

“Roberto Nanni. The Violence of Love”

by

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What is experimental cinema? It's difficult to give a definitive definition of a subject so inherently elusive. Deleuze attempts to synthesize the concept into a single sentence: *“The construction of a gaseous state of perception”*.

When one sees Roberto Nanni's films collected together, created over many years and in part re-edited as if they were open works, the words of the French scholar seem to take on “substance”. After all, what is more airy and volatile than film, destined to decompose and pulverize before our eyes? Here, perhaps the difference between experimental cinema and narrative cinema lies entirely in this awareness.

That is, those who make experimental films work with the perspective of loss and transformation, handing over their works to an uncertain future.

So much so that one might wonder if it makes sense to restore this type of cinema or if it's better to let it decay, to drift away.

Nam June Paik in the 1960s, before turning to electronics, when he was part of Fluxus, created “Zen for Film”, consisting of only white frames.

The subject of that film was precisely its consumption, filling with “scratches” and streaks. Signs of time. Structural cinema is gaseous, granular, pulsating; it can destroy form, deny it or transcend it. But it does not despise it, it prefers to penetrate it, to reach the heart of reality, until it sees it bleed. Ultimately, it's a manifestation of love.

In Italy, perhaps there is no tradition of structural cinema, except for a few examples. And how could such a practice belong to us, so rigorously mathematical.

We are a people who do not like rules, only exceptions.

Yet, when watching Roberto Nanni's cinema, one poses the question: are we facing a form of structuralism? A “warm” structuralism, to be understood, whose guardians are Belson and Brakhage. The poetry of the cosmos and that of the body.

In *“Sweet Wandering in Sacred Wild Places”* slowing down and refilming the bodies in combat of Cassius Clay and his challenger, expanding infinitely those moments of rapid

violence, naturally means wanting to penetrate the pulsating body of the film, creating an indissoluble bond between the represented subject and the device.

And doesn't the title, so evocative, refer to an Arcadia of our vision?

Experimental cinema - as theorized by Bunuel first with the opening scene of "*Un Chien Andalou*" - has taught us a new way of seeing. In Nanni's films, we find this primal and painful gaze. The fleeting gaze on the world, spied from a window, "*Through a Dirty Glass*". The intermittent and oblique gaze on a landscape seen from the window of a train. Certainly, there is a temporal, perceptual, ontological, conceptual abyss that separates the grain of Super 8 from that of electronic.

But Nanni's attitude, like that of Gehr or Gianikian and Ricci-Lucchi in transitioning from one medium to another, remains the same.

The need to transfigure reality to seek its true essence. The breath of the world.

And then, of course, the violence.

All of Roberto's imagery - upon reflection - revolves around violence, intertwined with love. What else is "*Love Conquers All. Conversation with Derek Jarman*" if not a violent act of love? Cinema as death at work, the body of the film decomposing harmoniously along with the body of the director, accompanying him to the final stage of life.

Cinema, love, death.

And then there's the sound. Nanni's musical and underground culture is encapsulated in his relationship with Steven Brown.

The poetry of John Keats becomes a sonic obsession, a phoneme replicated that marks the metamorphoses of visual, liquid, incandescent, gaseous matter.

The creations of the American musician converge into the pulsating weaves of Nanni's cinema, just as the projected images of the filmmaker become expanded elegies during the band's concerts, in the purest tradition of Vanderbeek's movie drome.

Roberto Nanni's cinema is musical regardless, but it's clear that it can vibrate and resonate to the rhythm of Brown's horns.

It's the moment of rebirth. The silhouette of the athlete in the sunset light, doubled thanks to a crafty effect that we won't reveal, seems to return to the world, purifying itself both from the sacred and ancestral violence of nature and from that of the new rituals of modern civilization.

Super 8 is ready to document all of this, with a filmic grace and the sensitivity of one who knows well that cinema is a terribly mortal art.

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