Alessandra Calanchi

Guido Fink and American Film Studies: The Early Years (1952-1953)

Is interdisciplinarity of any value in Film Studies? What is the role of film in the rise of American Studies in Italy? How does Guido Fink's pioneering penchant for interdisciplinary approaches square with his early configuration of American studies? These are just some of the challenging questions that crowded my mind on the day I discovered a corpus of early articles written by Guido Fink, one of the most prolific and eclectic scholars in American and film studies in the 1980s and 1990s. These articles were published in a national newspaper and in a local weekly magazine in 1952 and 1953. At that time, Fink was just seventeen years old but he had already shown the passion and maturity of a true cultural observer, though he was not yet a protagonist in the cultural arena. Many years would pass before he started contributing to *Cinema Nuovo*, directed *Cinema & Cinema* (from no. 30 to no. 44), and wrote extensively on many subjects, ranging from Orson Welles to Michelangelo Antonioni, from Mario Soldati to Stanley Kubrick, but he was already a nascent role model for those to come.

1. Beginnings

Guido Fink was born in Gorizia in 1935 to a Jewish family. In 1938[1], when his father lost his job due to the Racial Laws, Guido and his mother (a close friend of Giorgio Bassani, the author of *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*) moved to his grandfather's home in Ferrara. Five years later, they managed to escape the fascist massacre now referred to as the "night of '43,"[2] yet all the men in the family were arrested and, later on, his father died in Auschwitz. The boy's personal trauma, which converged with the collective trauma of the

Shoah, might have been unbearable had it not been for the curiosity, thirst for knowledge, passion, and moral balance that have deeply marked Guido Fink's life. In literature, theater, and cinema he found the keys not only for psychological survival, but also for a successful career (as a full professor in Bologna and Florence, as a visiting scholar at many U.S. universities, and as the director of the Center of Italian Culture in Los Angeles).

When Fink was 25 years old, his professor of English urged him to go to the States "vainly hoping he would stop dealing with cinema" (Fink, *Proteo* 398). But Fink had his own agenda. Later, as a university professor of English and American Literature, Fink always worked in a comparative, interdisciplinary perspective, constantly hybridizing literature and culture with theater and film, and always matching theory with reflections on history and society. In his university lectures, which I had the opportunity to attend, as well as in his writings, cinema and melodrama were given the same attention as Shakespeare or Henry James. A remarkable testimony of such "Finkian method," consisting in "a richness of interests, very fast connections, and unpredictable interlacements" (Barbolini 412),[3] is *Nel segno di Proteo*, a newly published collection of his essays – which still sound extremely innovative and unconventional – ranging from the late 1960s to the present.

To study American Literature with Fink in the early 1980s, and to read the articles he published, was a *Bildung* holistic experience, in line with the lively cultural environment in Bologna revolving around the review *Cinema & Cinema* (founded in 1974), the Cineteca Comunale (born as early as 1963), and of course the Academia itself, which offered courses in Drama, Art, and Music Studies (DAMS). Reference texts included the pioneering *Letteratura e cinema* by Gian Piero Brunetta (1976), *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Novel and Film* by Seymour Chatman (1978, translated in 1981), *Il nuovo cinema americano 1967-1975* by Franco La Polla (1978), the entry "Cinema e Letteratura" by Alberto Abruzzese (in *Produzione e consumo*, vol. II, Letteratura Italiana Einaudi 1983), *L'autore, il narratore, lo spettatore: cinema e racconto* by Giorgio Cremonini (1988), and *Immagine di un'immagine. Cinema e letteratura* by Antonio Costa (1993).

