

Guido Aristarco: From *Lascia o raddoppia?* to Broadcast Media

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Abstract

This paper analyzes various documents from the archive at the library of the Cineteca di Bologna, “Renzo Renzi”, which corroborate a professional collaboration between film critic Guido Aristarco and the state-run broadcaster Radiotelevisione Italiana (Rai) for the popular TV show *Lascia o raddoppia?* in 1956. These materials, including lists of questions about history of cinema, are a resource for recent studies that regard Italian film criticism as a relational system. More precisely, it is yet another in step in the historicization of a high-profile figure like Guido Aristarco and investigates the ways in which Aristarco used broadcast media, which occupied a central position in the media system during this period, as a pace for action within the complex dynamics of modern mass society.

Keywords: Guido Aristarco; RAI; Cinema Nuovo; Criticism; History of Film.

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1 Introduction

The archival material preserved in the colossal Guido Aristarco Fund at the Renzo Renzi Library of the Cineteca di Bologna it has so far been the subject of a single research (Noto 2019), despite it being the place to find not only tear sheets of most of Aristarco's *Cinema Nuovo* columns and conference papers, but also his entire, gargantuan correspondence, all neatly filed away at the time, with colleagues, friends, and readers. The thousands and thousands of letters from and to Aristarco complement the in-process collection of certificates, programs from various film festivals, and typescript transcriptions of the lectures, adding to the vast expanses of box files tracing a life that spanned most of the twentieth century.

The recent scholarly interest in the history of film criticism has so far yielded few studies which consider letters as newsworthy material and film criticism as a field of professional and cultural relations (Guerra and Martin 2019, Guerra et al. 2021). Thus, this paper aims to present and comment upon several documents demonstrating a professional collaboration between Aristarco and the state-run broadcaster Radiotelevisione Italiana (Rai) for the popular TV show *Lascia o raddoppia?* in 1956. In particular, by making use of this set of private exchanges — intended here as a primary source —, this paper aims to highlight a twofold aspect: on one hand, the high consideration for a well-established and renowned film critic from the foremost Italian cultural-educational institution at its inception, in the mid-1950s; on the other hand, it provides compelling evidence of how Aristarco's film policy was routinely and systematically solicited through peripheral and anonymous collaborations. In fact, the second set of documents I refer to in this article deals with a questionnaire, written by Aristarco for the quiz show, which offers an example of unusual film criticism in practice. By arguing that this selection of questions should be frame also as a critical operation performed in the promotion and qualification of preferences, and a hierarchical model of evaluation, this article would like to develop this theme in relation to the battle that Marxist journal *Cinema Nuovo* fought against *Lascia o raddoppia?* right from 1956. Notably, my emphasis is on the surprising light that these unpublished papers shed on the context of public controversies (intellectual, political, and cultural) in which the journal chose to intervene at the time.

Moreover, a brief glance at the relation between Aristarco, in the role of a professional actor, and broadcast media will make clear significant links between the film critic and this sphere, which played a decisive role in establishing his credentials.

In this regard, this paper adheres to a conceptual frame which examines, as Huw Walmsley-Evans states (Walmsley-Evans 2018), the individual film critic as a professional and a practitioner. In other words, it takes an approach that differs considerably from other recent studies while still sharing common concerns and subject matters with it. One example is Jean-Michel Frodon, who writes:

Here I need to make an *aparté* about what I call film criticism: anyone, being professional or not, being paid or not, who dedicates time, work, knowledge, deep affective relation with films to write about them should be called a critic. This excludes both the immense amount of vernacular comments about movies that exist online through chats and social networks, as well as media people who only use films to promote glamour, or to discuss — potentially interesting — topics regarding society, history, etc. but without any attention to the cinematic device that relates with these topics (Frodon 2022).

Finally, contributing to the study and revision of an exemplary versatile intellectual that maybe deserves an in-depth study of his professional story, this article would like to sketch an initial reflection on the Aristarco's role in the institutionalization of film criticism in Italy.

