

## Preface

We have come a long way since the call to recognize the Western as a «serious object of study» (Frayling 2006: 25). Today, the Western is the most exhaustively annotated of all genres. There are approaches by seemingly every method in the humanities. Early poetological essays,<sup>1</sup> auteurist analyses,<sup>2</sup> structuralist attempts,<sup>3</sup> psychoanalytical and feminist readings,<sup>4</sup> broader cultural studies investigations,<sup>5</sup> and to latest philosophical preoccupations<sup>6</sup> have commented on the Western profoundly. In recent times, there is also an increased interest in intercultural relations between the Western as «the American cinema par excellence» (Rieuepeyrout 1954) and other genres constituting national identities.<sup>7</sup>

Yet international research has mostly concentrated on the American Western. Apart from several publications about Italian and German Western, very few studies exist on intercultural transformations of the Western in other national cinemas. Considering the global influence of the Western – namely in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australia – it is surprising how little attention the respective national variants of the American genre model have achieved. Most of these variants of the Western are still disregarded by academic research, especially in English language. The few existing publications mostly deal with specificities of the respective national genre, and focus less on the actual transformations of the American genre model. Broader comparative studies of intercultural transformations of the Western are a desideratum in genre research. The present book, based on a conference held at the Gutenberg University in Mainz in November 2009, extends the perspective to include Westerns mainly from Europe – England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and USSR, but also from Australia, Brazil and Nigeria.

Edward Buscombe draws attention to the complex relationship between the Western and history, and questions if the genre actually deals with American his-

1 Rieuepeyrout 1953; Warshow 1954; Bazin 1955; Agel 1961; Bellour 1966; French 1973.

2 Wood 1968; Budd 1976; Gallagher 1986; Pye 1996; Engel 2003; Cowie 2004; Loew 2005; Ritzer 2009; Steinwender 2009.

3 Kitses 1969; Wollen 1969; Cawelti 1975; Wright 1975; Fridlund 2006.

4 Willemen 1981; Lehman 1981; Cook 1998; Esders-Angermund 1997; Lucas 1998; Holmlund 2002.

5 Mitchell 1996; Coyne 1998; Neale 1998; Loy 2001; Walker 2001; Prats 2002; Corkin 2004; Weidinger 2006.

6 Böhringer 1998; McMahon / Csaki 2010.

7 Routt 2001; Van der Heide 2002; Eleftheriotis 2004. For early approaches in the same vein see Kaminsky 1972; Anderson 1973; Croizier 1983; Moeran 1985.

tory in a straightforward sense. Especially films made outside of the United States are not confined by American history, as is evident in Italian and German Westerns. In American B-Westerns, the frontier thesis has no place, and most of these films are hardly concerned with national history. On the other hand, the Western has been responsive to changes in political discourse, thus often reflecting contemporary history. Buscombe outlines what might be an alternative history of the Western which pays attention to subtexts that can be in contradiction with the overt politics of a film, such as gay sub-texts, racial politics, or Hispanic influences.

Like Buscombe, Ivo Ritzer challenges notions of ‹purity› in national cinema. He undertakes a new consideration of the *western all'italiana*, arguing that it was never exclusively an Italian product but always figured as a project of transnational cooperations. Drawing on post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Stuart Hall or Arjun Appadurai, the essay focuses on connections between Italian Westerns and Asian cinema, tracking the cultural flows of creative staff, generic traits, cinematic devices, financescapes, and narrative constructions. Ritzer not only shows that films such as *OGGI A ME ... DOMANI A TE! / TODAY WE KILL TOMORROW WE DIE!* (1968), *IL MIO NOME È SHANGAI JOE / THE FIGHTING FISTS OF SHANGAI JOE* (1973), or *EL KÁRATE, EL COLT Y EL IMPOSTOR / THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* (1974), are deeply open to ambivalence; he also makes a case for a new mode of film analysis, advocating a combination of cultural theory and mise-en-scène criticism and concentrating on cinematic representation layering symbolic meaning as well as disclosing ideological operations.