Fink had many friends and collaborators (including Sandro Bernardi, Roberto Campari, Antonio Costa, Giorgio Cremonini, Piera Detassis, Giovanna Grignaffini, Franco La Polla, Leonardo Quaresima, Giorgio

Tinazzi), yet he was different from everyone else. First, he brought films into Literature courses. Second, he was not much interested in theory (like Abruzzese or Costa), nor in pedagogy (like Cremonini), nor in choosing film as a privileged arena of analysis (like La Polla); and he did not borrow from cultural studies such fashionable terms as "polysemy" or "hybridization." Rather, he overtly distrusted the walls between disciplines, the boundaries between nationalities, and all space between media. And he did not disdain team work: a volume entitled *Freedonia, cinema comico ebraico-americano*, edited by Fink, La Polla, Cremonini, and others (1982), and mixing Malamud, Roth, and Bellow with Mazurski, Lenman, and *The Jazz Singer*, is a perfect sample of his love for collective work in the name of cross-cultural alchemy.

This story, however, had started much earlier, as I discovered when I opened two old scrapbooks Fink had dismissingly given me when he moved out of his house in Ferrara in the 1990s, and in which he (or possibly his mother) had collected the reviews and articles he had published during his youth. I had left these books unopened for many years and when I finally resolved to browse inside I found a real treasure trove. Sometimes the date or other information is missing; at other times, a few hand-written notes appear among the paper fragments. In any case, these articles – around one hundred, all of which were published between 1952 and 1953 – represent an impressive production which has to date never been taken into critical consideration, and which reveals extraordinary elements of innovation and insight. By innovation, I mean in relation to the then existing (or non-existing) film studies, since no school or academic discipline yet existed; by insight, I mean his deep understanding of contemporary Italian society and its film industry, as well as American culture and cinema. It was in those years – the decade which closely followed the 1940s, in other words the years that had seen the rise of the anthropological-sociological approach to cinema in Europe (Morin) and of the American myth in Italy (Fernandez) – that Fink, regardless of the structuralists' lesson, laid down the bases for a multi-layered understanding of American politics and media, focusing on film structure (long before Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*), and making his first experiments in interfacing literature and cinema across disciplinary boundaries, which would later become characteristic of his methodology of research, many years before Peter C. Rollins passionately

wrote on the convergence between literature and cinema in "Film and American Studies".

In the first half of the twentieth century, U.S. culture was a most attractive territory for a young and curious scholar. Many intellectuals had fallen under its spell before Fink (although with great delay, due to fascist censorship): the first Italian article on Hemingway appeared in 1931, the first translation of Faulkner in 1937, *America amara* by Emilio Cecchi was published in 1939, and the *Americana* anthology by Elio Vittorini in 1941, while Cesare Pavese's appreciations of American silent films date from much earlier (1927-1929) but were published only in the late 1950s, all bearing witness to "a tenacious desire for anti-literature" (Mila 177) which was typical of the time. In the '50s, however, the scene changed. The Marshall Plan and the cold war vied for attention with the rise of television, and the intense relations between American intelligence and Italian radio broadcasting contributed to the creation of a new "American way of life – the Italian way" (Tobia 194). It was the time when Mike Bongiorno came back from the U.S. and Fernanda Pivano went there for the first time; Bianca Maria Tedeschini Lalli, one of the founders of American studies in Italy, published her first book on Henry David Thoreau; and a huge quantity of films crossed the ocean and arrived in Italy.

2. Out of the Crisis, into the War(s)

The two most important outlets for the young critic's reflections were the national newspaper *L'Unità*, the official organ of the Italian Communist Party, and *La Nuova Scintilla*, a local weekly magazine published by the Communist federation of Ferrara. Guido Fink was seventeen years old when his first article was published in *La Nuova Scintilla* with the title "Nel film *Furore* America amara" (Bitter America in *Grapes of Wrath*).[4] Fink starts his article, concerning the film John Ford had adapted from John Steinbeck's novel in 1940, by questioning the "long quarantine" the film suffered before being shown in Italy and the "initial hypocritical outcry" according to which the film shows "'depressing' aspects of American country life."

