



MODULE 10:

STATE OF THE NATION MOVIES, 1966-1979

CHAPTER 8: FREEDOM AND WANT SEE

Read: Cousins, pgs. 354-379* (Stop at Want See and the Seismic Change in American Cinema)

Keywords:

“Heimat Films”

DEFA Studios/New German Cinema

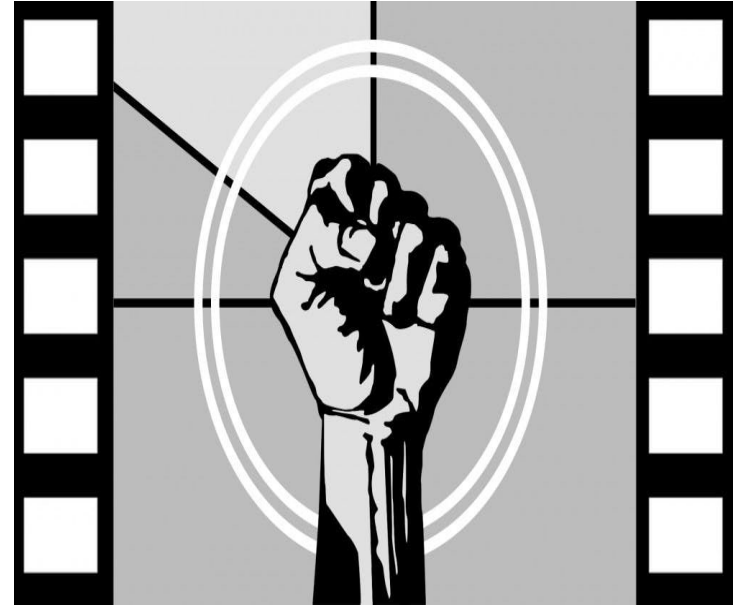
New Australian Cinema/Australian Film Development Corporation

Hacia un tercer cine “Towards a Third Cinema”

African Modernism

Directors

Wim Wenders, R.W. Fassbender, Margarethe von Trotta, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bernardo Bertolucci, Ken Russell, Derek Jarman, Nicholas Roeg, Peter Weir, Gillian Armstrong, Noriaki Tuschimoto, Ramesh Sippy, Youssef Chaine, Djibril Diioop Mambety, Ousmane Sembene, Patricio Guzmán, Yilmaz Guney



NEW GERMAN CINEMA: “THE OLD FILM IS DEAD”



The new wave of German cinema began in 1962 when 24 filmmakers signed the so-called Oberhausen Manifesto. The young filmmakers aimed to make independent films that explored contemporary German society.

For the first time since the 1920s, German filmmaking was reviving artistically. A new liberal political regime had come to power and filmmaking became its public confessional. But where America took old content and applied new form, West German directors took some of the form of the American cinema they had grown up with and applied it to new psychological, national and formal questions of daunting complexity.

A generation gap had opened up between German Baby Boomers and their parents who had either voted for Adolf Hitler or had endured him.

Mainstream cinema continued to churn out “heimat” films, homey regional stories which dodged the real issues everywhere. No national cinema was more driven than Germany’s during this period and none answered the question “Why make movies?” with more passion.

AMERICAN INFLUENCES IN NEW GERMAN CINEMA

R.W. Fassbinder: “The ideal is to make films as beautiful as America’s, but to move the content to other areas.”

Inspired by the films of Hollywood directors Douglas Sirk and Joseph L. Mankowitz. Throughout his career, Fassbinder’s pessimism and Marxist political beliefs led him to portray closed worlds from which people could not escape.

Wim Wender’s films were about men in open spaces. While the style of American films influenced Fassbinder, it was America itself and its utopianism that was Wender’s jumping off point.

Wenders has often said that the anti-Jewish and nationalistic cinema of the Nazi period destroyed German image-making. “We changed the way Germans looked at each other, their images, and their own history.”

Werner Herzog: After John Ford, Herzog is the most important landscape filmmaker to appear so far in *The Story of Film*. Herzog left behind matters of Germany’s relationship to America, and in a way the problems facing Germany itself.



THE WOMEN OF THE GERMAN NEW CINEMA



New American Cinema was mostly a boy's game, but the same cannot quite be said of the German equivalent.

Helma Sanders-Brahms: Worked as a TV presenter and assistant to Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. She is best known for *Deutschland, bleich Mutter/Germany Pale Mother* (1979). The focus of the story here was the key: not the public life of the country but its invisible years of domestic hardship.

Margarethe von Trotta: Before her life-changing discovery of cinema—especially that of nouvelle vague (new wave)—while on a trip to Paris, Margarethe von Trotta studied business for two years and worked in an office: “I came from Germany before the New Wave, so we had all these silly movies. Cinema for me was entertainment, but it was not art. When I came to Paris, I saw several films of Ingmar Bergman, and all of the sudden I understood what cinema could be. I saw the films of Alfred Hitchcock and the French Nouvelle Vague. I stood there and said, ‘that is what I’d like to do with my life.’”

