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Film, Philosophy, and Intercultural Film Criticism

1. Introduction

Film criticism, as the study and assessment of the film medium and its achievements in the form of individual films, appears to be some kind of Janus-headed enterprise. On the one hand, there are those who publish commentary on films in periodicals (magazines, newspapers, and mass-media outlets), while on the other, there are those who relate their writings to film theory and philosophy and publish their articles in academic journals. Members of the first lot are actually film reviewers (here we encounter Roger Ebert, Pauline Kael, Peter Bradshaw, etc.), who review new but also old films, rate them (usually using a 4- or 5-star scale) and inform readers whether or not they would want to see a particular film. Only the second group, therefore, consists of "proper" or academic film critics, who instead of reviewing and rating films, analyse them as regards their historical, political, cultural, and genre contexts, or even focus on the entire film history. Leading film critics in this sense include Andre Bazin, Bela Balasz, Christian Metz, Sigfried Kracauer, Kaja Silverman, and others, who have related their research on film to philosophy and theory. Only this kind of film criticism, however, will be of interest here.

The seventh art, as the film medium is known, after Ricciotto Canudo in 1911 changed his mind and assigned number six to dance, in many ways differs from the fine arts as classified by G. W. F. Hegel in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Various forms of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, as well as dance, have been found in almost every culture and society all over the world for millennia. No one knows when and exactly how those arts were first developed, who their authors or inventors were, and their origins are often interpreted through mythology or at best archaeology. The story of film, however, at least in this regard, is quite different. Being a child of modern times and of technological development, it has well-known founders and even its date of birth is considered a fact. On 28 December 1895 the brothers

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Auguste and Louis Lumière gave the first public and paid screening at Grand Café in Paris. It is this day that has been accepted as the birthday of cinematography.

Moreover, the seventh art was not only a modern and technological achievement (it required substantial knowledge of physics and chemistry), but also a medium specifically intended for the masses. Even though Canudo, for example, included moving images among the arts, proponents of film had to strive to prove that it actually belongs there, and that it is not merely a pastime for the working class, lacking any aesthetical, ethical, or other value. As it turned out, this new medium was, from the very beginning, a source of oppositions, dichotomies, as well as fierce struggles. Some of them are still in place today, and for some it seems that they even define the medium as such.

Some oppositions exist already on the level of production. Film, on the one hand, was conceived from the beginning as a business, and Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno developed their concept of the culture industry with this medium in mind. On the other hand, however, film can be perceived as the work of an individual artist who controls the whole process from start to finish. Moreover, film is considered a medium without a specific social value, but it can play an extremely important social role, even though its purpose can be ideological and/or propagandistic. Lenin's frequently quoted famous statement "that of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema," only reinforces this view, since after his decree a proportion of film production was to be devoted to entertainment films, and another to propaganda.[1]

More oppositions, still, can be found on the level of reception and above all within film scholarship. Some of them are well known; others come to the fore in specific cases, for example in intercultural contexts. Thus, for example, the notion of *world cinema* is generally not used to describe a unity of films that are produced in different geographical and cultural contexts around the world, but, on the contrary, it is frequently taken to refer to the films of all countries other than one's own. In English-speaking countries, for instance, *world cinema* is sometimes used interchangeably with the term *foreign film*, where a foreign film is not only foreign in terms of the country of production, but also in terms of the language used, i.e. non-English.

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[1]　Vladimir I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. XLII, International Publishers, New York 1934, p. 388.

Sometimes antagonisms tend to shift and make relationships more complex, but often also meaningless. A common opposition in the context of film scholarship is not the one between foreign and domestic, but between films with added artistic value and those without it, with the latter usually identified as "Hollywood commercialism". World cinema films are frequently grouped together with independent and art house films, they have a limited release, and many never appear in major cinemas. These films usually do not gain much popularity and consequently also not the gross takings of a typical Hollywood blockbuster; however, there are also exceptions to the rule. In the first decade of the 21st century, several foreign films enjoyed great success in English speaking countries – the first foreign language film to top the North American box office was the Chinese blockbuster *Hero*, directed by Zhang Yimou, in August 2004.