Harald Steinwender discusses the history of the Westerns (co-)produced in Germany from the silent era until the 1960s in context with other West European cinemas. Beginning with the silent period, there was a relatively steady production of Western movies, with its peak in the 1960s, the decade most thoroughly considered in the article. From the beginning, the American genre was transformed into films aiming at European audiences. In the 1960s, the diversification of German (co-)produced Western is most evident, ranging from naïve Karl May adaptations and hybrid Westerns by Wolf C. Hartwig to cynical *westerns all'italiana*.

Marcus Stiglegger discusses British Westerns, showing their differences in comparison to the US Western. Instead of focusing on mythology, the British Western features psychologically defined protagonists and frequently addresses moral questions. Furthermore, films such as *THE HUNTING PARTY* (1970) or *CHATO'S LAND* (1971) are characterized by nihilistic tendencies and highly graphic depictions of violence.

Gregory Mohr emphasizes the importance of the French Camargue Western produced by Pathé, as one of the earliest accounts of the Wild West in film history. Representing a quite large range of typical Western narratives, the Camargue Western was strongly connected with the actor Joë Hamman, who had travelled

to the United States. His knowledge of the Native American culture gave the films a sense of authenticity. Also the *mise-en-scène* of action sequences later became stereotypes of the genre, when the Western reached a phase of stabilization.

Natasza Korczarowska considers Polish variations of the Western as torn between dominant ideology and counterculture elements in the former Eastern bloc. Becoming the most popular form of entertainment in the 1960s, Polish Westerns were meant to reinforce the official party line. Yet films such as *RANCZO TEXAS / THE TEXAS RANCH* (1959), *PRAWO I PIĘŚĆ / THE LAW AND THE FIST* (1964), *WLIZE ECHA / THE ECHOES OF THE WOLVES* (1968), or *WSYSCY I NIKT / EVERYBODY AND NOBODY* (1978), managed to subvert their supposed ideological mandate. Set in the Bieszczady Mountains or the so-called Regained Territories after World War II, the films introduce parody and moral ambivalence, stimulating the repressed imagination of socialist Poland.

Sergey Lavrentiev gives a historical account of Western adaptations in the former USSR. He points out that the US Western was considered as a reactionary genre, yet proved to be very popular with Russian audiences as well as authorities. So the party leaders decided to produce ideologically ‹correct› socialist Westerns, often modelled after *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN* (1960), and staged in the Civil War between 1918 and 1921, focusing on the heroic adventures of the Bolshevik Red Army. Lavrentiev shows that the Soviet Western can be regarded as a mirror of Russian society in the 20th century.

Thomas Klein shows that landscape as one of the most important iconographic elements in the Western genre is a basis for various national cinemas to invent their own Western narratives and iconographies. Accordingly, the Brazilian *Cangaceiro* genre or Australian variations of the Western use native landscapes intensively, to build a national identity by telling stories situated in the respective country's past. The European Western mainly used European landscapes to tell Western stories situated in the US American past. In a brief case study, the article analyses the use of landscape in the DEFA-Indianerfilm which is strongly connected with the representation of the Indians as the natural and productive inhabitants of the continent colonized by a capitalist society.

Reflecting appropriate genre theories of the Western, Stefan Zimmermann discusses the importance of the Australian Ned Kelly myth as a Western narrative. In the light of Roland Barthes' notion of myth, Ned Kelly is analysed as an Australian variation of an outlaw, deeply rooted in Australian historical past, a time in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which was shaped by the appearance of bushrangers. Ned Kelly was the last and most prominent bushranger who reached the status of a social bandit. Beginning with the first ever made feature film of the world, *THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG* (1906) and ending with Gregor Jordan's *NED KELLY* (2003) featuring Heath Ledger, Zimmermann retraces the development of Ned Kelly as a national icon and a national commodity.

Cassis Kilian discusses Western transformations in two African films, Jean Rouch's *MOI, UN NOIR* (Côte d'Ivoire / F 1958) and Moustapha Alassane's *LE RETOUR D'UN AVENTURIER* (Niger/F 1965/66). Both films, the first released in the colonial era and the second after independence, show how young Africans used the Western to express themselves in their specific social situation. In doing so, especially Alassane's film reaches a rich performativity in Judith Butler's sense of the word. The Western is used as a playing field to put the difference of reality and fiction into question.

