

“Postcard Kitsch”: Review of *Grün ist die Heide* (November 19, 1951)

Abstract

Critical reactions to *Heimatfilme* were often varied, as exemplified in this review in the West German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: it praises the script for its handling of themes with speed and enthusiasm, and says that for a few moments, the film does justice to the beauty and melancholy of the heathlands, but says that the film descends quickly into “postcard kitsch” and argues that ultimately, the film is annoying and designed for mass appeal. Modern reexamination of the genre has generally fallen into two camps: a critical camp that levels similar critiques of escapism, denial, and kitsch at the genre, and a camp that argues that the many films in the genre attempted to negotiate a changing landscape torn between modernity and tradition. The review mentions that some of the film takes place against the backdrop of the Sudetes Mountains, highlighting an important theme in *Heimatfilme*: mountain landscapes were central to the genre. Mountains presented audiences with an illustration of unspoiled, intact *Heimat* that represented traditional order and a fantastical refuge from reality, but also hearkened back to the *Bergfilme* of the 1920s, wherein mountains became synonymous with nature.

Source

The Heath with a Movie Organ: The Film *The Heath is Green*

For a few moments in this film, you might think it does justice to the beauty and melancholy of the heathlands. There are occasional images that, even in color, give you a sense of its darksome allure, its expanse, its solitude. But then the postcard kitsch starts, the movie organ begins to wail, and that is that for the pleasant vision. In the opening credits, the names cleverly appear as if whittled in birchwood; and after all, what would the heath be without Hermann Löns! He is deployed zealously to the strumming of a guitar—it’s impossible to get *The Heath is Green* and *Rosemarie*, for whom my heart cried for seven years, out of one’s head. There are folk fairs with traditional costumes, and even displaced persons play a role—allowed to sing a song from the Sudetes Mountains. The script handles everything with speed and enthusiasm—the displaced landowner’s yearning for his property, the passion for hunting that turns him into a poacher, and, along the way, the entire knotty problem of refugees, dealt with summarily. That the whole thing is dished up with “heartache” and singsong (most delightful are the three vagabonds who also feature) is what makes it so annoying—but as experience tells us, probably only to a few. The masses will, as usual, be moved to see their favorites again—Willy Fritsch and Rudolf Prack, Sonja Ziemann, Maria Holst, Otto Gebühr, Hans Richter, Ernst Waldow and whatever the rest of them are called. (Director: Hans Deppe.) What else could you want? It’s all so lovely!

Source of original German text: “Heide mit Kino-Organ: Der Film ‘Grün ist die Heide,’” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 19, 1951, p. 4.

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