In reality, Fink continues, the film, *as well as the novel*, intends to focus precisely on:

> … certain 'bitter' aspects of America; it wants to point out that also scientific progress, if taken as the 'speculation' of the few and not as a benefit for the many, can lead to a 'regression': to the exploitation, that is, and the oppression of those that were not able to 'grasp' these innovations. The topic, in any case, was not one that would go down well with the Hays code. (*LNS* 31 May 1952)

Fink's debut in film studies and American studies was not soft. A "bitter" movie at the dawn of an economic boom was at risk of being considered mere leftish propaganda. The fact that the social structure mentioned by Fink was indeed on the verge of collapse owing to what nowadays we call an unscrupulous economic liberalism – a fact that he correctly identified as early as the early '50s – was far from being acknowledged. Also, the explicit reference to the Hays Code, a series of guidelines formulated and formally adopted from 1934 to 1967 by The Association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors stating what was considered "morally acceptable" in films, highlights the position of young Fink not only towards American cinema, but also towards culture at large, including politics, economics, and the history of ideas. Furthermore, Fink observes that while the film was censored, the novel was circulating freely in the U.S., and this gives us an idea of the delicate position of cinema in the cultural arena at the time.

While literature had gradually conquered a position of relatively greater freedom (not always: Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, and even Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* were strongly hit by censorship), cinema was a younger (and visual) art, and therefore it was perceived as having a more dangerous subversive potential. For this reason, soon after praising John Ford – whom he nevertheless considers "sentimentally attached to a waned civilization" – for finding "in this drama of the earth the material to delve once more into the contemporaneity of social problems," Fink quotes Italian professor Mario Fubini:[5] "The true novelty of cinematography … is to have realized the aspirations of

those who, ever since the 18th century and still today, have asked for and attempted a theatre for the people" (*LNS* 31 May 1952). Such a claim, Fink comments, ought to be welcomed and put into practice by the more advanced forces of Italian cinema.

The operation of juxtaposing American and Italian cinema, society, and culture will become, as we shall see, a characteristic of Fink's style – we could even say, of his poetics. What Fink wants to do in this article (and in those that follow) is precisely to make such juxtapositions *work*, in order to grant interdisciplinary and international legitimization to all arts: in his words, "it cannot be assumed *a priori* that 'popular art' does not coincide with art true and proper" (*LNS* 31 May 1952). Today such a statement may sound obvious, but let us imagine Fink's great effort to cancel in his readers' minds the recent memory of the Minculpop (the fascist Ministry of Popular Culture) and give the term "popular" a new respectability at a time when Andy Warhol, say, was still a beginner. Moreover, Fink alerts his readers against the danger of generating "new misunderstandings" and "new formulas," new "genres" and "sub-genres," thus anticipating the still ongoing debate on the Canon and its questionable hierarchies (*LNS* 31 May 1952).

3. From Hollywood to Valle Padana

From economic crisis to war is but a short step. "*Guerra e pace* made in Hollywood" (War and peace made in Hollywood) gives Fink the opportunity to say straight out what he thinks not only about war movies, but about military rhetoric and political propaganda conveyed through the film industry. This is a recurrent theme in his articles, *et pour cause*. First of all, he states the importance of being conscious about one's own historical time, something he thinks "has always been lacking in American artists" since "the very extensive Hollywood war filmography … is just a whole series of rhetoric exaggeration, of superficial exaltations" (*LNS* 19 June 1952). He is explicit in his critique: he speaks of "Hollywood's poor cultural ground" and "faded propaganda rehash," and accuses: "The truth is that from the epigones of the First World War to the preludes of the current Korean War, the psychosis of propaganda has never abandoned the

Hollywood studios, except for a brief and tense period during the 'cold war'" (*LNS* 19 June1952).

To readers of the new millennium, who have seen dozens of films about the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan, and terrorism, this article sounds naïve and, at the same time, prophetic. Moreover, it makes us reflect on the fact that in those years, when only a few families had a television set in their homes, and the Internet did not exist, newspapers and magazines were a crucial arena to give and find information and foster cultural debate. The reference to the Cold War – which was far from over in 1952, and was as cultural as it was political – also evokes the idea of what we might call a virtual "cold peace" between the Americans and Communism, taking place, thanks to the cinema, in the printed pages. American cinema, in fact, not only provided entertainment and culture, but also urged internationalization (as Communism did) and a re-semioticization of history and literature within the new media: an agenda young Guido Fink was very fast to welcome and adopt, following Henry Luce's invitation – dating back to the same year as the attack on Pearl Harbor in the U.S. and the publication of the *Americana* anthology edited by Elio Vittorini in Italy – to enter a new international dimension.

