited numerous other publications, including *La nascita dei generi cinematografici / The Birth of Film Genres* (1999); *I limiti della rappresentazione / The Bounds of Representation* (2000); *Lo stile cinematografico / Film Style* (2007). Contact: lquaresima@iol.it

Irmbert Schenk

Irmbert Schenk is Professor of Media Studies at Bremen University. His research focuses on Italian literary and theatre history, and particularly on German and European film history. His publications as editor or author include, for example, *Filmkritik* (1998); *Dschungel Großstadt* (1999); *Erlebnisort Kino* (2000); *Experiment Mainstream?* (2006); *Kino und Modernisierung* (2008); *Das goldene Zeitalter des italienischen Films – die 1960er Jahre* (2008). Contact: irmbert@uni-bremen.de

Jörg Schweinitz

The Strawberry Statement: An American Student Revolt, Imaginations in East German Cinema, and the Constitution of a Phantom-Community

Time and again, numerous film historical publications are guided by the concept of national cinema – more often than not, a concept lacking a solid theoretical grounding and complexity of thought. Such an approach seems especially questionable when ignoring the audience as a constitutive factor. Should such a thing as a national cinema exist, then only as a composite of a national audience's mass film experience. Accordingly, a national cinema will be understood as an individual amalgam of a special selection of certain national and international films with specific symbolic emphasis. The case of 'East German cinema' – in many ways a special case – makes this particularly apparent. Despite prevalent constructions in film history, it was not *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (*The Legend of Paul and Paula*, Heiner Carow, GDR 1973) which influenced the younger East German audience and its imagination most in the early seventies. Ironically, the film that determined the self-conception of young East Germans at the time was a New Hollywood film: *The Strawberry Statement* (*Blutige Erdbeeren*, Stuart Hagman, USA 1970; East German release in 1973) – a film widely ignored by Western Europe and US audiences on its release in 1970, and by now completely

forgotten. This film made a lasting impact on the once young East German audience, and still lingers in the cultural memory of that generation. When one considers a national cinema as a factor in forming a nation in Benedict Anderson's sense of an "imagined community", then it was this film about an American student revolt that contributed enduringly to the constitution of a phantom-community and its symbolic repertoire.

Jörg Schweinitz is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Zurich, Switzerland; he teaches courses on the history of film theory and the history of film / cinema. From 1995 to 2001, he was Visiting Professor of Film Studies at several German universities (Freie Universität Berlin, Universität Potsdam, Universität Marburg), at the Universität Klagenfurt (Austria) and in 2002 at the University of Chicago. During the following years, he taught at Bochum University and was appointed Professor of Film History at Babelsberg Film Academy in 2006; in 2007, he moved to Zurich. He is co-editor of the German film theory journal *Montage/AV*. His publications on the history of film theory include the source book *Prolog vor dem Film. Nachdenken über ein neues Medium 1908-1914* (1992), the first German language edition of Hugo Münsterberg *The Photoplay* (in German: *Das Lichtspiel*, 1996, including commentary) and *Film und Stereotyp. Eine Herausforderung für das Kino und die Filmtheorie. Zur Geschichte eines Mediendiskurses* (2006). Contact: joerg.schweinitz@fiwi.uzh.ch

Pierre Sorlin

Reception in Context – What European Spectators Learnt from Newsreels During the Spanish Civil War