2 History of a consultancy

By an undated (ca. 1956) two-page typewritten Mario Labroca's letter — headed "Rai - Radiotelevisione italiana, Direzione Generale Torino - Roma" and signed by "Direttore del Centro di Produzione Tv - Milano" — Guido Aristarco is informed of the methods and organization of his anonymous collaboration as a consultant for the television program *Lascia o raddoppia?*:

Dear Sir, we wish to express our deepest gratitude for your valuable collaboration. In this new phase of organizational work, 'Lascia o raddoppia' has shown greater safety and precision: requirements that must be increasingly met. We therefore deem it appropriate to clarify a few points" (Rai [1956a], my translation).¹

Firstly, as a matter of course, we must take into account the complex and peculiar history of the cultural and social 'phenomenon', in Emma Barron's terms, that was the quiz show *Lascia o raddoppia?*, introduced in the single state-run channel in 1955. Numerous articles and academic monographs have pursued fruitful inquiries into several aspects of this program, assessing its importance and its role within the larger media system during Italy's 'economic miracle' (Chalaby 2013, Fiacco and Scaglioni 2013, Barron 2016, 2018, Garofalo 2018).

As I suggest in my brief introduction, focusing on private letters as texts can shed light on the wider historical context in which they were written, and this letter makes us think about the prestige and institutional expertise that Aristarco's persona embodies in 1956.

Even though the very first lines are closely modelled on the standard for a conventional epistolary opening, here we have a testimony of the overall attention Rai paid to Aristarco.

This is also confirmed by an undated attached document, titled "Promemoria" [Memorandum] (Rai [1956b]), enabling an investigation of Rai's position in terms of reliable knowledge and expertise in the eyes of its consultants: "It is perhaps superfluous to mention that each question and each answer is entrusted, for compilation, to specialists precisely so that they convey the safest and most recent knowledge in studies on the subject field-studies" (Rai [1956b], my translation).²

Concerning the first letter quoted above, the following bulleted list reveals the fees, provisions, and constraints and specifies modalities for completing and sending the most precise wording of questionnaires, a crucial point in determining the good success of the show.

Is it my contention that anonymity, expressed in point 2, may have played a decisive role in Aristarco's decision to collaborate; such a clause would also have precluded the danger to his public disclosure.

1) Honoraries - For the first round of the game, each consultant will be allotted 12 questions, with a reimbursement of 2,000 lire per question. However, the questions submitted on the eve of the broadcast must be sufficient in number for nine to be easily chosen. For each of the subsequent rounds, five questions will be compensated in the same manner and to each consultant. The attendance fee for the sessions for defining the questions is 10,000 lire, reduced to 5,000 lire for those who are, on the same day, part of two Commissions. 2) RAI guarantees that under no circumstances will the names of its consultants given publicity. 3) It is essential that the questions be signed and accompanied by an explanatory and bibliographical report, so that the office, the submitter, and the notary can easily orient themselves regarding the questions for all eventualities. Therefore, an example of a question accompanied by a report according to our requirements is attached (Rai [1956a], my translation).³

Using an example, point 4 highlights the importance of correctly formulating the questions, not only for the success of the program, but also for optimal collaboration with the consultants. Some of the potential un-

1. "Egregio Signore, desideriamo esternare la nostra viva gratitudine per la sua preziosa collaborazione. In questa nuova fase di lavoro di organizzazione, 'Lascia o raddoppia' ha dato prova di una maggiore sicurezza e precisione: requisiti che debbono essere sempre maggiormente curati. Pertanto riteniamo opportuno precisare alcuni punti:" (Rai [1956a]).

2. "È forse superfluo ricordare che ogni domanda e ogni risposta vengono affidate, per la compilazione, a specialisti appunto perché rappresentino la più sicura e recente parola degli studi sulla materia" (Rai [1956b]).

3. "1) Onorari - Per il primo turno di giuoco, verranno, a ciascun consulente, compensate n° 12 domande a lire 2.000 l'una. Le domande presentate l'antivigilia della trasmissione dovranno però essere in numero sufficiente per poterne scegliere agevolmente nove. Per ognuno dei turni successivi saranno compensate, allo stesso modo e a ciascun consulente, cinque domande. Il gettone di presenza alle sedute di definizione alle domande è di lire 10.000, ridotto a lire 5.000 per chi fa parte, nello stesso giorno, di due Commissioni. 2) La RAI assicura che non sarà in nessun caso data pubblicità ai nomi dei suoi consulenti. 3) È essenziale che le domande siano firmate e accompagnate da relazione illustrativa e bibliografica, affinché l'ufficio, il presentatore ed il notaio possano facilmente orientarsi sulle domande stesse per ogni eventualità. Si allega, pertanto, un esempio di domanda corredata da relazione secondo le nostre necessità" (Rai [1956a]).

pleasant consequences that could arise from miscommunications, ambiguities of language, and so forth are evoked.