Peter W. Schulze gives a comprehensive survey of «transculturations» of the Western in Brazilian cinema, focussing on the national-specific genre of the *nordestern* or *filme de cangaceiro*. Against the backdrop of the historical figure of the *cangaceiro* and its representation in different cultural productions, the history of the genre is outlined. Special attention is drawn to generic matrices and to manifold filmic transformations – not only of the US-American Western and the *western all'italiana*, but also of certain Mexican films and of other genres such as the Brazilian *pornochanchada* or the Hong Kong martial-arts film. In its dialectics of transnational adaptation and national affirmation, the *nordestern* reflects different expressions of Brazilian cultural identity, with filmic representations ranging from «glocal» hybrid mainstreaming to the assertion of a radical particularity.

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## Where the Wild West Can Be Staged

### Western Landscapes in International Cinema

Landscape as nature on the one hand and as a space made by humans (architecture) on the other hand plays an important role in film. Film genres especially are often determined by a specific place where the events of the story unfold. Often the landscape serves as the environment for generic formulas. The sea is significant for the pirate or sea adventure as the mountains are for the German Heimatfilm. The city is significant for the gangster film, as the desert and the plains are for the western. The pirate adventure seldom does without a sea combat, a gangster film needs a car chase through a city and the western often showcases a pursuit with horses across the plains.

In his book *Landscape and Film*, Martin Lefebvre points out why representations of landscape are worth examining: «Landscape is a multifaceted and pluridisciplinary spatial object whose meanings and representations extend from real-life environments to art» (2006: xiii). Calling into mind the cultural geographer's perspective, Lefebvre indicates that landscape is not the same as nature. Human beings create landscape; nature is what we usually call untouched. Apart from the assumption that there may be no more untouched nature on Earth (not even in national parks), in film nature automatically becomes a cultural form because of the camera's perspective: «The form of a landscape is [...] first of all the form of a view, of a particular gaze that requires a frame. With that frame nature turns into culture, land into landscape» (2006: xv). As we know from Disney's True Life Adventures, the spectrum can range from a zoological «documentary» view of what really exists to a manipulation of nature and landscape.<sup>1</sup> In most cases, we know through the media how important landscapes are for cultures, as we have already seen images of them. This knowledge can influence our perception of the actual landscape. Simon Schama notes in *Landscape and Memory*: «Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock» (1996: 61). Lefebvre points out that these «Imaginative projection[s]» were especially noticeable in the Western: «Nowhere is this more obvious perhaps than in those landscapes that have become such an integral part of the iconography of

1 THE LIVING DESERT is a great example of how flora and fauna can be manipulated using cinematic devices. See Klein 2009.

Western films. [...] The cinema has [thus] dramatically transformed the experience that we have of that land [...]» (2006: xvi).

In this article, a first approach is provided for the analysis of landscape in both the US-Western and the Western in general. To refer to Edward Buscombes article in this book (pp. 13–24), the Western is not only a genre that was important for the American film and especially Hollywood, but also for other national cinemas. To use Rick Altman's terminology, the Western is an international genre because of the widespread use of semantic elements. Using an approach from cultural geography, I will try to show that landscape is used differently according to the cultural functionalization in their respective countries. Finally, I will concentrate on the Indianerfilm in former East Germany as a short case study.

## The significance of landscape in the Western

John Ford introduced the most famous Western landscape to the genre in his first sound Western *STAGECOACH* in 1939. According to Richard Slotkin, *STAGECOACH* is part of a Renaissance of the Western that took place between 1939 and 1941. Hollywood tried to find new ways of telling American myths using the historical (progressive) epic, the outlaw story and the classical (neo-classical) genre form (represented by *STAGECOACH*) (Slotkin 1998: 286). The landscape in particular that John Ford used helped shape the notion of the Wild West: «Monument Valley has become so well established as a <typical> landscape emblematic of <the West>, that it is difficult for modern audiences to recognize that in this film (and in his subsequent Westerns), Ford is inventing the Valley as a cinematic (and American) icon» (Slotkin 1998: 305). Monument Valley, a region at the geographical centre of the Colorado Plateau, bordering Utah from Arizona, became the trademark of the Western because of the uniqueness of its landscape.