"Coraggio vero e coraggio falso" (True and false courage) offers Fink a further opportunity to speak of war: the first part deals with director Joseph Losey's *The Lawless* (1950), which he praises for treating the problem of ethnic and racial hatred with acumen and sensitivity, while the second part is devoted to *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel* by Henry Hathaway (1951), which, on the contrary, he considers "false, very hypocritical and frankly ugly," and full of "false anti-conformism," "militarism to the bitter end," "mythology of the Superman of no far memory," "insistent apologetic restlessness," and "over-sentimental tricks" (*LNS* 26 June1952). Interestingly, in the same issue of the journal we find another article by Fink, concerning film director Carlo Lizzani ("Verso un nuovo cinema per il popolo. Un grande film italiano sulla Valle Padana e per la sua Rinascita"; Towards a new cinema for the people. A great Italian film on the Valle Padana and its Renaissance). This continuity between America and Italy is an important part of Fink's project, which consists in creating a cross-national geography based on a symbolic juxtaposition of the two different cultures – as well as of the two different valleys. On the one hand, we

have the Far (and Wild) West, with its all-pervasive mythology aimed at building an American national epic; on the other, there is Lizzani's vision of a renaissance of the "Valle Padana" and Italian cinematography in the name of personal courage and anti-conformism (*LNS* 26 June1952).

With "Il cinema di Hollywood di fronte all'uragano" (Hollywood's cinema facing the hurricane), Fink resumes the war issue, but now he moves towards Korea, which gives him the opportunity to accuse American film producers of making business out of it (*LNS* 2 Oct. 1952), while "In *Viva Zapata!* lotta l'eroico Messico" (Heroic Mexico fights in *Viva Zapata!*) he delves into U.S. history to take a stand against oppression (*LNS* 9 Oct. 1952). On the other hand, he condemns an Italian film on Garibaldi in "Sbiadite *Camicie Rosse*, rettorica da mestieranti" (The dull rhetoric of faded *Camicie Rosse*) because it shows the same rhetoric of power American movies are guilty of (*LNS* 6 Sept. 1952), while in "I 'Marines' di Ford e i Mille di Garibaldi" (Ford's "Marines" and Garibaldi's One Thousand) he praises *1860* by Alessandro Blasetti (1933). In this article, by juxtaposing three different chronotopes – the Italian Risorgimento, the Western epos, and the first World War – and through his final deep focus on the origin of the Italian nation, Fink follows a personal cinematographic path which starts in the U.S. and arrives in his own homeland. In so doing, he does not actually intend to criticize John Ford or dismiss the Allied Forces; rather, he wants to inscribe the difficult process of Italian unity in the wider arena of world history, an arena where both the Marines and the "Mille" are represented as national heroes as long as they fight for the liberty that fascism and nazism will later try to delete. In other words, Fink leads the two national histories to collide and precipitate one into the other, implicitly encouraging the spectator to be extremely critical and reflexive and to abandon any prejudice (*LNS* 26 Feb. 1952).

An American counterpart of Garibaldi can be found in "Tolta la maschera alla setta del K.K.K." (The K.K.K. unmasked), a long and passionate article on *Storm Warning* by Stuart Heisler (1950) starting with a sermon against the "terrorist organization" called Ku Klux Klan (*LNS* 7 Aug. 7 1952). Here Fink grasps the opportunity to refresh the readers' and spectators' historical memories by quoting President Abraham Lincoln, and to test their film culture by mentioning the classic *Birth of a Nation*.

Not yet satisfied, Fink praises a recent article by Tullio Kezich, "I nostalgici del Dixie e la difesa della razza" (Dixie's nostalgics and the defense of race), endorsing his considerations against Hollywood, which 23-year-old Kezich accused of political apathy, racism, and anti-democracy.

