

paesaggio nel cinema, che si definisce nella doppia opposizione fra figurativo e narrativo e fra luogo (visibile) e spazio (diegetico), che rappresenta la polarità dalla quale si generano i modelli di costruzione dello spazio filmico, insieme diacronici e sincronici, storici e strutturali. Sono le tipologie – alle quali l'autore attribuisce suggestive definizioni prese in prestito dal poeta Dino Campana (“panorami scheletrici del mondo”) e da Ibsen (“il tempo dei giochi”, “il tempo dei miti”, “il tempo della riflessione”), o da lui stesso coniate (come quella di “paesaggio come apertura sui possibili”) che scandiscono il passaggio dal vedutismo dei pionieri, ai giochi visivi delle avanguardie, alla costruzione di spazi funzionali al racconto che nel cinema classico diventano spazi mitici, alla situazione nella quale il paesaggio diventa protagonista – oggetto autonomo di un'attenzione che si insinua nelle fratture sempre più ampie del racconto – e si fa termine di riferimento della proliferazione di *sguardi forti* – che sappiamo essere uno dei tratti che marcano il cinema della modernità –, fino a farsi esso stesso fonte di sguardo, nell'esperienza neorealistica e postneorealistica di Rossellini e di Antonioni. Ed è proprio quest'ultimo approdo – nel quale lo sguardo cinematografico coincide con uno dei contrassegni del senso profondo della contemporaneità – quello che permette a Bernardi di fare emergere l'ambizione metodologica, teorica e filosofica del suo approccio: il recupero di una prospettiva antropologica, assente nella cultura italiana; l'affermazione dell'estetica come “coscienza della distanza” e di una critica come “critica della cultura”, nella quale gli autori e gli stili individuali siano i “filtri” che permettono di risalire al modello di visione e di concezione che caratterizza un'epoca storica e una situazione antropologica: una critica che sappia comporre un'analisi stilistica sottratta ai suoi vezzi autoreferenziali e con un'impostazione dei *cultural studies* che tenda a una visione “stereoscopica” nella quale i nostri modelli di

ricezione si confrontino con i modelli che sono alla base della visione che ha generato i testi. Lo studio del paesaggio nel cinema italiano può essere appunto uno dei terreni nei quali può radicarsi e svilupparsi questa prospettiva culturale, assumendo come campioni in particolare Rossellini e Antonioni, al quale, per il suo carattere esemplare, viene dedicata tutta la seconda parte del libro, momento iniziale di uno studio di portata più ampia. E qui il discorso di Bernardi si dimostra capace di coniugare il recupero dei risultati più fecondi della critica antonioniana con l'acutezza e la profondità delle analisi dei testi, orientando il tutto alla verifica e alla conferma dell'ipotesi più generale e complessiva che dà origine al discorso.

Si comprende dunque, anche da questa rapida esposizione, che siamo davanti a un lavoro appassionante e profondo, capace di stimolare un dialogo e un confronto problematico che mi riprometto di sviluppare in futuro e che auspico possa incoraggiare altri interlocutori.

## SELECTED BY: THOMAS ELSAESSER

Leonie Naughton, *That Was the Wild East: Film Culture, Unification and the “New” Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000)

It has become quiet around cinema in Germany. Long gone are the days of the New German Cinema: Fassbinder has been dead these past twenty years, and Wim Wenders has turned himself into a gallery-photographer, whose shows now grace the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The bright new hope of the 1990s, Tom Tykwer (director of *Lola rennt*), whose *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* remains a bold, if flawed masterpiece in the post-Dogma European transcendental style, has followed it up with arguably one of the worst “Europuddings” of recent years. *Heaven*, his necrologue-adaptation of a Krystof Kieslowski project, made the

untimely loss of the Polish director the more keenly felt. There is a sense that whatever *cinéphile* energy still exists between Munich, Hamburg and Berlin is now most likely to be found among Germany's (second-generation) "young Turks:" Thomas Arslan, Katir Sözen and Fatih Akin.

But even this graveyard of buried reputations and dashed hopes is a busy place, compared to the silence that reigns over the cinematic landscape in what are now called "the New Federal States." The official euphemism for what used to be the "DDR," the German Democratic Republic was once one of the most thriving filmmaking countries of the Socialist block, with internationally renowned directors such as Konrad Wolf and Heiner Carow, working at the DEFA Studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg, the reluctant but not entirely unworthy heir of the once-famous Ufa Studios.