In their article «John Ford and Monument Valley», Jean-Louis Leutrat and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues agree with this opinion that «It is Ford who has progressively constructed this space as a topos, in the sense of a stock of stereotypes» (1998: 165). But this space does not consist of one landscape. The two authors explain how different parts of Monument Valley are used in seven of Ford's sound Westerns. They conclude that Monument Valley consists of different shapes to form a kind of master landscape that together gives an idea and notion of what this unique landscape might be able to signify. Different parts of the region fulfil functions for certain narrative patterns. And Ford was not aware of the narrative potential of all parts of Monument Valley from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Altogether these

2 Deborah A. Carmichael argues that in the first appearance of Monument Valley in a Ford Western, in *STAGECOACH*, the uniqueness and beauty of the landscape did not endure the myth of a land



landscape variations create a «theatre of memory [...] a stage with its entrances, a circumscribed space with an inside and an outside, an assembly of monuments intended to facilitate remembrance of something, providing the order in which they appear is adhered to» (1998: 167).

It is interesting that Leutrat and Liandrat-Guigues use the term «theatre» to refer to the construction of this landscape – how the natural Monument Valley becomes cultural memory. «Theatre» seems to be better able than «film» to function as a metaphor and express the notion of a cultural performance, in which landscape is transformed into a spectacular artefact. But the use of theatre is also a bit misleading because film landscapes are always representations. This does not apply to open-air theatres, as «real» landscapes are already there. We cannot be certain how true the on-screen representations and the impact of the landscape are. The latter's impact on the Western genre and how we perceive it is of great importance, even beyond the dominating Monument Valley.

Following the Western discourse, it's incontrovertible that the landscape is one of the most important elements of the genre. It plays a major part in what Rick Altman calls the syntax of the genre (Altman 2006). Landscape manifests the often-mentioned opposition between wilderness and civilization or nature and culture, if we follow Jim Kitses' antinomies (1969: 11). For John Cawelti, «The Western is essentially defined by setting [,] [...] not so much to a particular geographic setting like the Rocky Mountains or the Great Plains but to a symbolic setting representing the boundary between order and chaos, between tradition and newness» (1999: 9).

If we follow Cawelti's notion of setting, it might be possible to see different landscapes as semantic elements that serve as symbolic settings for the Western. In a first step, we can identify the following «natural» types of landscapes used in Westerns: deserts, plains, mesas, mountains, hills, forests, rivers. It's useful to keep an eye on those places where people live as well, for example towns, camps (both Indians' and whites' i.e. gold digger camps), ranches, farms, and Indian villages. Furthermore, landscapes have to relate to semantic elements such as characters (including horses). There are obvious links between certain character types and the landscape. In this way, Indians and outlaws are linked to the wilderness. When accentuated in relation to a significant iconography of the Wild West and in combination with other important narrative devices, these different facets of landscape qualify for the myth of the frontier and therefore an audio-visual representation of a national identity.

that can be «civilised»: «The arid climate of the valley holds little promise for the agrarian success necessary to maintain the American myth of the garden [...]». Carmichael 2006: 225.

## Landscape in genres of other national cinemas related to the Western

Landscape is also relevant for other national cinemas and the relationship between landscape, film and national identity. This is especially the case in Australian cinema. In his article «Outback. Blicke in die Australische Filmlandschaft», Stefan Zimmermann notes that «landscape as marker [...] is almost unique feature for Australian cinema» and that the terrific emptiness and the expanse of the deserts and half deserts are important for the significance of the Australian outback (2009: 144–5). This reminds us of Western landscapes. If we consider that Australia had a frontier and a settler history comparable to the Wild West in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we could assume that the landscape might have had and still has a similar meaning: «Because it has been presented as so tantalizing and so essentially unknowable-yet-lovable, the land has become the structural centre of the nation's myths of belonging. The image of the paradoxical region can be used to «explain» so many of the inconsistencies of a colonial society» (Gibson 1994: 49).