Race is a particularly controversial issue, connected as it is to intolerance, pogroms, and the trauma of the Shoah. In an article entitled "Nella 'Croce di Lorena' l'eco della Resistenza" (*La Croce di Lorena* as an echo of the Resistance), Fink comments on a 1943 film whose description of the lager and rebellion against the Nazis "brings us an echo of the heroic climate of the Resistance" (*LNS* 5 Feb. 1953). Again, Fink is building bridges across space and time. Bridges are absolutely (and dramatically) necessary, he implies, because resistance to fascism and anti-Semitism are not local phenomena and therefore cannot be limited to Italy or Europe. Fink could not foresee that only four months later a couple of Jewish scientists, Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg, would be executed for conspiracy in the United States, after continuing to assert their innocence for two years.

4. Social and political issues

In Fink's articles, Hollywood and Rome, the Western and neorealism, the Marines and the Nazis meet and collide with one another, in a subverted cultural geography whose boundaries are, for the reader, to be recognized and interpreted. Alongside war and race issues, this cross-cultural geography also includes social problems concerning work, safety, and gender. In "Le *Tre storie proibite* di Genina, fioretto conformistico di falsa umanità" (Conformism and false humanity in *Le tre storie proibite* by Genina), for instance, he accuses film director Augusto Genina of conformism, superficiality, and easy sensationalism: it would have been much better, Fink implies, to problematize the social causes for (and psychological consequences of) a dramatic event that occurred in Via Savoia, Rome, consisting of the tragic collapse of a stairway on which a large number of young women were standing while waiting for a job interview. The young typists here depicted seem frivolous and their personal petty

dramas are in the foreground, while the novel *Roma ore 11* by Elio Petri, which had inspired the film, rightly focused on the fact that as many as two hundred girls were looking for an ill-paid job and the conditions of the building were not safe (the book had, in fact, been censored). Quite interestingly, in the same article Fink also denounces Hollywood, from where films "technically perfect, but rarely rich in vitality and human interests, continue to arrive" (*LNS* 11 Nov. 1952).

The woman issue is also considered with reference to the U.S. in "Donne vere e false nel cinema d'oggi" (True and false women in today's cinema) Fink deals with the representation of women in American cinematography, where "They can more or less be divided into two categories: the 'intellectual lovers' (the tormented and hysterical heroines …) and the 'pin-up girls' or 'glamour girls,' call them as you wish, that is to say laden with sexual allure pure and simple" (*LNS* 14 Aug. 1952). Behind the naiveté of the still inexperienced critic, it is possible to foresee Fink's taste for provocation, his contempt for commonplaces and stereotypes, and his notion of an ideal woman that is both intellectual *and* desirable. To this extent, it is interesting to observe that in "Diva," an article concerning Bette Davis, he does not mention beauty or any aesthetic clichés but defines the actress as "the most courageous and intelligent star in Hollywood" (*L'Unità* 4 Sept. 1953).

Fink's most relevant article of the period, however, is entitled "I progetti anticonformisti rimangono lettera morta" (Unconventional projects remain unfulfilled) and contains the young critic's reaction to an article published by an anonymous reader signed as "Mau" in the Catholic newspaper *L'Avvenire Padano*. In that article, Fink's reviews – even those concerning American cinema – are accused of being "Russian propaganda"; his sources, they write, come from a magazine which is not really "independent" (*Cinema Nuovo*); and *La Nuova Scintilla*, guilty of accusing the Church of clerical censorship, is defined a "humoristic weekly" (*LNS* 3 Sept. 1953). Fink rejects all accusation with polite firmness, and also takes the opportunity to underline that the Italian Government has encouraged the rise of national cinema, but has at the same time created "a commercial Hollywood-type climate where the anticonformist projects remain on the shelf and the most

serious film directors have to give in to never ending compromises" (*LNS* 3 Sept. 1953).