Reception is an ill-defined, ambiguous word. How do spectators "receive" mainstream films? There is no answer outside the context of communication. Reception is an active process in which antecedent questions predetermine the selection of the relevant data. Cinematic messages do not affect uninterested people who forget them immediately, but they have an effect on those who feel concerned and are looking for more information. A curiosity or worries, born in an historical context, provoke receptiveness to the facts and figures conveyed by the media that, in turn, materialize what was previously a mere impression. Reception is a dialectic intercourse between an anxiety and tentative answers. In worrying situations, where precise facts are not available, spectators or readers look for striking, telling images. I have chosen the case of the Spanish civil war because, in the absence of topical information, cinema played a relevant part. Newsreels are simplistic but efficacious because they evidence, in a direct, brutal manner, bombs that fall and kill, people who bleed, cry and die. They are influential when spectators are prone to be influenced. Here is probably the crucial point: the films create impressions that intensify antecedent thinking. Between 1936 and 1939 the media, especially cinema, offered illustrations and stereotypes of which the public took hold, because they cast in concrete form the violence and impending dangers most had already vaguely in mind. The roots of reception preceded the intervention of the media. The attention paid to newsreels was a function of the abiding historical context. It is within the specific circumstances that we can understand how people "read" them. The various interpretations were strongly influenced, and in some cases even wholly formed by pictures. Spanish images were not neutral, but "fixed", in the photographic meaning of the verb. Some were formless ideas and aroused new fears.

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Janet Staiger

The Centrality of Affect in Reception Studies

It is not surprising that *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, played mostly comically, would delight a Broadway audience in 1979. A barber with no regard for human life, a neighbour pie-maker who finds a solution to profit from bodies, and a villainous judge, at the intensification of post-Fordist American culture, seem ripe for allegorical reading. Nearly thirty years later, Tim Burton's 2007 rewrite of the Stephen Sondheim "musical thriller" produces a very different feel. Moreover, the filmed version exploits the possibilities of cinematic specificity. I watched my fellow audience members flinch at the crunch of the first head as it hits the floor falling into the cellar from Sweeney's barber chair.

I will consider the centrality of affect in reception. Reception studies has a long-standing attention to spectator affect in theorizing textual effects such as "identification" but also in understanding meaning-making. While psychoanalytic critics always connected meaning and affect, recently cognitivist scholars have as well. For instance, Ed Tan subtitles his 1996 book *Film as an Emotion Machine*. Tan (and others) explore aesthetics not only as a cognitive activity but also as an affect. Genre critics also pursue the equation of genres with affective consequences (or judge an artwork inadequate if it fails to produce the "right" experience).

The journalistic reception of Burton's *Sweeney Todd* provides a useful case study. The first part of my analysis will look at the questions that US critics ask: Does the adaptation do Sondheim justice? Can the actors sing? And is the movie affectively powerful in "good ways"? The second part will survey some of the non-U.S. critical reception. The overall judgment is that it is "bloody good."

Janet Staiger is the William P. Hobby Centennial Professor in Communication, teaching courses in Radio-Television-Film and Women's and Gender Studies, at the University of Texas at Austin. Author and editor of ten books and 50-plus essays, her book publications include: *Media Reception Studies* (2005), *Authorship and Film*, co-ed. with David Gerstner (2003); *Perverse Spectators. The Practices of Film Reception* (2000); *Blockbuster TV. Must-See Sitcoms in the Network Era* (2000); *Bad Women. Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (1995); *The Studio System* (ed.) (1995); *Interpreting Films. Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (1992); and *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, co-author with David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1985).
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Anna Lisa Tota

Film and Cultural Trauma. Aesthetic Codes and Public Knowledge of Controversial Events

The relationship between film and history seems to be very controversial: for many decades historians have strongly criticized the misrepresentation of the past due to the cinema, but recently a new approach has prevailed both in film studies and cultural sociology. In contemporary societies the representation of the past cannot be relegated to the academic culture of historians. The cultural consumption of the past represents an increasing phenomenon that needs to be further analysed. Following this perspective, the question to address refers to what extent the representation of the past on the screen might be similar or dissimilar to that produced by historians. By representing a controversial past, the cinema changes the content of collective memory according to the characteristics of the filmic code.