When it comes to oppositions and conflicts, film criticism is not excluded. On the one hand, there seems to be a very clear understanding of what film criticism actually is, or what it consists of. Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan begin their introduction to *The Language and Style of Film Criticism* (2011) with the following observation: "For many people film criticism is something by an opinionated journalist, a film critic, who tells you whether a film is worth seeing."[2] Although, they continue, "such reviews can be a source of pleasure as well as utility [...] film criticism can do a great deal more".[3]

That "a great deal more" is usually understood as being related to film theory, sometimes even to philosophy. Some commentators, such as Noël Carroll, claim that film theory (or, as he calls it, the theory of the moving image) has always been highly suspect amongst critics and filmmakers alike: "The major source of skepticism here is the same in both instances. Movie makers and critics care about individual motion pictures – the one they are making or the one they are analyzing."[4] Theorists care about films in general. Critics and filmmakers need something that they can put into practice, and for them theory is too abstract and too broad to be of use. So, in this view, if you are a film critic, or a filmmaker, you should stay away from theory and philosophy.

279

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[2] Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (Eds.), *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, Routledge, London and New York 2011, p. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Ted Nannicelli and Paul Taberham (Eds.), *Cognitive Media Theory*, Routledge, London and New York 2014, p. 235.

This example shows that film differs from the other visual arts in the sense that contrary to the other visual arts, the film medium did not go through a conceptual turn the same way as the other arts did. To put it simply, you need theory to appreciate Duchamp or Warhol, and most of 20th century art, but you do not need any theory to enjoy Antonioni, Bergman, or Jia Zhangke; you either like them or you do not. This is, of course, an oversimplification, because proponents of film theory generally do not share this view. For most of them, and even for some philosophers of film, what they do is nothing less than film criticism. So, it seems promising to first look into this great divide and examine the signs of interculturality.

2. The Place of Film Criticism in the Context of Philosophy

Almost three decades ago, Carl Plantinga published an essay in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* in which he tried to draw the line between aesthetics and film theory. In his interpretation, the relationship between the two "has been marked to a great extent either by mutual inattention or by open suspicion and disagreement".[5] Plantinga does not claim here that aestheticians have ignored film, or that film scholars have disregarded aesthetic issues, but that a schism exists between the two academic disciplines.

Film theorists tend to ignore (or take exception to) what aestheticians say about film, and aestheticians ignore (or vehemently critique) what film theorists say about philosophy of film. The discipline of film studies considers film, and the discipline of aesthetics considers aesthetics, from within the context of particular academic institutions or fields, each with a particular history and set of conventional practices.[6]

Plantinga continues with a series of examples, which can be amusing, but they, at the same time, also shed some light on the place of film criticism. Ian Jarvie, for example, from the side of philosophy claims the following:

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[5] Carl Plantinga, "Film Theory and Aesthetics: Notes on a Schism", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51 (3/1993), p. 445.

[6] *Ibid.*

> Writers on film characteristically make free with references and allusions to films which they have not the slightest reason to suspect their readers know. Writers on film characteristically drop the names of, or even quote from, their own favourite gurus [...] But worst of all is the general irrationality of their procedures.[7]

Jarvie shares his view with Noël Carroll, who attacked what he called "psycho-semiotic" film theory (this is his name for the psychoanalytic/semiotic/Marxist variety of film theory) with the claim that film theory "has been nothing short of an intellectual disaster and [...] should be discarded".[8] From what Jarvie and Carroll claim, however, one can deduce more than just an emotionally charged attack. Irrational procedures identified as "psychosemiotic" film theory are nothing less than the core methods of film criticism.

Probably one of the most comprehensive sources of film criticism, and now a classic example, is an anthology in two volumes entitled *Movies and Methods* edited by Bill Nichols.[9] This anthology, in Nichols's words, was intended to "examine a range of critical methods applicable to film study, and [...] provide useful examples of how these methods can be applied to the study and appreciation of actual films".[10] As the table of contents of the first volume shows, there are two major kind of criticism: contextual (comprising political and genre criticism) and formal (covering *auteur* and *mise-en-scène* criticism); the third part covers film theory focusing on historical approaches and structuralism-semiology.