4) In one of the episodes of 'Lascia o raddoppia' a contestant could not be admitted to the game because, during the previous afternoon, it had turned out that one of the prepared questions was wrong. The broadcasting office became aware of an oversight which would have been obvious in an elementary check, but had been missed, as the two consultants had not met to consult and do a check, had not accompanied the questions with the prescribed explanatory report, and had submitted them late. Since the incident could have had unpleasant consequences, the television station was forced to renounce the collaboration with the two consultants (Rai [1956a], my translation).⁴

The last point is useful for placing the correspondence in a more specific context:

5) Until the transmission of 'Lascia o raddoppia' on Saturday, February 11th, the questions must be filed by 6pm on Thursdays at RAI, and the Commissions will be convened on Friday afternoons after 2.30pm. From Monday, February 13th, when the broadcast will switch to Thursday evenings, the applications must be filed by 6pm on Tuesdays, again at RAI, and the Commissions will meet on Wednesday afternoons. As far as possible, TV will collect the applications with a motorcyclist from the home of one of the two experts. Best regards (Rai [1956a], my translation).⁵

A further document, a sort of guideline for the formulating questions correctly, consists of three typewritten pages signed by Mario Labroca and entitled: "AI SIGNORI CONSULENTI DI 'Lascia o Raddoppia'" (Rai [1956c]). This text provides a practical example of the pattern that the consultants must follow when composing questions and offers helpful insights into the production routine of *Lascia o raddoppia?*

The most emblematic cases of "unfair questions" ("Portrait of Barzizza", "The Bridge of Sighs") are outlined in a numbered list comprising five points (from *a* to *e*). Among these cases, the famous "scandal of the contrabassoon" involving Lando Degoli (Muggeo 2021), which further contextualizes the correspondence. The increasing scholarly output on the episode has highlighted its impact and pervasive influence in broader social transformation:

Finally, the RAI formed a special internal commission of experts to review the matter. The following week, the commission reported that they found no evidence that Verdi has used the contrabassoon in *Macbeth* or *Nabucco*, however they ruled the question to be too technical. Degoli was invited to return to the program. So, on Saturday, 7 January 1956, Degoli returned to the quiz show, but to the dismay of viewers, he did not *raddoppiare*, or double. Instead, he opted to take the 1,280,000 lire that he had already won and *lasciare* — leave. The media response was not sympathetic — they felt cheated. [...] However, the 'scandal' had demonstrated that *Lascia o raddoppia?* was something more than a popular game show. For millions of viewers, it was a new part of life and their weekly routine, a program that people from right across society discussed. It was a subject where everyone could hold and voice an opinion. (Barron 2019: 100–101)

However, the correspondence that truly testifies to Aristarco's performance for Rai comprises a group of four short letters dated January 10th, 1956; February 21st, 1956; February 21st, 1956; and March 2nd, 1956. These letters provide information on the fees received by the film critic and the exact dates of the meetings he attended.

4. "4) In una delle trasmissioni di 'Lascia o Raddoppia' un concorrente non ha potuto essere ammesso al giuoco poiché, nel corso del pomeriggio precedente, era risultato che una delle domande predisposte era sbagliata. L'ufficio ordinatore della trasmissione si è accorto di una svista che sarebbe risultata evidente a un controllo elementare, mancato, in quanto i due consulenti non si erano riuniti per consultarsi e controllarsi reciprocamente, non avevano corredate le domande della prescritta relazione illustrativa e le avevano presentate in ritardo. Poiché l'incidente avrebbe potuto avere conseguenze spiacevoli, la Televisione è stata costretta a rinunciare alla collaborazione dei due consulenti" (Rai [1956a]).

5. "5) Sino alla trasmissione di sabato 11 febbraio di 'Lascia o Raddoppia', le domande debbono essere depositate entro le ore 18 del giovedì alla RAI, e le Commissioni saranno convocate nel pomeriggio del venerdì dopo le ore 14.30. Da lunedì 13 febbraio, passando la trasmissione al giovedì sera, le domande dovranno essere depositate entro le ore 18 del martedì, sempre alla RAI, e le Commissioni si riuniranno al pomeriggio del mercoledì. Nei limiti del possibile la TV provvederà al ritiro delle domande con motociclista al domicilio di uno dei due esperti. Con i migliori saluti" (Rai [1956a]).