ITALIAN 1970s CINEMA: IDENTITY AND SEX



Pier Paolo Pasolini: In the early 1970s, the great Italian poet, philosopher, and filmmaker brought to the screen a trio of masterpieces of medieval literature—Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, and *The Thousand and One Nights*—and in doing so created his most uninhibited and extravagant work. In this brazen and bawdy triptych, the director set out to challenge modern consumer culture and celebrate the uncorrupted human body, while commenting on contemporary sexual and religious mores and hypocrisies.

Filled with scatological humor and a rough-hewn sensuality that leave all modern standards of decency behind, these are carnal, provocative, and wildly entertaining films, all extraordinarily designed by Dante Ferretti and featuring evocative music by Ennio Morricone.

Bernardo Bertolucci: Having already made a reputation as one of the greatest Italian film directors of his generation, Bertolucci, was known in the early 1970s for his anti-fascist themes such as *The Conformist* (1970), became one of the most influential movies in American 1970s cinema. Two years later he achieved worldwide notoriety with *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), mainly as a result of its explicit sex scenes. In his depiction of the painful, loveless, joyless relationship between a middle-aged American man (Marlon Brando) and a young Frenchwoman (Maria Schneider), Bertolucci set out to show, he said, that “every sexual relationship is condemned.”

Jean Luc Godard saw his films as a “betrayal of radicalism.”

DEREK JARMAN'S *SABASTIANE*: A MILESTONE IN GAY CINEMA



In 1976, Derek Jarman, a 29-year-old experimental painter, co-directed *Sabastiane*, about a Roman soldier who becomes a Catholic martyr. Made with almost no money and written and performed in Latin, the film's frank homoeroticism made it a milestone in the history of gay cinema.

Jarman and his collaborators later devised a way of filming on amateur film stock, slowing it down, transferring it to video, combining it with other footage to produce trance-like feature films.

His themes were Englishness, Shakespeare, homosexuality, the barbarity of contemporary life – and eventually in the revolutionary *Blue* (1993), one of the most abstract films ever made, the director's own blindness caused from an AIDS-related illness.

THE AUSTRALIAN NEW WAVE

British director Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* (1971) helped to kickstart the New Australian Cinema. Like Pasolini and Herzog, Roeg believed in a paradise lost where people were not ruled by their conscious thoughts and moral assumptions. Unlike them, he seemed to suggest that this paradise ultimately resided not in pre-industrial lands, but deep inside the structure of the human mind.

The Australian Film Development Corporation was set up, providing in Germany, public subsidies for new filmmakers. Soon crude comedies gave way to turn-of-the century settings, thematic ambiguities, literary adaptations and head-on confrontations of racism and sexism.



MINAMATA: THE VICTIMS AND THEIR WORLD - BIRTH OF THE INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY

Years since its first appearance, Noriaki Tsuchimoto's seminal *Minamata: The Victims and Their World* has lost no measure of its power to shock, enrage, and inspire. A landmark of socially-engaged documentary, *Minamata* continues to sound a global alarm about the human and environmental consequences of industrial pollution, searingly evoked through Tsuchimoto's patient, compassionate lens.

In the small town of Minamata in Kyushu, far from the metropolitan center, the fertilizer company Chisso built a factory to take advantage of cheap labor and commenced dumping mercury-filled wastewater into the nearby sea.

Soon residents began exhibiting symptoms of a mysterious illness, a happening that would eventually develop into the worst case of environmental pollution in postwar Japan. Noriaki Tsuchimoto visits the patients and their families who sued Chisso and listens to their voices. His camera gently lifts the veil and reveals their reality.

Minamata: The Victims and Their World is impressive in how it stands on the side of the patients, not only providing a collage of individual portraits, but also an understanding of their everyday lives.



“TOWARDS A THIRD CINEMA”

“Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World” by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino argued that throughout most of the history of the medium, film had been a commodity. Filmmakers in the developing world should reject this history and start again, treating cinema as a weapon to fight oppression, a revolutionary tool. According to the manifesto, there are three types of films:

1. Commercial Entertainment – Made mostly in Hollywood,
2. Modernist Art Movies – Made by auteur directors
3. Third Cinema – Opposed to Commercial and Modernist Art Cinema, is about post-colonial identity and made in the non-Western world after 1969.

Explaining the neo-colonialist dilemma and the need for “a cinema of subversion” or “a revolutionary cinema”, “Toward a Third Cinema” begins by explaining the dilemma that the anti-imperialist film-maker is left with a paradoxical need to survive within as well as subvert “the System”.