According to Ross Gibson, films like *THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER* (1982) use the landscape to express the opposition of nature and culture and therefore create a national myth (Gibson 1994: 50). George Miller's film became known as a Kangaroo-Western because of this use of landscape in combination with other semantic elements (fig. 1). In the context of the Ned Kelly myth, landscape is used to create a national identity as well. This is especially true for Gregor Jordan's film version from 2003, where the national icon is unmistakably shown as a social bandit.<sup>3</sup> From another perspective, the Australian landscape generally does not really serve the opposition between wilderness and civilization in the sense that this wilderness can

3 See Stefan Zimmermann's article in this book.



1 *THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER* (1982)

be controlled and colonized. And it does not serve the opposition between desert and garden. The desert can't be made habitable and this impact is significant for the myth of the Australian outback as well. Australian Bushranger films of the 1970s like *MAD DOG MORGAN* (1976) and new Australian films in the last decade that were discussed in the context of the Western like *THE TRACKER* (2002) and *THE PROPOSITION* (2005) make more use of this extremely alien notion of the Australian bush.

Cinematic representations of typical landscapes to create a national myth can also be found in Latin American national cinemas. This applies to the Pampas that is significant for the Argentinian gaucho myth. This myth was conveyed mainly by José Hernández' epic poem «Martín Fierro» and several film adaptations. The Pampas is also part of the Brazilian landscape. But there, the Sertão region, not the Pampas, became famous in the creation of a national myth. This region in northeast Brazil is famous for its semi-arid vegetation and for the cangaceiros or bandits, the most notorious of whom is Lampião. He acted as a kind of social bandit in the 1920s and 30s. Lima Barreto's *O CANGACEIRO* introduced the cangaceiro and the Sertão landscapes to world cinema in 1953. Barreto's film won the International Prize in the adventure film category at the Festival de Cannes of that year. This marked the beginning of the cangaceiro genre which is inspired by the Western, but without losing its cultural integrity. In Carlos Coimbras *A MORTE COMANDA O CANGAÇO*, released in 1960, the importance of the landscape for this genre and the production of a national identity are demonstrated from the beginning. In the first sequence, the Sertão is represented in brief images to give impressions of the variety of landscapes. The multitudinousness of this region is marked, while the voice over introduces the myth of cangaceiros to the culture.

Mexico, where the production of Westerns and Western related genre films (for example the *comedia ranchera*) between the 1940s and the 1960s was second in size only to Hollywood, is a special case. Many American Westerns were shot in Mexico, especially in Durango state, among them *WHITE FEATHER* (USA 1955, Robert D. Webb's Western started film production in the region), *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN* (USA 1960) and *CHISUM* (USA 1970). Many films with John Wayne from the 1960s onward were shot in Durango. Wayne even owned a farm named La Joya Ranch there. Fewer Mexican Westerns originated in this region. The most famous is Alejandro Jodorowski's art-Western *EL TOPO* (1970). Raúl de Anda directed *ESTAMPIDA* (1958), a «Revolution Adventure-Western» (Wilt 2004: 251) there. Previous Westerns or Rancheras in the Golden Age of Mexican cinema were shot in other regions. De Anda's 1940s Charro Negro films,<sup>4</sup> for example, originated in the fed-

4 *EL CHARRO NEGRO* (1940), *LA VUELTA DEL CHARRO NEGRO* (1941), *LA VENGANZA DEL CHARRO NEGRO* (1942).

eral district, in the Ajusco region and on the outskirts of Mexico City. It's worth examining why the Mexican film industry did not discover Durango as a film landscape before the 1950s.

## Landscape in the European Western

Mostly Italo-Westerns are set in Mexico, New Mexico, or other regions near the southwest border with the United States. But, as we know, shooting never took place there. The films were shot in Europe, e.g., in Spain. On location shooting took place in regions near Madrid and in the Almería province. As the Italo-Westerns were situated in southern US border states – Arizona, New Mexico and Texas – and in Mexico, Hans-Christoph Blumenberg suggested that «southern» would be an appropriate term for the Italian variation of the Western. Landscapes in other US states (Wyoming, Montana), which were the settings for many American Westerns could not be expressed with Spanish landscapes. But another reason for the focus on the southwest is the significance of the border (Blumenberg 1998: 8). Not so much the *frontier* is significant in many Italo-Westerns, but the US-Mexican *border* which is rife with conflict and fear. Therefore, the desert seems to be the dominant landscape. It can symbolize the end of moral attitudes and the deconstruction of the classical Hollywood Western because the notion of the garden has vanished. But it's important to mention that the *Western all'italiano* features a greater variety of landscapes than we assume. Sergio Corbuccis *IL GRANDE SILENCIO / THE GREAT SILENCE* (1968) for example, was shot in the Pyrenees Mountains and Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy and is dominated by cold, rocky and forest landscapes.