The first letter clarifies:

Dear Dr. Aristarco, we would like to inform you that, starting today, the remuneration for formulating questions for the program 'Lascia o Raddoppia' has been set at 2,000 lire per question. Additionally, we also would like to inform you that we will also utilize your collaboration for documentation and assessment consultancy, for which aperiodic flat rate fee will be applied. Please accept our best regards (Rai 1956d, my translation).⁶

The second letter expresses gratitude to Aristarco for attending the meeting on February 14th, 1956, in preparation for the broadcast on February 16th, 1956. It also includes a check for 10,000 lire (Rai 1956e). The third letter expresses appreciation for the written questions provided for the broadcast on February 16th, 1956, and includes a check for 24,000 lire (Rai 1956f). The accounts align with the initial document's indication that the fee for meeting is 10,000 lire, and each question is compensated at 2,000 lire.

The final letter expresses gratitude for the questions received for the broadcast on February 23rd, 1956, and encloses a check for 24,000 lire (Rai 1956g).

3 A list

The relevance of *Lascia o Raddoppia?* in the history of mass culture in Italy justifies our attention towards the content of this consultancy. What role does Aristarco perform as a consultant? Which discourses are channeled, and challenged through his collaboration? Therefore, the question is not simply this collaboration exists, but rather what forms it takes and what transactions it stimulates.

A seven-page typewritten draft with handwritten corrections showcases the questions written by Aristarco, along with their corresponding related answers (approximately thirty questions in total) (Aristarco [1956]). Deliberately, the critic compiles an apparently random and diverse list of questions on the history of cinema. It is worth mentioning some of these questions to highlight, as I will do later, how they fully reflect his cinematographic "canon."⁷

6. "Egregio dr. Aristarco, Le rendiamo noto che, con decorrenza odierna, il compenso per la formulazione dei quesiti per la trasmissione 'Lascia o Raddoppia' è stato fissato in lire 2.000 per ogni domanda. La informiamo, inoltre, che ricorremo alla Sua collaborazione anche per consulenze di documentazione e accertamento il cui compenso verrà periodicamente forfettizzato. Voglia gradire i più distinti saluti" (Rai 1956d).
7. This is an annotated version of the list: "In quale anno si tenne la prima Mostra cinematografica di Venezia, che allora era biennale? Come si intitola il film interpretato da Greta Garbo tratto da un lavoro teatrale di Pirandello? [Quali sono] il nome del regista e il nome dell'attore che interpreta la parte del giovane magistrato nel film 'In nome della legge'? Sa dirmi il titolo del romanzo americano a cui si è ispirato il regista Luchino Visconti per il film 'Osessione'? Il film [L.] Amore di Roberto Rossellini riunisce sotto questo titolo due episodi. Sa dirmi i titoli? René Clair ha scritto un libro nel quale raccoglie molti suoi articoli, memorie, saggi. Il libro è stato tradotto anche in italiano. Conosce il titolo originale del libro? In quale località della Sicilia è stato girato il film 'La terra trema' di Luchino Visconti? Chi è stato l'interprete principale nella parte del disoccupato nel film di Vittorio De Sica 'Ladri di biciclette'? Chi è il regista del celebre film 'L'uomo di Aran'? Ci dica il titolo italiano di due film di Chaplin che iniziano con la parola 'Luci'. Il regista del famoso film italiano muto 'Cabiria' firmava Piero Fosco. Sa dirmi il suo vero nome? Prima di realizzare il suo primo film a soggetto, [Jenny], Marcel Carné aveva diretto nel 1929 un cortometraggio documentario. Sa dirmi il titolo? Nel film 'Luci della ribalta' Charlie Chaplin ha fatto interpretare una piccola parte ad un altro grande comico del cinema. Qual è il suo nome? Il primo film diretto da De Sica è 'Rose scarlatte'. Sa dirmi il nome dell'autore della commedia da cui il film è tratto? Come si chiamano i protagonisti della storia del film 'Due soldi di speranza'? Un film di Pudovkin è comunemente conosciuto col titolo 'Tempeste sull'Asia'. Qual è la traduzione letterale italiana del titolo originale? C'è un romanzo di Vasco Pratolini portato sullo schermo dal regista Carlo Lizzani. Qual è il titolo del romanzo? Il primo film di Roberto Rossellini venne realizzato con la supervisione di Francesco De Robertis. Sa dirmi il titolo? Tra i classici italiani del cinema muto figura un film del 1913 con Lydia Borrelli e Mario Bonnard. Sa dirmi il titolo e il regista del film? Come si intitola il primo film tratto da un lavoro televisivo? Il cinema americano ha ottenuto nel corso di tutte le edizioni del Festival cinematografico di Cannes un solo grande premio per il miglior film. Come si intitola il film? [Mario Camerini] diresse nel [1934] un film intitolato [il] cappello a tre punte. Di quel film [o] stesso Camerini ha girato recentemente una nuova versione. Sa dirmi il titolo? Nel 1930 dalla novella il [Silenzio] di Pirandello venne realizzato da Gennaro Righelli il primo film sonoro italiano. Quale è il titolo del film? Sa dirmi il nome di almeno due [d]egli interpreti principali del film Un colpo di pistola realizzato da Renato Castellani nel 1941? Uno dei nostri più grandi operatori morì anni orsono [in seguito] ad un incidente automobilistico. L'ultimo film cui prese parte è Senso. Quale è il suo nome? Una nota attrice di teatro ha interpretato la parte della signora Lolotta nel film Miracolo a Milano [diretto da Vittorio De Sica e] tratto da Totò il buono di Cesare Zavattini. Sa dirmi il nome dell'attrice? Nel film Umberto D realizzato nel [51] da De Sica su soggetto di Zavattini, la parte del protagonista venne affidata ad un attore non professionista, e precisamente ad un professore. Quale è il suo nome? Il regista Federico Fellini interpretò una parte in un episodio di un film diretto da Roberto Rossellini, accanto a lui figurava Anna Magnani. Qual è il titolo del film? Alessandro Blasetti ha diretto un film sull'epopea garibaldina