In a letter dated September 10, Fink declares that he is not a member of the Communist party, and yet he would not withdraw one single line of what he had written. A few days later he writes a long passionate article entitled "*L'armata s'agapò* storia di un film proibito" (*L'armata s'agapò*, the story of a forbidden film) in defense of two eminent critics, Guido Aristarco (the director of *Cinema Nuovo*) and Renzo Renzi, who have been imprisoned in Peschiera with the charge of "insulting the armed forces" owing to the publication of the article *L'armata s'agapò* (1953), whose title has erroneously been interpreted as a satire of the army. The political atmosphere is obviously quite hot: Fink is very upset and considers this episode extremely serious and a menace "not only to press freedom, but also to the freedom of culture and thought." He concludes by quoting Cesare Zavattini: "Arrest us all if you want … but we shall continue along our road!" (*LNS* 17 Sept. 1953). Indignation is aroused again when, just two weeks later, Luigi Zampa's anti-fascist film *Anni facili* (1953) is hit by censorship. In "Il cinema è nelle vostre mani e voi state per distruggerlo!" (Cinema is in your hands and you are about to destroy it!) he writes: "another attack on the freedom of thought" (*LNS* 2 Oct. 1953).

5. Back to the Fifties

Guido Fink has often gone back to the 1950s in his writings. For example, he dedicates several pages to "Ferrara e il cinema del dopoguerra" (Ferrara and the post-WW2 cinema) in *Storia Illustrata di Ferrara*: "The years of reconstruction following the war are characterized by a notable enthusiasm and fervor for initiatives. Alongside the reborn national cinema, there is the *predictable invasion of American cinema, that does not however obstruct, at least for the moment, the affirmation of some European products*" (Fink, *Ferrara* 1025). Fink also remembers that in 1948 Ferrara was the setting for some scenes of one of the first big Hollywood productions shot overseas, *Prince of Foxes*, a romanced biography of Cesare Borgia. American culture and local cinema continue to intertwine in his pages. To give an example, when recollecting Vancini's film on the "long night" of 1943, Fink uses a

powerful "contamination" between Italian history and American literature to describe the trauma of fascist violence:

> … the director re-reads a short story by Bassani, "Una notte del '43," a splendid meditation on the horror of visions and of History, that History made of injustices and violences that crush the characters … and that we vainly hope to exorcize, by hiding it, *like the white ghost with the sickle on the cover of Gordon Pym* that Pino Barilari keeps turned upside down on his bedside table: that white ghost that "even if it continued to be present, to be there, was no longer frightening" … (Fink, *Ferrara* 1033, my italics).

In the end, Fink resumes, "everything is reduced to a great question mark, in the Talmudic *and Singerian* tradition of the question as the only answer to other questions" (Fink, *Ferrara* 1033). We find Poe and Singer quoted here, just as we find many other American writers and characters elsewhere in Fink's works, as if they were necessary to better understand Italian literature, cinema, and history (and vice versa). Had Fink been a young Italian scholar in our time, when disciplines are being more and more imprisoned in grids, codes, and acronyms, he would have found it difficult to adapt, and would probably have fought against the rules, since his intrinsically interdisciplinary, international, and intermedial vision would never accept a rigid structure.

Fink realized, as a very young man and before many others in his generation, that to understand his own time he had to direct his attention to America, not only Italy or Europe; and to cinema, not only literature. Cinema had in fact become the arena in which political and ideological battles were to be fought; it was history's litmus test, and the place where literature could find its modern transposition. Ernest Hemingway, Edgar Allan Poe, Truman Capote, O' Henry, and many other authors show up in Fink's early writings, bringing literature inside articles dedicated to film directors, actors, and actresses. At the same time, such writings resonate with what J. P. Mayer, just a few years before, had defined "the power of the film medium – as popular art and educational instrument – to serve *positive* ends if *responsibly* developed" (25). Nonetheless, the fear, expressed by the sociologist, that "in the absence of responsible thought and attention to challenge and criticize them" films would remain "stale and vague," his manifest contempt for films that "so readily glorify the social *status quo* of the society in which we live,"

and his avocation not to "persist in our academic remoteness from film as mass-influence," were probably unknown to young Guido (25).