The Karl May movies, which predated and initiated the Italo-Western, were shot almost entirely in Croatia, for example the Paklenica National Park, and often stressed the scenic beauty of mountainous landscapes which are reminiscent of the German «Heimatfilm» in the 1950s. Other European Westerns were shot in the land where they were produced, like the Romanian production *PRUNCUL, PETROLUL ȘI ARDELENI* / *THE OIL, THE BABY AND THE TRANSYLVANIANS* (RO 1981), which is part of a trilogy. The DEFA-Indianerfilm is the most interesting in terms of landscape because these films were shot at many different locations, in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Mongolia and the Soviet Union. I will refer to this later. First, I will introduce an approach to the analysis of landscape in film, which comes from cultural geography.

Before that, however, an interesting and dubious example of a completely unconventional use of landscape in a Western should not go unmentioned: In *NE TOUCHE PAS À LA FEMME BLANCHE / DON'T TOUCH THE WHITE WOMAN* (I 1974) by Marco Ferreri, a desert is situated in Paris and depicted as a gigantic building pit (fig. 2). It's the last hideaway for the Indians, where General Custer's last stand takes place.



2 TOUCHE PAS À LA FEMME BLANCHE (1974)

While watching the film, the viewer comes to accept this place in the middle of Paris, where the traditional market «Les Halles» used to be, as synonymous with the Wild West.

## Cinematic landscapes

In his article «Cinematic Landscapes» which deals specifically with the use of landscape in Hollywood movies, Chris Lukinbeal differentiates between landscape as space and landscape as place: «As space, landscape provides an area in which the drama of the film can unfold. As such, landscape is constantly turned into a space of action» [...] «Landscape as place is closely associated with the geographic expression «sense of place» and refers to the location where the narrative is supposedly set (whether real or imagined). Place provides narrative realism by grounding a film to a particular location's regional sense of place and history» (2005: 6).<sup>5</sup>

When used as space, the landscape has primarily a dramaturgical function. Applied to the Western, a plain is an ideal setting for a pursuit because the camera can follow the action for a long time. The street in a Western town is well suited as a setting for the final shoot-out. The landscape as space is subordinated to the narrative patterns. Therefore, landscape as space does not have the potential to play an important role in the creation of genre syntax. But this is the case when landscape

5 Many thanks to Stefan Zimmermann who gave me the hint at Lukinbeal.

is used as place. When the Western creates a myth by locating certain events in a particular time and place, then landscape might be used as place. The landscape does not merely serve as background scenery. It's the narrative that is «situated within place» (Lukinbeal 2005: 7). The panned or tracked establishing shot that gives a view of the whole area where the action unfolds is typical for this use of the landscape (Lukinbeal 2005: 8).

John Ford increasingly used Monument Valley as a place. But it is also used as a spectacle, «something beautiful and visually pleasant» (Lukinbeal 2005: 11). Lukinbeal refers to a text by J. B. Jackson who compared landscape as constructed by man with the theatre. The landscape in the Western, especially in John Ford's sound Western mentioned above, often satisfies a «voyeuristic appeal» (Lukinbeal 2005: 11). That may apply mainly to European audiences who are not fully acquainted with the geographical locations. Therefore, the significance of the landscape as place may not be fully apparent.

In the Karl May films, landscape is used mainly as space and as a beautiful spectacle. It's the consequence of a landscape construction that is «less the authentic representation of a real America than a condensed image of a European idea of the Wild West» (Bergfelder 2006: 187). In the Italo-Western, landscape obviously does not have to express beauty. Nor is it used as a place, if we keep in mind that the typical shots in this Western form are not long ones, but the close-up and the extreme close-up (also called the Italian shot). But this dominance does not mean that we only have close-ups. Naturally, we can find long shots for example in Sergio Leone's films. And these shots do give the landscape an allure of place. But this place is not a land where you should settle down. The land, especially the images of arid regions, seems hostile and reflects conflicts beyond the notion of morality between the opponents.