The list, which serves as an archetypal form capable of replacing published texts, operates through its inclusions, exclusions and the implicit “left-unsaid”. It becomes a foundation for perpetuating taste regimes, a means of codifying what is deemed acceptable or not, encompassing individuals (titles, topics, and genres).

These points warrant close attention. By examining them, we can observe their characteristic national scope. Consequently, the list primarily caters to a national audience and addresses national concerns. The critic highlights the consecutive titles, revealing a certain degree of self-reflexivity.

The selection showcases a handful of “masterpiece” or “classics”, predominantly belonging to Italian Neorealism. Naturally, Aristarco, being a prominent expert of the time, focused on this cinematic movement. It is well known that the critical discourse of the 1950s was dominated by concerns about the political and commercial implications of Neorealism. The list prominently features directors such as Visconti, Zavattini, and De Sica. Except for Chaplin — whose image appeared on the cover of the first issue of *Cinema Nuovo* — and Flaherty, American titles are absent. There is a modest representation of Soviet Cinema (Pudovkin), and a few titles from Rossellini’s early works (although, Aristarco maintained a critical stance towards Rossellini’s collaborations with Ingrid Bergman). Additionally, the list includes several collaborators of Aristarco, reflecting his close relationships with notable figures from the film industry, particularly Zavattini, Antonioni and Blasetti.

Essentially, this list, with its “pick and choose” approach, shall sufficiently substantiate the thesis that the names and titles included are representative of Aristarco’s self-presentation as a film expert. It can be argued that this performance was instrumental in conveying his canon (what is artistically valuable or legitimate in cinema) and critical discourse, which draws on the work of the hypothetical axis constituted by Francesco De Sanctis, Antonio Gramsci, Benedetto Croce, and Gyorgy Lukács, albeit with necessary precautions (Brunetta 2009: 324–348). It was an attempt to establish symbolic boundaries within an influential institution like Rai. While one might contend that these questions represent the general canon of Italian film expertise at the time and could be prepared by any other film expert, it is not particularly surprising that notable figures such as Alfred Hitchcock (whose film *Rear Window* was screened at the 1954 Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica in Venice), John Ford, Orson Welles, and many others are absent. It should also be noted that the question “American cinema has won only one major prize for best film out of all the editions of the Cannes Film Festival. What is the name of the film?” (Aristarco [1956], my translation)⁸ is incorrect and tendentious. Upon closer inspection, several American movies have been awarded over the years, including: *The Lost Weekend* by Billy Wilder in 1946, *Dumbo* by Ben Sharpsteen and Walt Disney in 1947, *The Third Man* by Carol Reed in 1949, and *Othello* by Orson Welles in 1952. Hence, Aristarco’s opinions, value attributions and critiques, predominantly expressed through the reviews he published in *Cinema Nuovo*, also emerge from this anonymous and secondary context.

4 A critical battle

In this paragraph, I will argue that such collaboration should be analyzed while considering *Cinema Nuovo*’s overall attention to the quiz show and the broader television landscape of that time. I do not intend to extensively revisit the question of what left-wing intellectuals thought about television or mass culture (Dagrada 1996, Colombo 1999, Crapis 2002). Instead, my focus is on evaluating the seemingly ambivalent status of television as both a genre and a serious subject of study, in aesthetic and social terms, as reflected in the pages of *Cinema Nuovo*.

