Volání Antarktidy / Voyage au Pôle Sud

**The few thousand kilometers that separate Patagonia from the South Pole are a fascinating and hypnotic journey for explorers. Some even speak of an addiction, 'the Antarctic bite'. *La Marche de l’empereur*(2005) director Luc Jacquet has been experiencing it for 30 years. His new film is a visually striking adventure, offering us images beyond words, an ultimate tribute to a vanishing continent.**

Director’s note

*A conversation between image and sound,*Antarctica Calling*is a story that liberates itself from the constraints of time and geographic or scientific pretensions, to give way to the poetry of the moment. A journey in black and white, with a form that invites us to leave reality behind.*

A discourse on the fragility of humankind and civilization, especially when it is forced into both geographical and mental prisons.

After the exploits of *Matter out of Place, a*documentary by Austrian director Nikolaus Geyrhalter that won the Pardo Verde 2022, with *Voyage au pôle Sud*by Luc Jacquet the Locarno Film Festival returns to host a film that analyzes the unfortunately unstable, unbalanced relationship between man and the environment. With his latest work however, the director of *March of the Penguins* totally changes register, and with wonderful black and white images focuses on this relationship with a perspective that we could define "existentialist". A relationship, that between man and the environment, that cinema has explored over the years through titles of great cinematographic depth, starting from *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert J. Flaherty, which represents one of the founders of the genre. Whether they are the polar ice or still unexplored places on our planet, the settings in which the human being has not yet managed to impose his "civil domination" have attracted over the years many great filmmakers, willing to stage this confrontation by exploring the physical and mental limits not only of the characters but also their own. Pioneer of this type of cinema at the limits of human and artistic experience was undoubtedly Werner Herzog, who, with masterpieces such as *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972) or *Fitzcarraldo (1982*), canonized a type of artistic experience that imposes an almost ideological duel between director and environment, with the film itself metaphorically becoming the weapon of the former, at least until it slips out of his hand to become an instrument of revenge for the other. The domination of the so-called "filmmaker" over nature understood as a theater of reality in which to impose one's own vision was then taken to extreme consequences by Francis Ford Coppola: the filmmaker, fresh from the Oscar for directing *The Godfather – Part II*(1974), made his own – read also ignored – Herzog's lesson and forced the limits of human endurance during the making of *Apocalypse Now*, soon rewarded by the awareness of having made one of the most important films in the history of American and international cinema.

Another fundamental element in the comparison between man and nature used by (especially) American cinema to represent the blackest side of humankind is undoubtedly the white of the snow. A symbol of innocence and purity, it has instead become a disturbing metaphor for the alienation of the individual. Whether imposed or intended. Think of the *Jeremiah Johnson*(1972) by Sydney Pollack, a revisionist western in which the protagonist, played by Robert Redford, withdrew from the cruel game of society because he was disappointed by its rules and its players. If we think that the western was the founding genre of the epic of American cinema, the ideological discourse of this cult-movie becomes even more important. More recently, the Coen brothers have used the expanses of ice and snow surrounding *Fargo* (1996) to represent the human disconnection of characters as absurd as they are violent. As the last bastion of a world that is now struggling to find the support of logic and morality resists only a magnificent Frances McDormand in the role of the policeman protagonist. Coming even closer to the present day, Taylor Sheridan used the snowy reserves of Native Americans for his powerful directorial debut *Wind River*(2017), taking *Fargo*'s existentialist discourse even further but without the relief valve of the stylized irony of the Minneapolis brothers. Result? A discourse in its own radical way on the fragility of humankind and on his idea of civilization, especially when this itself is forced into both geographical and mental prisons.

– Adriano Ercolani

Zdroj: Locarno Film Festival