## Landscape in the DEFA-Indianerfilm

Between 1965 and 1983 in East Germany, the work groups «Roter Kreis» and «Johannisthal» produced the so-called «Indianerfilme» including twelve films beginning with *DIE SÖHNE DER GROSSEN BÄRIN / THE SONS OF GREAT MOTHER BEAR* (1966) and ending with *THE SCOUT* (1983). The star of these films was Gojko Mitic, a Yugoslavian actor who had had small roles in earlier Karl May films. But his function in reaching the ideological objective of the DEFA-Indianerfilme was different. Constantly choosing the Indians' point of view (and not that of an Indian chief *and* a white pro Indian superhero like Old Shatterhand), these films were to «articulate an outspoken critique of the colonialism and racism that fuelled the westward expansion of the United States» (Gemünden 1998: 399).

This critique becomes visible through the use of landscapes. Landscapes in Georgia, Yugoslavia, Rumania (Carpathian Mountains, Danube), and Mongolia

(Gobi Desert) are used to signify specific regions of the Wild West. But the use of south eastern European and Asian landscapes results in a particular image of the Wild West. This prompts the following questions: How do these landscapes compare to the American originals? What are the genre patterns in terms of landscape? Is landscape used as a space or as place as well?

In fact there are plain landscapes that serve typical genre patterns, like the pursuit of the stagecoach, which is used fairly often. We could say that the European and Asian landscapes were useful as a space for the action. But the DEFA films aimed for authenticity as well, so they were set in a particular time and place: *THE SONS OF GREAT MOTHER BEAR* deals with the Oglala tribe and is situated in Nebraska in 1871; *SPUR DES FALKEN / TRAIL OF THE FALCON* is situated in the Black Hills (Lakota tribe) in 1875; *TECUMSEH* (1972) is situated in Pennsylvania (Shawnee tribe) at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and could therefore be subsumed under the category of the Pennsylvania Western) to name but a few.<sup>6</sup> In Gottfried Kolditz' *APACHEN* (1973) which is situated in 1840 near the American border, not all natural elements were available. The lack of typical plants on location in the province Samarqand meant that artificial Saguaro cactuses had to be used. Trying to be authentic and represent the landscape geographically correctly, the *mise-en-scène* produced the opposite of the intended emphasis. The images of a landscape with only one typical plant cannot really produce authenticity. Instead, the space becomes an artificial place – it seems as if the shooting had taken place in a studio.

Accentuated in these films is also the beauty of the land, especially when it is linked to the Indian way of life. In this respect, the Western discourse of the land as garden comes to mind. The beginning of Kolditz' *ULZANA* (1974), the sequel to *APACHEN*, is a good example. Ulzana and his Mexican wife are swimming in a lake. The images show perfect harmony between the two lovers and nature. Their nakedness supports the impression of a garden of Eden (fig. 3). This harmony is visually interrupted by using montage. Two villains on a hilltop gaze at this harmonious scene – their intrusive glaring foreshadows the violence and destruction that follow later on.

Soon a military troop arrives who had been invited to visit the Apache camp. Ulzana tells the general how they manage to grow corn, pumpkins and melons. The Apaches have built an irrigation system to plant grapes and to sustain themselves. Both leaders hope this system will lead to grapes of peace instead of wrath (fig. 4). This image of the productive Indian can be placed in the discourse Carl Wilmsen mentions: «A major notion is underlying the fiction that American settlers filled up an empty continent: that Native Americans and Mexican Americans were not using the land productively» (2006: 189). In the DEFA-production *ULZANA*, the Indians

6 Authenticity was also produced by the reference to historical chiefs of the Indians, like Tecumseh, Ulzana and Osceola.