As with so many other aspects of life in the GDR, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent unification of the two Germanies also changed the craft-conscious, self-confident but also somewhat complacent world of filmmaking in the socialist part. By West-German standards, which brutally came to be applied in cultural matters just as much as they did in economic affairs, DEFA – both literally and symbolically – was declared bankrupt. The fact that well before unification, GDR audiences had already begun to abandon DEFA films in favour of such international box-office successes like *Crocodile Dundee* and *Dirty Dancing* did not help the home-grown film-culture to make its case for continued state funding, once this state had become the Federal Republic. Already since the early 1980s, homes in the GDR had also tacitly re-tuned their television sets to West German channels, and in the process, converted their own film culture into the global mix of American sit-coms and soaps, West-German comedians and chat-shows, sandwiched between the tv-reruns of Hollywood classics. Paradoxically, West German *cinéphiles* were envious of West Berliners,

who could receive GDR television: not because of the news or current affairs programmes, needless to say, but for the regular Saturday matinee and late evening re-runs of German cinema classics from the 1930s and 1940s (thus including films made under the Nazi regime), thanks to the well-stocked Staatliche Filmarchiv der DDR, another part of the Ufa legacy that the GDR found itself heir to.

This almost wholesale liquidation of a small, but substantial film culture and unique European media-ecology, together with its consequences for an entire generation of filmmakers, is the subject of a new book by Leonie Naughton, an Australian film scholar with a long-time interest in East and West-German cinema. *That Was the Wild East* is a welcome book, but one that will require patient readers. With impeccable scholarship, intrepid dedication and an Australian sympathy for the underdog, Naughton charts a story almost as uniformly down-beat and relentlessly depressing as so many of the films she discusses in such loving detail.

The book has a commendably clear structure, which reflects the overall purpose of the publication series, of which *That Was the Wild East* is only the latest of about forty titles: Social History, Popular Culture and Politics in Germany. Part One sketches the impact of unification on filmmaking in the GDR, with a special emphasis on the discourses – both East and West German, official as well as journalistic – that were deployed to justify or protest the dismantling of DEFA, before the *Treuhand*, the body entrusted with privatizing, auctioning off and disposing of the former state-own assets, finally sold the DEFA Studios to a French conglomerate. Because of the high profile of some of the participants – notably the role of Volker Schloendorff, the new Head of Studio Babelsberg – the story of this "fire sale" is relatively well-known, at least in Germany. To have it concisely re-told by Naughton is helpful, not least because she so contrasts the ambitions of certain figures in the national or European film

industry and the harsh realities of the globalized media business. If Paris or London have struggled to survive as important centres of cinema production, even with the help of television, it becomes obvious how provincial and marginal Berlin had become during the decades of the Cold War, notwithstanding the hype about the New Berlin as capital and heart of Germany.

Part Two of *That Was the Wild East* looks at the films that have been made since 1989 about unification, by East German as well as West German directors. While most of these films have had no impact whatsoever internationally, and – with one or two exceptions – encountered glacial indifference also in Germany, their value as symptoms and documents is not to be underestimated. At least this is Naughton's view, and her painstaking archival work almost convinces one that for future historians, some ethnographic treasures are indeed buried in these films, about which one (West) German critic remarked: "when you've seen one of them, you quickly get the impression you've seen them all." Naughton is determined to prove him wrong, and she is able to come up with quite a sophisticated classification scheme, which not only distinguishes between feature films and documentaries, between Wall films, Romantic Comedies, Love Stories, Splatter Films, Musicals, and Gross-Out Comedies. She also locates a whole series of recurring tropes, ranging from the blatantly didactic (sub-standard apples, divided families, orphaned or neglected children) and transparently symbolic (inheritance, shoplifting, cannibalism, kidnapping are favourite narrative motifs), to the enigmatically allegorical (an underwater diver in full diving suit wandering the streets without being noticed). As might be expected, the private motor car plays an inordinately important role in marking – as well as subverting – the differences of values, attitudes and life-styles between West and East Germans. Not for nothing is the title of the most successful films of the entire genre *Go Trabi Go*, alluding to the by now once more

folk-hero status of the East German equivalent of the Volkswagen beetle, the Trabant. A cramped, foul-smelling, two-stroke plasticated menace on wheels, this tiny box-like car was so ridiculous and ugly that it came to stand for everything West Germans despised about their brethren from the East, until the usual semi-otic reversal operated by popular culture on objects of disapproval or denigration by the dominant culture rescued even the "Trabi," and made it into an icon of rebellious obstinacy and heroic perseverance against the BMWs and Mercedes that progressively invaded East German roads.

