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Randall Halle. *German Film After Germany. Toward a Transnational Aesthetic.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the entire landscape of film production in Germany has changed rapidly. The distribution and circulation of film material, actors, directors, ideas, and above all money accelerated throughout Europe, which in the last decade of the twentieth-century became an economically and culturally important actor on the global stage. By now it has become clear that the economic changes throughout this crucial time span affected the content and aesthetic of the films. The films portray no longer merely nationally important topics, but rather transcend the national cinema paradigm via transforming content and aesthetic in a way that attracts larger audiences on a European and ultimately global scale.

German Film After Germany: Toward a Transnational Aesthetic, a monograph consisting of six chapters and an introduction, takes to task the changing landscape of film production in Europe from the 1990s until the present, and its influence on the films' aesthetic at large. It should be of major interest for those studying transnationalism, globalization, and the accompanying transformations on the economic market through the lens of Film Studies. Throughout the analysis, German and Film Studies scholar, Randall Halle investigates the role Germany and German film took during the establishment of the European Union, which forced the nation-state dependent film business to break with this outmoded model in order to compete on a global market. Halle demands that "the humanities must begin to explore how the cultural artifacts of this new mode of production signify" (4). Even as the chapters trace the decline of the national and the emergence of the transnational aesthetic he does not see a total elimination of the national cinema, i.e. local and concrete giving way to the global and abstract. Rather, he holds that the local still exists, "even if it is transformed. It does cease to speak only to the specific and begins to address common denominators, to recognize shared interests in broader scale" (15). For investigating how political, economical, and cultural transformations took place at the same time, affecting each other, Halle regards film "to be the most significant marker of simultaneous economic and cultural transformations, a marker of globalization and transnationalism" (6).

The first chapter, "Apprehending Transnationalism", is dedicated to a positioning of transnationalism, by clearly rejecting theories like cultural imperialism, Americanization, and statism as approaches too simplistic to deal with global changes properly. Rather, Halle suggests "a process of Hegelian *Aufhebung* where the older more local and concrete experiential forms are conserved and lifted onto the new level" (20). This Hegelian model of sublation functions as the framework for the entire book, trying to demystify the dangers of globalization and deconstruct the false concept of Hollywood as a major threat for the smaller national cinemas, by clarifying that although "Hollywood [...] comes close to functioning as

an empty signifier, [...] [it rather remains] a place of film production transformed by globalization as well" (27).

The second chapter, "German Film, *Aufgehoben*," introduces "The European Audiovisual Market and Its Ensembles of Production" (35). Halle uses the term 'ensemble' to deconstruct the film market, which is often perceived as a self-governing object with obscure machinations. He rather suggests a division into interdependent and interconnected actors, namely "the free market, the closed trade zone, and the inter-national federation" (36). The free market ensemble draws not only several economic forces together, but also relies on English as the primary medium of communication, which facilitates film production and ultimately paves a way for the audience to imagine a post-national community via creating a foil for a general sense of belonging. The closed trade zone ensemble emphasizes European attitudes and topics at the expense of national affiliation, whereas the international federation ensemble precisely eliminates European themes to the benefit of national designation. This dialectical process fosters a fruitful interdependence of each market ensemble and creates a solid balance between European and national aspects leading hopefully to one imagining and imagined community.

The third chapter, "The Transnational Aesthetic," focuses on several dimensions of film production, beginning with Volker Schlöndorff as a director who envisioned future film production to be a European and not a national project, but nonetheless failed because of deploying too strict and rigid criteria. Halle analyses Schlöndorff's method and crystallizes the major aspects that should have been taken into account, particularly the significance of visual language, and the emergence of interest groups as opposed to national audiences. He argues that Schlöndorff underestimated the inclinations of a transnational audience, who apparently did not embrace art film as the genre to imagine a transnational community in a way Schlöndorff had envisioned.

Chapter four, "The Historical Genre and the Transnational Aesthetic", provides the reader with several in-depth-analyses of films that deal with the major crises and wars of the 20th century in order to imagine a common past as the proper foundation to imagine a common future. Although it used to be precisely the historical genre that was deployed to imagine a national community, it turns out to be quite useful for transcending the national mode of production and reception. Halle reasons that the historical genre throughout its development from national to transnational film changed its aesthetic purpose from preserving towards producing a common culture.

The fifth chapter, "Inhabitant, Exhabitant, Cohabitant," combines social, economic, and medial developments, to question the possibilities migrant film-makers in Germany have used to imagine themselves as inhabitants of the national community. Halle ends with Fatih Akin, the first filmmaker who successfully imagines a space for a transnational inhabitant, by depicting characters who

are multilingual and multicultural, and transcending what matters to people as members of one ethnic milieu towards what matters to people as simply being human.

In his last chapter, “Transfrontier Broadcasting, Transnational Civil Society,” Halle leaves the area of actual filmmaking and heads into the broadcasting landscape of Germany, promoting 3sat and Arte as model broadcasting stations for transcending the nation-state model of television towards transregionalism in case of 3sat and towards pan-Europeanism in case of Arte.

The monograph contributes to a film-oriented analysis of Germany’s economic, cultural, and aesthetic position in an era of globalization and transnationalism, two phenomena that affect each other but still have to remain separate in order to approach them properly. Moreover, it makes an important interdisciplinary contribution to the humanities, which tend to ignore economic and financial factors, a stance that is no longer possible in a globalized world. By providing the reader with the Hegelian concept of sublation to approach transnationalized film it shows readers how to embrace transnationalism as a helpful approach to understand the present period of transition and experimental transformation. Halle ends by pushing German Studies in particular and the humanities in general forward to face new phenomena, like transnationalism, and not to retreat into the shelter of tradition.

Yet I would like to raise two issues whose exploration would have made this seminal analysis more dynamic. First, the last chapter, with its evaluation and analysis of the present broadcasting landscape, remains somewhat disconnected from the preceding chapters, which clearly dealt with the content and the production of transnational films. It would have been interesting to know whether and to what extent films specifically shot for television broadcasting change their aesthetic, too. Second, his claim for a globalized view of the world is not quite sustainable in the end, since he remains somewhat Europe-centered in his investigation, which tempts one to suspect him as seeing the U.S. as Europe’s Other, still in need for an inter-continental separation.

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