3 The lake at the beginning of ULZANA (1974)



4 The irrigation system in ULZANA (1974)

are characterized as people who are quite capable to use the land productively.<sup>7</sup> This functionality of Indian life related to landscape could be compared to *DEVIL'S DOORWAY* (1954). In this US-American Western directed by Anthony Mann, Robert Taylor plays a Shoshone Indian who uses the land productively as well. But what he does with his tribe is cattle ranching and thus could be interpreted more as affirming the white's treatment of the land: «They have adapted to and are living the American/agrarian dream» (Slotkin 1998: 369).

The Indians in *ULZANA* are able to sustain themselves and make a living because the general can buy fruit from them. But the villains, who are bent on getting their hands on the money, destroy the irrigation system. This means that the Indians are characterized as those who use the land productively whereas the whites, who are always called the Americans, want to destroy the land. The message is: When the Indians die, the land will die too. This includes the towns and the space of Mexican inhabitants as well. When *Ulzana* is wounded by a bullet, his men and his wife bring him to a Mexican doctor. First the doctor refuses to help the Indian. But he eventually helps when he is told that the town will die if *Ulzana* dies.

Now the bad white people's intown aim of making the Indians dependent on them has been achieved. With their help insufficient, their real aim is to force the Indians into a situation in which they cannot survive. The natives of the land are forced to leave and move to San Carlos where they will not be able to live from the

7 Many Indian tribes in the southwest practiced agriculture and irrigation. However, the Apache were foragers. See Lindig/Münzel 1978: 184–5, 190.





5 The wasteland San Carlos  
in *ULZANA* (1974)

land. In 1871, the real San Carlos reservation in southeastern Arizona was established as a reservation for the Chiricahua Apache.<sup>8</sup> The landscape we see in the film is a desert, where vultures are the only animals shown (fig. 5).

## Conclusion

In the national cinemas of Brazil, Mexico and Australia, landscape plays an important role in the creation of national myths. Genres grew out of these national cinemas which are linked to the Western. In these genres (the *filme de cangaceiro* in Brazil, the *Charro-film* in Mexico, the *bushranger-film* in Australia), landscape signifies specific places in a historical past to establish a national myth. The European Western used mainly European sceneries in terms of landscape as space and to represent the American Wild West. European Westerns almost always transform the American Western by audio-visually transforming European landscapes to make them look like their image of the frontier in the United States. Similar to that representation, European actors were transformed to embody Native Americans: most notably the French actor Pierre Brice and the Serbian actor Gojko Mitic. Only a few European films are linked to the Western with shooting location and setting being the same. The Hungarian production *TALPUK ALATT FÜTYÜL A SZÉL / THE WIND BLOWS UNDER YOUR FEET* (1976) is very interesting in this respect because it is set and shot in the Puszta. Of course this landscape reminds viewers of the Great Plains or the Pampas, but for European audiences, the Puszta is inseparably linked with Hungary.

The production of the DEFA-Indianerfilm can be put in the context of East Germany's interest in the Wild West beginning in the 1950s. Friedrich von Borries and Jens-Uwe Fischer point out that a vast Indian and Cowboy community existed from

8 <http://www.chiricahua-apache.com/supporting-materials/selected-treaties-and-other-historical-documents/creating-the-chiricahua-apache-reservation-1871/> According to this source, the film does not say exactly when it was set, but it appears to be in 1870/71. All other sources, for example the German [filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de), say the film takes place in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

the foundation of the GDR until the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This community mirrored the «cultural and political particularities of the SED-state» (2008: 9). On the one hand, Indian life served the socialist corporate establishment. On the other hand it allowed a respite from the omnipresent ideological indoctrination, if only for a little while. Gerd Gemünden mentions that the success of the DEFA-Indianerfilme «lies not so much in the successful appropriation of proven formulas but rather in the way in which the films tap into broadly held notions of national identity, firmly appropriating the <other>, i.e. the Northern American Indians, as an <us>» (1998: 402). This <us> is already expressed in the landscapes, as they are mostly part of countries of the eastern bloc. Although the European Western is not a homogeneous form, it is possible to note that there is a widespread but nevertheless European perspective on a colonial past in which European identity played a much greater role than most examples in American Westerns suggest (Michael Cimino's HEAVEN'S GATE from 1980 might be an exception). The analysis of landscape as a place is one way of distinguishing and perhaps classifying these European images of the American frontier.

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