Naughton is good at showing how predictably contradictory are some of the representations of unification and of East Germany in films made by West German directors. Thus, she notes that – contrary to the actual movement of East Germans, many of whom went west in search of better jobs and living conditions, in the films made by East German directors, the characters move further east, sometimes as far as the Ukraine or at the very least, to Poland. Also on a retreat are the protagonists of West German made films: but here the GDR becomes a projection screen for disillusioned radicals. A country which despite industrial pollution, neglect and poverty beckons with the chance for a fresh start in bucolic rural settings, the East becomes somehow the "better" Germany, after both communism and capitalism have failed: a homeland to lost souls among blossoming apple-trees. As Naughton rightly says: "the reclaiming of the east as Heimat is a western initiative [...] to which eastern filmmakers addressing unification do not subscribe" (p. 123).

The three films that are discussed in greatest details are *Go Trabi Go* (P. Timm, 1990), its sequel, *Das war der Wilde Osten (That Was the Wild East*, W. Büld, 1992) and *Wir können auch anders (No More Mr Nice Guy*, D. Buck, 1993). All three are formula films, using alternately the road movie and the Western as their generic foil to satirize both East and West Germans. Produced by such commercial

heavy-weights as Bavaria Studios (and Günther Rohrbach), written and directed by West German filmmakers, the films are broad comedies in the dumber-and-dumber mode, for whom nothing is sacred and no gag too old or hackneyed. By documenting the production history and relating it to the fast moving changes in public perception about the cost and benefits of unification (both East and West Germans became increasingly disenchanted with each other), Naughton brings out the symptomatic nature of the films' plots, props and characters. She is also right in emphasising the "generic" nature of virtually every unification film, rather than taking an "auteurist" approach. For even though some of the most commercially successful as well as the most clichéd works were made by "name" directors, such as Helma Sanders-Brahms, Margarethe von Trotta, and the two *enfants terribles* of German cinema in the 1980s, Christoph Schlingensiefel and Detlev Buck, their interest for (film) history is not *cinéphile*, but sociological. Only when she comes to discussing the films made by East German directors about the effects of unification in her concluding chapter, names such as Helke Misselwitz, Roland Gräf, Peter Welz turn up, along with former DEFA directors (and dissidents), such as Frank Beyer, Heiner Carow and Egon Günther. Their post-unification films are few, and made with minuscule budgets: these are on the whole sombre and often self-lacerating balance-sheets of the failures of the GDR: failures by its own ideological and idealist standards of having set out after 1947 to create a more humane and just society, not by the standards of West German affluence, dominated only by the economic imperative. The sense of betrayal, of self-deception is pervasive, and so is feeling of wasted lives: perhaps it is understandable that even East Germans did not want to be confronted with this kind of truth, so that some of these films attracted fewer than 2000 spectators.

Naughton's partisanship is unambiguously on the side of the people of the East. They see themselves above all as losers twice over, once

betrayed by their political elites and another time by their West German liberators, behaving as winner-takes-all predators, both politically and in personal relations. But she has a message at the end which is at once devastating and stoical, and not without its own self-deprecating irony:

*Despite their divergent portraits of the east, unification films from both the east and the west present a generally consistent portrait of German-German relations. Mostly these films suggest that those relations do not exist. No alarm is displayed about this situation, which is accepted as perfectly normal. [...] This is another irony that emerges from this cycle of 1990s films. What these films ultimately effect is a segregation of East and West Germans (pp. 242-243).*

Clearly, the real "unification films" are yet to be made, but just as clearly, Germany is not yet ready for them. Perhaps here lies the glimmer of hope, not just for the future of the Federal Republic, but also for the German cinema: when the East no longer feels the victim, and West no longer thinks it has won, then German filmmakers will have something in common – the task of discovering each others' "otherness." But now in order to respect and even to preserve that otherness: this could be the beginning of another kind of national unity, just as it could be the beginning of another kind of German cinema.

**SELECTED BY:  
ANDRE GAUDREAU  
ET JEAN-PIERRE SIROIS-TRAHAN**

Vincent Pinel, *Le Montage. L'espace et le temps du film* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/CNDP, 2001)

Cet ouvrage fait partie d'une collection (Les petits Cahiers) que viennent de lancer les