There is, however, no space for world cinema in this volume, and the only reference to China, for instance, is the title of a dark comedy by French director Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise*. The reason for this West-centred approach to film criticism and film study in general is explained by Nichols himself in the introduction to the second volume of *Movies and Methods*: "The study of film has gained an added dimension of respectability precisely because it is increasingly

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7   *Ibid.*, p. 446.

8   *Ibid.*, p. 447.

9   Bill Nichols (Ed.), *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. I, University of California Press, Berkeley 1976, and Bill Nichols (Ed.), *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. II, University of California Press, Berkeley 1985.

10   Nichols, *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. I, p. 4.

aligned with one of the great missions of Western humanism: the preservation and conservation of our cultural heritage".[11]

Nichols places film criticism within the field of cultural studies, where it investigates "the form and meaning of social relationships as manifested in texts [...] or in everyday life".[12]

> Whatever specificity can be assigned to the study of film possesses significance only when it is drawn back into the general arena of culture and ideology. It is here that film viewing pleasure can be related to class, race, sex and nationality, to questions of social structure and the position of the individual (including the question of how a sense of individuality or spectatorship itself arises or is created).[13]

It would be possible to assume that Nichols uses the concept of culture in its anthropological and non-hierarchical sense as it is used in the tradition of cultural studies; however, the table of contents of the second volume of the *Movies and Methods* does not confirm this reading. There are texts published on historical, genre, and feminist criticism, on structuralist and psychoanalytic semiotics, and in the last part several (eight, to be precise) texts under the heading "Countercurrents".

There is no reference to China in this volume and this last part either, although there is a text about "the third world", which apparently covers some of the issues regarding "world cinema". It is entitled "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction", and was written by Robert Stam and Louise Spence. But more than the mentioned text, it is (at least for us) interesting to read the introductory remarks by Nichols.

> Discussion of the Third World cinema represents an inevitable countercurrent to the theory and practice of a predominantly Western cinema. Many Western film-makers and critics are active supporters of efforts to develop progressive, national

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[11] Nichols, *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol. II, p. 2.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[13] *Ibid.*

cinemas in the Third World, and they are highly appreciative of the differences of strategy and priorities that often develop.[14]

Even though the above passage does not cover Chinese cinema specifically, it is worth mentioning it because it epitomises the relationship between the West and "the rest" within the field of film criticism. From this relation of inequality it would be impossible to build intercultural film criticism.

But not all of those who write on film share this view. In his book *The World Viewed* (1971; 1979), Stanley Cavell wrote: "Criticism, as part of the philosophy of art, must aspire to philosophy".[15] If Cavell's assertion holds for film criticism, e.g. if film criticism is considered criticism at all, then it must be a part of philosophy of film art, and therefore it must aspire to philosophy. But then, film criticism has obviously turned to the other side of the great divide.

An old question immediately surfaces here: What is meant by "philosophy" in this context? Or, to put it another way that enables intercultural interpretation: "Which philosophy counts?" It goes almost without saying that for Plantinga and the advocates of the film aesthetics he enlisted, philosophy is the equal of analytic philosophy. And the situation he describes reflects a broader division characteristic of Western philosophy – the split between the analytic and Continental traditions. A bipolar disorder is therefore the defining feature of Western philosophy, and casts a shadow over film criticism as well.

This does not mean, however, that both poles are static, or ahistorical. Film theory itself has gone through several important changes, or, as some would call it, through a paradigm shift. The film theory at least partially explained by the contributors to Nichols's anthology, and sometimes called "Grand Theory," mostly by its opponents, became a thing of the past.[16] A decade and a half after Plantinga, and two decades after Nichols, we encounter a different setting. Robert Sinnerbrink claims in this context:

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14   *Ibid*., pp. 632–633.
15   Clayton and Clevan, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
16   Robert Sinnerbrink, "Questioning Style", in: Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (Eds.), *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, Routledge, London and New York 2011, p. 38.