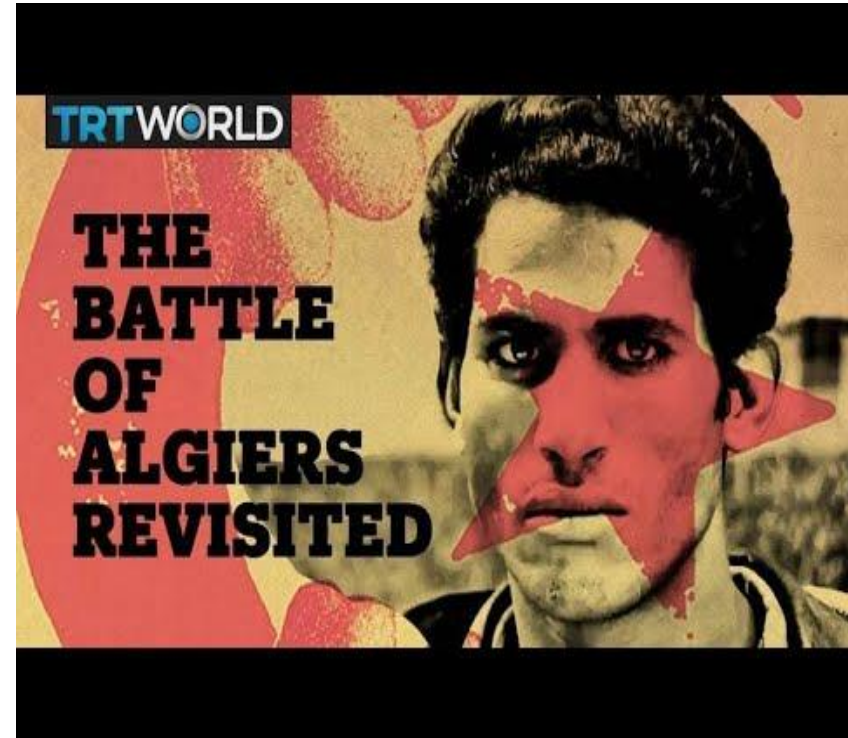


THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS: THE AMBIGUOUS LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

Despite being directed by an Italian filmmaker, Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) is considered a pillar of Africa's Third Cinema movement. The film suggests that French counterinsurgency tactics such as torture may have won the "Battle of Algiers" but eventually led to the failure of the French to maintain their colony in Algeria.

In this cinematic examination of the Algerian struggle for independence from French colonialism during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Pontecorvo exposes the ambiguous legacy of imperialism in Western efforts to combat indigenous resistance and terrorism.

Stanley Kubrick praised the film by stating, "All films are, in a sense, false documentaries. One tries to approach reality as much as possible, only it's not reality. There are people who do very clever things, which have completely fascinated and fooled me. For example, *The Battle of Algiers*. It's very impressive." According to Anthony Frewin, Kubrick's personal assistant, "When I started work for Stanley in September 1965, he told me that I couldn't really understand what cinema was capable of without seeing *The Battle of Algiers*. He was still enthusing about it prior to his death."



TOUKI BOUKI: “TEARS UP THE SCREEN WITH FANTASIES OF AFRICAN MODERNITY”

The most popular images of Africa in cinema until the late 1960s were those of Tarzan movies, where Black Africans are usually mysterious figures in the background, or John Huston’s *The African Queen* (1951), told from the point of view of white people and missionaries.

The film’s title means “journey of the hyenas” in Wolof. With a stunning mix of the surreal and the naturalistic, Djibril Diop Mambéty paints a fractured portrait of the disenchantment of post-independence Senegal in the early 1970s.

In this picaresque fantasy-drama, the disaffected young lovers Anta and Mory, fed up with Dakar, Senegal, long to escape to the glamour and comforts they imagine France has to offer, but their plan is confounded by obstacles both practical and mystical. Alternately manic and meditative, *Touki bouki* has an avant-garde sensibility characterized by vivid imagery, bleak humor, unconventional editing, and jagged soundscapes, and it demonstrates Mambéty’s commitment to telling African stories in new ways.



HAILE GERIMA: “ANOTHER STEP FORWARD FOR THIRD CINEMA”

Haile Gerima is a filmmaker whose impact on the history of cinema is twofold. An independent and visionary director, he has moved between documentary and fiction during his fifty-plus years of expressing the Pan-African experience and collective memory through film.

He has also been a professor of film at Howard University in Washington, D.C. for decades, where he has mentored several generations of filmmakers such as cinematographers Malik Sayeed and Bradford Young as well as cinematographer and video artist Arthur Jafa, among others. This series explores the range and depth of Gerima's oeuvre while spotlighting films by his comrades and mentees.

Born in Gondar, Ethiopia, to a family of teachers and storytellers, Gerima trained as an actor in Addis Ababa before continuing his studies in the United States.