An enthusiastic, polemical, multifaceted, militant, and ironic film critic, Fink scarcely missed a single film (despite the fact that there was a veritable invasion in 1952 and 1953), and in the meanwhile he studied arts, theater, literature, all converging into the melting pot – or better, the mosaic – of his writing. The result was a continuous stimulus to reflect, think, catalogue, exclude/include, associate, confront, analyze, and counter-analyze. The mature Fink has proved to be a predictable consequence of his younger self: sustained by the same passion, by the same insatiable erudition, by the same impatience of boundaries. Fink has for all of his life been a heterodox scholar, a lover of cinema and literature without sacrificing either of the two – nay, a specialist of both because of his capacity to follow different (whether parallel or not) paths without ever getting lost, but, on the contrary, often finding new territories to explore and compare, always with the same insight and depth. Without his initial cultural voraciousness, without his energetic passion, both American studies and Film studies would have encountered more difficulty in taking off in Italy and in interacting, in the following decades, with their cousins overseas.

Even though he was not a theorist in a traditional sense, we can conclude that Fink's pioneering interdisciplinary approach squares with his early configuration of American Studies to such an extent that it is unthinkable that one could exist without the other. If Chatman wrote: "Characters exist and move in a space which exists abstractly at the deep narrative level" (138), Fink was more interested in problematizing the implications of film characters with *real life*. If Chaney spoke of "fictive landscape" (9), Fink was more concerned with American or Italian *actual* topographies. And if the presence of movies in U.S. higher education courses is still considered inadequate (Rollins), if many complain about the lack of interest in the cinema within American Studies (Auerbach, Rabinovitz), if it is true that,

> Both American studies and film studies are fields encompassing multitudes of meanings with complex connections; albeit this association has, paradoxically, long been neglected by film theorists and American studies practitioners alike. Despite a massive outpouring of publications on American studies and on film, separately, there are still few texts and even less in-depth research about the relationship between the two fields (Cristian).

then the convergence hoped for (and worked out) by Fink since the early '50s has offered and still offers a different paradigm which cannot be ignored.

Unfortunately, he left dozens of articles uncollected, his books representing only a small part of the huge corpus of his work. It is a fact that, as a university teacher, he never delivered lesson notes, and as a researcher he would disseminate most of his articles and essays in reviews and books either edited by fellow scholars or co-authored.

Nonetheless, thanks to the path Fink traced, we can say that cinema played a role almost as relevant as literature in the rise of American Studies in Italy, while American Studies, in turn, nurtured Film Studies. To approach literature and culture, for young Fink, meant to explore the new countries of imagination at a time when to watch a film was a really oneiric and unrepeatable experience, and to report it in the papers meant to sanction its success or its failure. The quantity of films that arrived in the Italian cinemas in the early 1950s was extraordinary, and Fink consciously plunged into the flux of images, names, plots, and issues, always linking them to historical, political, and social events, or to literary, musical, artistic works, and thus building the foundation for a development of unprecedented cultural complexity. We have been benefiting from this heritage for years.

Notes

[1] The same year in which the story told by the film *Gli occhiali d'oro* by Giuliano Montaldo (1987), also set in Ferrara, takes place.

[2] The massacre provided the subject of a short story ("Una notte del '43" by Giorgio Bassani), the film *La lunga notte del '43* (Florestano Vancini, 1960), and an essay by Guido Fink ("Le tre notti del '43," 1994).

[3] All translations from Italian are mine.

[4] From now on, I shall refer to *La Nuova Scintilla* as *LNS*. All of this material has recently been copied and collected with the help of the Cineteca di Bologna, so it is now possible to read the full articles, including those I will not mention here because they specifically refer to French, Italian, and URSS cinema or to juvenilia. I wish to thank Anna Fiaccarini and Daniela Fink for supporting my research work.

[5] A literary critic and professor at the Universities of Trieste and Bocconi (Milano), he had been forced to leave his position in Palermo owing to the Racial Laws.