> The dominant strain in contemporary philosophy of film [...] has embraced a model of theorizing that is naturalistic rather than humanistic, explanatory rather than hermeneutic, scientistic rather than aesthetic.[17]

This shift in film theory is known now as the "analytic-cognitivist" turn. A few years ago, Ted Nannicelli and Paul Taberham began their introduction to a *Cognitive Media Theory* book they edited with the following statement: "As we write this [in 2014], cognitive theory in film and media studies is flourishing".[18]

But also, they claim, "the lines between cognitive media theory and empirical study of the psychology of moving image viewing on the one hand, and cognitive media theory and the philosophy of motion pictures [...] have never been so permeable".[19] Which also means that cognitive film criticism is also a real possibility, and in some cases even actuality. However, just like its predecessor, it does not offer real possibilities for intercultural film criticism. Not because it is West-oriented, but because it has no cultural orientation at all.

Nevertheless, the "analytic-cognitivist" turn has not been the only development in writing on film. There is another movement, less visible, more modest, and closely related to philosophy. It appears under several labels from "film and philosophy" to "film as philosophy" and to "film-philosophy". In some cases, these tactics are based on revivals of certain approaches, e.g. film-philosophy follows Stanley Cavell's way of writing on film; in some cases, new methods are developed. Stephen Mulhall, for example, interprets a film (for example Ridley Scott's *Alien*) as something that (in itself) develops specific ways of thinking (*alien* thinking in this case).

The common denominator of all these approaches is the role that philosophy plays within the analysis – this role is crucial and central; but also, most of the writing relates to the individual films, giving them an opportunity to speak for themselves. It is not about the transformation of a certain film into philosophical concepts and deductions, and it is also not about interpretation in the sense that it was criticised already by Susan Sontag (in 1964): "The function of

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[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Nannicelli and Taberham, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

criticism should be to show *how it is what it is*, even *that it is what it is*, rather than to show *what it means*".[20] Cavell, who was one of the early proponents of this approach, however, has gone further, describing that, "in how I have conceived my writing on film to be motivated philosophically, is that it takes the fact of film itself to become a challenge for philosophy".[21] This move is radical in the sense that it overturns the tradition. Traditionally, philosophers are those who ask questions; here, it is the film that poses questions to philosophy and challenges it.

Among the influential recent authors who have contributed considerably to the relationship between philosophy and film in a general sense, one could emphasise at least two: Gilles Deleuze and Fredric Jameson. As pointed out by David Martin-Jones, it is all too easy to accuse Deleuze's *Cinema* books of Eurocentrism, and in order to apply them to the context of world cinemas, they have to be uprooted from their initial (Western) ground: "Taking this approach, we can deterritorialize the *Cinema* books and thereby enable their repetition in difference when they come into contact with the cinemas otherwise 'Othered' from their pages".[22] Even though it would, no doubt, be interesting to go further and deeper into such a deterritorialisation of Deleuze's approach, due to the lack of space here we will only focus on Fredric Jameson.

3. Fredric Jameson: Film as a Cognitive Map

Jameson counts neither as a traditional film critic nor as a typical philosopher. He has been labelled "probably the most important cultural critic writing in English," and due to the range of his analysis, which is fairly extraordinary, he has also demonstrated that "nothing cultural is alien to him".[23] Following the lead of Hegel, he has also exhibited an inclination towards a dialectical approach, in which he clearly exerts an effort to grasp the world as both one and multiple. In the words of one of his commentators, Jameson "is one of the very few thinkers

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[20] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York 1966, p. 10.

[21] Clayton and Klevan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[22] David Martin-Jones, Deleuze, *Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2006, p. 235.

[23] Colin MacCabe, "Preface", in: Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetics: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1992, p. ix.

who genuinely ignores the conventional distinctions between cultural objects […]. As importantly he will move between media: the analysis of a text will be followed by a social description of a building, the criticism of a mainstream film will be succeeded by an appreciation of an avant-garde video".[24]

It is apparent, on the one hand, that Jameson does not follow Lenin's dictum, according to which cinema is considered the most important form of art. On the other hand, however, he does not in any way deny the importance of the film medium itself. Jameson started to show his interest in this medium in the 1970s, with the publication of articles about films like *Zardoz* (1974)[25] and *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975),[26] but his full theoretical engagement with this medium followed two decades later. Crucial in this context were probably a series of lectures he delivered at the British Film Institute in 1990, and two books on film that followed in 1992: *Signatures of the Visible* and *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System.* Both significantly contribute not only to an understanding of Jameson's intellectual development, but also to a distinctive and influential form of intercultural film criticism.