Recent scholarship (Garofalo and Masciullo 2019) has shed light on how *Cinema Nuovo*’s discourse on *Lascia o raddoppia?* coincides with a critical battle. Since 1956, the journal, as a platform for debates, has engaged in a long-standing intellectual conflict concerning Italian television and quiz shows. This battle of ideas is structured around a central point of antagonism and often takes the form of specific discourses that invoke

nel 1934, sa dirmi il titolo? L’opera più significativa della corrente naturalistica del cinema italiano muto rimane a parere unanime della critica Sperduti nel buio realizzato nel 1914 e tratto da [un] dramma di [Roberto Bracco]. [S]a dirmi il nome del regista del film? Chi era l’attore che interpretava il famoso personaggio del cinema muto italiano Za’ la Mort e che cosa significa[va] nel gergo degli apaches Za’ la Mort?” (Aristarco [1956])

8. “Il cinema americano ha ottenuto nel corso di tutte le edizioni del Festival cinematografico di Cannes un solo grande premio per il miglior film. Come si intitola il film?” (Aristarco [1956]).

underlying apocalyptic ideologies (Gobetti 1956, 1960). As editor-in-chief of one of prominent Marxist Italian journal and the center of a community of film experts united under his leadership, Aristarco fosters discussions, written conflicts, and debates. He encourages controversies through the fierce articles written by of his columnists, such as Vittorio Spinazzola and Paolo Gobetti. The tone of *Cinema Nuovo* ranges from mildly apocalyptic to more extreme.

However, when characterizing TV criticism in the 1950's, one must be cautious not to oversimplify systematically dismiss the negative rhetoric that has long surrounded media and television consumption. The prevailing narrative often pits mass entertainment against orthodox Marxism. However, despite appearances, Aristarco's keen interest in this specific medium holds singular importance due to his unique perspective, which contrasts with the attitudes and tendencies of other left-wing figures and publications (Colombo 1998: 226–228). Aristarco criticizes Italian television as a simplistic, mass-culture industrial production, but looking favorably on its American counterpart. It is also noteworthy that Aristarco takes an active role, by and introducing the volume *Qui, Studio One* (Aristarco and Gobetti 1959), which translates and combines contributions from American-tv experts and authors such as Rod Serling, Paddy Chayefsky and others. This volume, published in 1959, includes a TV Code that specifically addresses quiz shows.

5 Conclusions. Aristarco and broadcast media

Aristarco's professional history encompasses a range of practices, each stemming from his perception of film criticism as a profession. His multifaceted interests, materialize as direct involvement and tangible contributions to various fields, extending beyond the realm of film criticism and traversing different media. This case study calls for a more specific examination of role that broadcast media played in Aristarco's professional life, suggesting the potential for discourse analysis focused on broadcast media.

A closer look at Aristarco's biography reveals that, starting from the mid-1950s, the field of broadcast media greatly his subsequent professional endeavors. From 1969 to 1977, he was involved in radio broadcast for RSI - Radiotelevisione Svizzera di Lingua Italiana. Over a span of little over a decade, from 1969 to 1982, he collaborated with Radio Koper-Capodistria, writing texts for radio broadcasts on the history of cinema. Much of his film criticism practice revolved around these daily engagements, the material preserved in the archives serves as a paratext that should be compared to his main publications.

In his intermedia orientation, characterized by broader range of occupations and practices, Aristarco contributed to the redefinition of the film critic profession in Italy and the associated contexts within which operated.

As mentioned earlier, private letters have proven to be valuable sources in shedding light on unprecedented aspects of the historicization of this prominent figure in film criticism.

The question of whether the critic had a strategy is difficult to avoid. The documents clearly serve a pragmatic function, which can be related to the common challenge of "making a living" in film criticism. However, other motivations remain unclear, and my suspicion persists. Nevertheless, I argue that this episodic collaboration of Aristarco's consultancy which, never extended further, at least as far as can be determined at present, provides an opportunity to present a counter-portrait that diverges from the usual narrative. In addition to being a film theorist, Aristarco was also a publisher, an organizer, a pioneer of visual culture, a campaigner, and a scholar. Examining Aristarco's work as a whole and across disciplines such as journalism, editorship, radio broadcasting, publishing ventures, and teaching, we can identify recurring concerns that shape a pattern of social and cultural intervention.

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