Works cited

Auerbach, Jonathan. "American Studies and Film, Blindness and Insight." *American Quarterly* LVIII.1 (2006): 31-50.

Barbolini, Roberto. "Nota editoriale. Filottete e l'isola che non c'era." Guido Fink, *Nel segno di Proteo. Da Shakespeare a Bassani*. Ed. Roberto Barbolini. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2015. 411-14.

Chaney, David. *Fictions of Collective Life: Public Drama in Late Modern Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure on Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.

Cristian, Réka M. "American Studies and Film From Blind Spot to Symbiosis." *Americana. E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* X.25 (2014).

Fernandez, Dominique. *Le mythe de l'Amérique chez les intellectuels italiens de 1930 à 1950*. Paris: n.p., 1967.

Fink, Guido. "Nel film Furore America amara." *La Nuova Scintilla* 31 May 1952.

——. "Guerra e pace made in Hollywood." *LNS* 19 Jun. 1952.

——. "Coraggio vero e coraggio falso." *LNS* 26 Jun. 26 1952.

——. "Tolta la maschera alla setta del K.K.K." *LNS* 7 Aug. 1952.

——. "Donne vere e false nel Cinema d'oggi." *LNS 1*4 Aug. 1952.

——. "Il cinema di Hollywood di fronte all'uragano." *LNS* 2 Oct. 1952.

——. "In *Viva Zapata* lotta l'eroico Messico." *LNS* 9 Oct. 1952.

——. "Sbiadite *Camicie Rosse*, rettorica da mestieranti." *LNS* 6 Sept. 1952.

——. "Le *Tre storie proibite* di Genina, fioretto conformistico di falsa umanità." *LNS* 11 Nov. 1952.

——. "Nella 'Croce di Lorena' l'eco della Resistenza." *LNS* 5 Feb. 1953.

——. "I 'Marines' di Ford e i Mille di Garibaldi." *LNS* 26 Feb. 1953.

——. "I progetti anticonformisti rimangono lettera morta." *LNS* 3 Sept. 1953.

——. "Diva." *L'Unità* 4 Sept. 1953.

——. "'L'armata s'agapò' storia di un film proibito." *LNS* 17 Sept. 1953.

——. "Il cinema è nelle vostre mani e voi state per distruggerlo!" *LNS* 2 Oct. 1953.

——. *Ferrara e il cinema del dopoguerra*, *Storia Illustrata di Ferrara* no. 65 (1989): 1025-40.

——. "Le tre notti del 1943." *La lunga notte del '43. La sceneggiatura originale*. Ferrara: Liberty House, 1994.

——. *Nel segno di Proteo. Da Shakespeare a Bassani*. Ed. Roberto Barbolini. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2015.

Giannelli, Luca. *New York Confidential*. Roma: Circolo Proudhon, 2014.

Luce, Henry. "The American Century." *Life* 17 Feb. 1941: 61-65.

Mayer, Jacob Peter, *Sociology of Film*. London: Faber & Faber, 1946.

Mila, Massimo. "Due inediti di Pavese." 1958. Cesare Pavese, *Il serpente e la colomba. Scritti e soggetti cinematografici*. Ed. Mariarosa Masoero. Torino: Einaudi, 2009. 177-9.

Morin, Edgar. *Le cinéma, ou l'homme imaginaire*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1956.

Pavese, Cesare. *Il serpente e la colomba. Scritti e soggetti cinematografici*. Ed. Mariarosa Masoero. Torino: Einaudi, 2009.

Rabinovitz, Lauren. "More than Meets the Eye: Movies in American Studies." *American Studies* XLVII.2 (2006): 71-85.

Rollins, Peter G. "Film and American Studies: Questions, Activities, Guides." *American Quarterly* XXVI.3 (1974): 245-65.

——. "Film, Television and American Studies: A 1998 Update." *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1998. 246-69.

Tobia, Simona, *Ascoltatori italiani, buonasera! Voice of America e l'Italia 1942-1957*. Milano: Libraccio Editore, 2014.