One of the reasons that Jameson approached film so seriously and thoroughly is to be found in a remark at the end of his introduction to *Signatures of the Visible*. Even though in the West television to a large extent managed to outshine it, "film itself has never been more alive than it is globally, where in the new world system a host of local voices have found the most sophisticated technical expression".[27] Writing in 1992, Jameson anticipated here everything from the introduction of digital technology to the microfilm movement, proving thereby the ongoing relevance of the film medium on a global scale.

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[24]   *Ibid.*

[25]   *Zardoz* is an Irish-American science-fiction film, written and directed by John Boorman and starring Sean Connery and Charlotte Rampling. It depicts a future world where a stone image called "Zardoz" instructs the "Brutals" to kill each other in order to gain eternal life (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zardoz).

[26]   In this film, directed by Sidney Lumet, and starring Al Pacino, a man robs a bank to pay for his lover's operation, which turns into a hostage situation and media circus (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0072890).

[27]   Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, Routledge, London and New York 1992, p. 8.

Any serious discussion about film, however, has to take into account the inextricable materiality of the medium (technology), as well as its effects on the subjective level (the construction of a film subject by the film apparatus or *dispositif*). From a question that seems rhetorical only on a superficial level, it follows that Jameson took his encounter with the film medium quite seriously, but also that he situates his approach within the broader context of the visual turn.

> Did human nature change on or about December 28, 1895? Or was some cinematographic dimension of human reality always there somewhere in prehistoric life, waiting to find its actualization in a certain high-technical civilization? (and thereby now allowing us to reread and rewrite the past now filmically and as the philosophy of the visual)?[28]

Human nature nevertheless did change, but the result is, to use a concept developed by Herbert Marcuse, one-dimensional: human nature has transformed into a single sense. Visual media offer us the world as a body, and in this sense "the visual is *essentially* pornographic," and has its end in mindless fascination, in an experience without conscious thought. There is no fundamental difference between pornographic and other films; the latter are "only the potentiation of films in general, which ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body".[29]

> Were an ontology of this artificial, person-produced universe still possible, it would have to be an ontology of the visual, of being as the visible first and foremost, with the other senses draining off it.[30]

But even though the visual as such does not necessitate the thought, in order to understand it the act of seeing ought to be replaced by something else. There are many different kinds of thought developed to address the visual; however, for Jameson there is only one: "the only way to think the visual, to get a handle on increasing, tendential, all-pervasive visuality as such, is to grasp its historical coming into being [...]; history alone, however, can mimic the sharpening or dissolution of the gaze".[31]

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28   *Ibid*., p. 7.
29   *Ibid*., p. 1.
30   *Ibid*.
31   *Ibid*., p. 2.

In order to properly address his approach, one has to take into account the theoretical style and concepts advanced through his intellectual development. First, and foremost, Jameson is a Marxist, and consequently he gives primacy to the economic forms (base), even though he analyses a film (at the level of superstructure). There are numerous difficulties that arise from a classic Marxist approach, which presupposes that an analysis of the economic base enables one to recognise and interpret cultural superstructure forms. The most essential problem, however, lies in the conclusion that any analysis and interpretation of a cultural form, such as film, ends up with the same message, which actually can only be analysed in economic terms. This way it might be possible to make a distinction between Chinese and Western film production; however, in the last instance this difference would only contribute to an understanding of distinct property relations.

In order to address this classical problem, Jameson developed the concept of the political unconscious, which was introduced in *The Political Unconscious* (1981). As pointed out by Colin MacCabe, Jameson was, as a linguist and literary analyst, "trained to respond to the smallest variations of meaning," and has managed to develop a form of Marxist analysis that "will respect and utilize these differences rather than collapsing them into undifferentiated reflection".[32]

> To accomplish this, he makes the radical theoretical move of assuming that the relation to the economic is a fundamental element within the cultural object to be analyzed – not in terms of the economic process within which the cultural object takes form but in the psychic processes which engage in the production and reception. For Jameson, every text is at its most fundamental level a political fantasy which in contradictory fashion articulates both the actual and potential social relations which constitute individuals within a specific political economy.[33]

For Jameson, the political interpretation is therefore not an "optional auxiliary to other interpretative methods [...] but rather [...] the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation".[34] While in *The Political Unconscious* literary texts

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[32]   MacCabe, *op. cit.*, pp. x-xi.