At UCLA in the late 1960s, Gerima turned his attention to directing and created a range of groundbreaking films. While a member of UCLA's L.A. Rebellion group of Black filmmakers (his peers include Charles Burnett and Julie Dash), Gerima boldly expressed social and political realities facing Black communities while challenging traditional cinematic norms. Gerima remains focused on celebrating the resolve of Black people all over the world to fight against systems which oppress and exploit them, just as he remains committed to revolutionizing cinema itself.



“THE UGLY OF KING” OF NEW ARAB CINEMA



In 1972 a New Arab Cinema manifesto was published at the Damascus film festival in Syria. It called for a new political commitment in Middle Eastern film and led to several landmark films.

The most notorious Middle Eastern filmmaker of the period was Yilmaz Guney, best known for *Ulmüt* (1970) and *Yol* (1982). By the 1970s he had become a star in Turkey, a scruffy, gruff hero figure, sometimes called the “Ugly King.”

His stardom prefigured Amitabh Bachchan’s in India in that he was less an object of desire and romantic fantasy as are celebrities in the Western star system, than an on-screen spokesman for ordinary people. The authorities disliked him not only for his leftism, but because of this closeness to the people.

A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN CHILEAN CINEMA



The Battle of Chile (1975-79): A documentary film directed by the Chilean Patricio Guzmán, in three parts: *The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie* (*La insurrección de la burguesía* 1975) *The Coup d'état* (*El golpe de estado*; 1976) *Popular Power* (*El poder popular*; 1979) It is a chronicle of the political tension in Chile in 1973 and of the counter revolution against the government of Salvador Allende.

Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* (1973): Produced by *The Beatles* manager Allen Klein (and partially funded by John Lennon and Yoko Ono), *The Holy Mountain* followed Jodorowsky's much-lauded and controversial film, *El Tópo*. These early works are characterised by surreal, often disturbing sequences, Christian symbolism, spiritual quests, and psychedelic imagery

FILMS FEATURED IN *THE STORY OF FILM*, EPISODE 10

- *Fox and His Friends* (1975) (a.k.a. Faustrecht der Freiheit) dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) (introduced in Episode 6) dir. Douglas Sirk
- *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) (a.k.a. Angst essen Seele auf) dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972) (a.k.a. Die Bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant) dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- *All About Eve* (1950) dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz
- *Alice in the Cities* (1974) (a.k.a. Alice in den Städten) dir. Wim Wenders
- *An Affair to Remember* (1957) dir. Leo McCarey
- *Gods of the Plague* (1970) (a.k.a. Götter der Pest) dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
- *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages* (1978) (a.k.a. Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages) dir. Margarethe von Trotta
- *Burden of Dreams* (1982) dir. Les Blank
- *Arabian Nights* (1974) (a.k.a. Il fiore delle mille e una notte) dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini
- *The Spider's Stratagem* (1970) (a.k.a. Strategia del ragno) dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
- *The Conformist* (1970) (a.k.a. Il conformista) dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
- *Women in Love* (1969) dir. Ken Russell
- *Performance* (1970) dir. Donald Cammell & Nicolas Roeg
- *Mean Streets* (1973) (introduced in Episode 9) dir. Martin Scorsese
- *Persona* (1966) (introduced in Episode 7) dir. [Ingmar Bergman](#)
- *Walkabout* (1971) dir. Nicolas Roeg
- *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) dir. Peter Weir
- *My Brilliant Career* (1979) dir. Gillian Armstrong
- *Minamata: The Victims and Their World* (1971) dir. Noriaki Tsuchimoto
- *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (1987) dir. Kazuo Hara
- *Black Girl* (1966) (a.k.a. La noire de...) (introduced in Episode 8) dir. Ousmane Sembène
- *Tarzan's Secret Treasure* (1941) dir. Richard Thorpe
- *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1971) dir. Assia Djebar
- *Xala* (1975) dir. Ousmane Sembène
- *Sinemaabi: A Dialogue with Djibril Diop Mambéty* (1997) dir. Beti Ellerson Poulenc
- *Badou Boy* (1970) dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty
- *Hyènes* (1992) (a.k.a. Hyenas/Ramatou) dir. Djibril Diop Mambéty
- *Kaddu Beykat* (1975) (a.k.a. Lettre paysanne) dir. Safi Faye
- *Harvest: 3,000 Years* (1976) (a.k.a. Mirt sost shi amit) dir. Haile Gerima
- *Umut* (1970) (a.k.a. Hope) dir. Yilmaz Güney & Serif Gören
- *Yol* (1982) dir. Yilmaz Güney & Serif Gören
- *The Battle of Chile* (1975/1977/1979) (a.k.a. La batalla de Chile) dir. Patricio Guzmán
- *The Holy Mountain* (1973) (a.k.a. La montaña sagrada) dir. Alejandro Jodorowsky