This paper focuses on the filmic representation of cultural traumas, such as the Shoah or September 11th. A cultural trauma, according to cultural trauma theories (Alexander et al. 2004, p. 1), “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways”. In other terms, here is a gap between the event and its public meanings. This gap is what makes a trauma “cultural”: the public knowledge of the event will strongly depend on the meanings attributed to the event itself through different cultural artefacts, such as a filmic text. Some movies can contribute to constructing or changing the public knowledge of a trauma. Reception practices of the filmic text are relevant as “they are sense-making processes” which will affect the ways in which a particular trauma will be inscribed in public discourse. The methodological and theoretical framework provided by cultural sociology is considered in relation to empirical examples, as the public representation of the Shoah in Italy after *Life Is Beautiful*. The concept of canonization plays a central role, as it can be argued that during the last decade a new filmic genre of memorization of the Shoah has emerged. As very often happens to traditional genres, they can be broken: *Life Is Beautiful* by Roberto Benigni represents an interesting case. By analysing the controversial trajectories of the film in Italian public discourse (that is, the different opinions at the different stages, before and after the Academy Awards, etc.), it is possible to map the different conceptions of how the Shoah should be represented in public discourse. The conflict over the most adequate narratives introduces the controversial definitions of what happened during one of the most tragic periods of recent European history. In relation to canonization, it could be argued that there are many similarities between *Life Is Beautiful* and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman.

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Johannes von Moltke

Structures of Feeling: Spectatorship and Affect in Postwar German Cinema

“In the 20th century, the public headquarters of emotions is in the cinema” (Alexander Kluge). This paper attempts to link the emotional dimensions of film spectatorship with socio-historical accounts of affect by focusing in particular on the work of Alexander Kluge. Kluge’s ongoing work on a “chronicle of feelings,” I argue, evidences a surprising degree of overlap with recent investigations of spectatorial affect and emotion in cognitivist film theory; Kluge’s insistence on the public and historical nature of feelings, however, provides an important corrective to the generally ahistorical accounts of spectatorial emotion in recent scholarship. I exemplify these general claims by taking up Kluge’s obsession with the relationship between “feelings” and the experience of war in his own work. Comparing Kluge’s representation of war to the generally more melodramatic approach of his contemporaries in the New German Cinema (e.g. Fassbinder, Sanders-Brahms), or of recent films like *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003), I argue that Kluge invests war with the same “intensity of feeling” (this is Kluge’s notion of what constitutes the political), but thwarts the functionalization of those feelings by conventional dramaturgical devices.

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Rainer Winter

Film Analysis as Cultural Analysis. The Perspectives of Cultural Studies

Since its beginnings, cultural studies has been concerned with the analysis of media in its different social and cultural contexts. This means that the meanings of a film are (partly) dependent on the socially and culturally shaped processes of reception and appropriation. Cultural Studies is interested in the circulation of meaning in a society restricted by existing power structures. My contribution discusses the theoretical and methodological perspectives of this approach.

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Yvonne Zimmermann

Nestlé's Fip-Fop Club: The Making of Child Audiences in Non-Commercial Film Shows (1936-1959)

Nestlé's Fip-Fop Club was very successful in creating child audiences in non-commercial film shows. Founded by the Nestlé Food Corporation in Switzerland in 1936, the Fip-Fop Club addressed boys and girls aged five to fifteen. Its main goal was to arouse consumer interest in children and to train them as future customers. The Club offered various leisure activities to its members, such as trading cards, a monthly magazine and – the bi-annual highlight – film shows including Charles Chaplin and Laurel & Hardy, as well as animated and nonfiction films. In 1949, one in eight children in Switzerland was a member of the Fip-Fop Club.

Within the corporate media mix, film played a key role in creating a public sphere where children gained collective film experiences – often the very first ones in their lives. Thus, Nestlé socialised children with the medium, introduced them to popular film culture, and created collective audiences that formed an active and productive community: the Fip-Fop family. Such 'communitisation' of children – *Vergemeinschaftung* in Max Weber's term – sheds light on corporate media strategies to introduce children to consumer culture and marks the Fip-Fop Club as a prime example of the interrelations of media culture and consumer culture.

The Fip-Fop case draws attention to determinant pragmatic factors that, in addition to films, structure specific modes of film reception – and, in the long term, specific memorial practices of film reception: Although officially closed in 1959, the Fip-Fop Club is still alive!

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