[33]   *Ibid.*

[34]   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Routledge, London and New York 1981, p. 1.

by Balzac and Conrad are used to perform an economic analysis and to formulate a social history of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the films interpreted in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* address the much broader context of consumer capitalism and the global multinational system at the end of the 20th century.

While the slogan of *The Political Unconscious* was "Always historicize!",[35] the next significant question is related the key historical category that enables historisation in the first place. For Jameson, the contemporary economic system and the dominant cultural production form a pair in which the latter reacts in a complex way to the former. The first cultural reaction to capitalism was therefore realism, which attempted to offer forms of representation that would enable the emergent public to grasp this stage of economic development. Modernism, the cultural reaction to imperialism and monopoly capitalism, which emerged already after "a loss of innocence about representation,"[36] is marked by an avant-garde ethic and aesthetic, looks into the future for an ideal audience for ideal art, and itself constitutes an area of art dissociated from the economy.

Jameson's contribution is predominantly related to his understanding of the contemporary phase of capitalism, where he follows the lead of Ernest Mandel and his concept of late capitalism as the current stage of global multinational capitalism. Postmodernism is a notoriously fluid concept that can carry a plethora of different meanings; however, Jameson's Marxist definition is relatively precise and above all related to a new social positioning of art in which economics and culture are fully integrated, and film is, in this sense, understood as a postmodern medium *par excellence*.

Yet the film medium is more than that. Even though film is a postmodern medium, it also recapitulates the general aesthetic development from realism to modernism and postmodernism. It is a result of developed forms of industrial production and a response to the first stage of capitalism. In the well-known words of avant-garde filmmaker Hollis Frampton: "Cinema is the Last Machine. It is probably the last art that will reach the mind through the senses".[37] At almost

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35 *Ibid.*, p. ix.
36 MaCcabe, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.
37 Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses", in: Bruce Jenkins (Ed.), *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 113.

the same time, another, yet completely different, avant-garde filmmaker, Jean-Luc Godard, wrote a project for a cinematographic essay entitled *Moi Je*, and gave its second part the title "I Am a Machine" ("*Moi, je suis une machine*").[38]

In its aesthetic development, realism in (Western) film is represented by the classic Hollywood cinema, exhibiting the aforementioned moment of innocence about the means of representation; modernism and all its complexities can be found in European cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, while postmodern film is present only from the 1970s on. While the characteristic feature of postmodernism in Jameson's Marxist view is the dissolution of the distinction between high and low art (or culture), it is the film medium that serves here as an example *par excellence*. This does not mean that there is no postmodern subject matter or that there are no particular themes related to it, or that postmodern art has no specific features, such as superficiality, pastiche, or the waning of affect. It means, however, that film, as a postmodern medium, crosses fields of economy and culture at every level, and "more than any other medium provides – if not the universal form – at least the possibility of combining the most ancient and local artistic traditions with the most modern and global advertising campaigns".[39]

If film really is the most postmodern among the art forms, it is also not difficult to understand why Jameson turned to it in order to analyse its political unconscious in the period of global multinational capitalism. His endeavour, nevertheless, cannot be fully understood without the introduction of yet another key concept: cognitive mapping.

As a concept that was gaining importance and influence during the years after its introduction,[40] cognitive mapping is fairly vague. Even though the term was already used in 1948 by the psychologist Edward C. Tolman, who wrote about cognitive maps in mice and men,[41] Jameson developed it from another source,

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38   Christa Blümlinger, "The History of Cinema, as Experience", *Radical Philosophy*, 192 (July/August 2015), p. 15.

39   MacCabe, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

40   *Cf.* Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping", in: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago 1988.

41   *Cf.* Ernest Ženko, "Estetika kognitivnega kartiranja", *Filozofski vestnik*, 23 (3/2002), pp. 121-134.

Kevin Lynch's work on people's ability to map a contemporary urban space that has exploded around them. With the support of Althusserian political philosophy, cognitive mapping became Jameson's crucial political device, and a means by which the individual subject, now disconnected and fragmented, can locate him- or herself in the contemporary globalised world, which no longer allows the individual subject to make sense of his or her environment.

This situation is not unique to postmodernity, since it already occurred in modernity, only that it is now magnified and multiplied to a level that calls for the new strategy of "cognitive mapping" in order to "enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole".[42] On the one hand, cognitive mapping thus allows for the capacity to negotiate the relationship between the local and the global, which seems to be crucial in order to accomplish any intercultural analysis, even though; on the other hand, it remains a way of presenting the unpresentable. But instead of following the development of Jean-François Lyotard, and invoking the aesthetics of the postmodern sublime, Jameson focuses on the political consequences of the unrepresentable in the representation.

The result of cognitive mapping in the age of multinational capital is the omnipresence of the "theme of paranoia," which produces conspiracy theories, which Jameson sees as "the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age; [...] a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital, a desperate attempt to represent the latter's system".[43] Conspiracy theories do not represent the system as it is, but as something else, and produce an analogy that is taken to be real. In this sense, cognitive mapping demands a subject that is capable of critical distance, and also knows what is socially legitimate and relevant, therefore a subject that simultaneously exists inside and outside of society and history; a subject that is at the same time local and global.

291

In both books on global cinema, *Signatures of the Visible* and particularly *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (of which the first part is entitled "Totality as Conspira-

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[42] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London 1991, p. 51.
[43] Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping", p. 356.

cy"), Jameson uses conspiracy as an allegorical structure. Yet as his analyses of films show, this allegory is more than a "poor person's cognitive mapping." It is rather the very paradigm of cognitive mapping. According to Jameson, we have to analyse film comparatively, because we can only understand it if we place it simultaneously in its local and global political contexts, "for any film will inevitably reflect on what one might call its place in the global distribution of cultural power".[44]

Jameson's approach to film criticism is specific in that it enables one to understand film in its global complexity, which in the age of late capitalism became of utmost importance. Moreover, it succeeds in articulating the relationship between film and politics in multicultural settings, grounding a new manner of intercultural film criticism that is still relevant today.

4. Conclusion

Both film and film criticism have histories that, contrary to the other forms of art, are noticeably shorter, but nevertheless considerably complex. As an invention of the late 19th century, although truly a medium of the 20th century, from its very beginning film has been a source of oppositions and struggles on various levels, from production to reception, interpretation, and criticism.

The main question regarding the reception of film in this paper is related to the role of philosophy in film criticism. Due to the fact that film did not go through a "conceptual turn," as the other visual arts did, for some filmmakers and critics alike, philosophy, but also theory in general, is something that should best be avoided. On the other hand, for others the role of philosophy is crucial, because film criticism must aspire to philosophy. The latter view becomes even more important if we connect it to intercultural film criticism and phrase it in a Kantian manner: "How is intercultural film criticism possible?"

Film criticism of the "classical variety," (psychoanalysis/semiotics/Marxism) and related to "Grand Theory," cannot be easily appropriated to be used in this situation because it is explicitly related to Western humanism. The cognitivist paradigm, which became prominent in recent decades, also does not seem to be

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[44]   MacCabe, *op. cit*., p. xv.

a genuinely useful critical tool, even though there are examples of film criticism that follow this paradigm. This approach namely does not offer a historical or cultural orientation, which is essential to intercultural criticism.

What seems reasonably promising, in this context, is the approach taken by Fredric Jameson, who in his form of film criticism takes into account the fact that we now live in an era of multinational global capital. Consequently, his analysis not only serves as a complex form of political film criticism, but also as a strategy of cognitive mapping, which, at least potentially, enables a subject to cognitively map his or her surroundings within the global multinational society, and enables him or her to act politically.

Yet this kind of approach lies on the challenging edge of the spectrum of film criticism. Not only can it not be used as a means to review and rate films, due to its difficult theoretical language and style and its excess of contexts and references, but it also appears demanding even to those who are familiar with film theory and philosophy. Furthermore, Jameson's writings on film seem to exceed film criticism in the sense that grasps both the individual film and the film medium as an integral and inseparable part of social totality, so that each claim regarding film is above all a claim pertaining to the totality. However, in this way film criticism elevates film, which is split between art and popular entertainment, to the level of serious academic and political interest. What more could one ask for?