



**CINEMA**  
**REBORN**  
**2023**

**26 April – 2 May 2023**

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Front cover photo: *Bad Blood/Mauvais Sang*, courtesy Playtime Group  
Back cover photo: *The Last Emperor*, courtesy Umbrella Entertainment  
This page: *Black Girl/La Noire de...*, courtesy Janus Films

# CINEMA REBORN

## A message from the Organising Committee

In our relatively brief history – this is the fifth Cinema Reborn – we have been pleased to discover every passing year brings an even bigger selection of restored titles to consider.

It's not just the number that impresses, it's also the variety. Films the Organising Committee have never heard of; some we thought we might never see again; and some that demand re-viewing and new appreciations.

The Weimar-era comedy *I By Day, You By Night* (1932) has taken 87 years to reappear and *The Long Farewell* (1971), from the much-neglected Ukrainian director Kira Muratova – who made 23 features during her career – arrives in a 4K restoration.

One film crosses the three-and-a-half-hour mark – the gritty and provocative *The Mother and the Whore* (1973), often cited as the film that ended the French New Wave; and there's two-hours-and-forty-five minutes of *The Last Emperor* (1987), one of the most lavish and ravishing historical epics ever made.

There are restorations of old favourites, including Murnau's silent era *Sunrise* (1927); Charles Laughton's hilarious British butler Marmaduke Ruggles in *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1935); Vittorio De Sica's breakthrough neo-realist *Shoeshine* (1946) and two French classics *La Piscine* (1969) and Leos Carax's *Mauvais Sang* (1986).

Independent films come with two feminist works, *Variety* (1983) from Bette Gordon, exploring a woman's challenge to the male gaze, and *Blind Spot* (1981), following a young female historian in Lyon as she retraces the life of woman's rights activist Flora Tristan (1803–1844). *Black Girl* (1966) follows the life of a Senegalese woman working for a French colonial couple and is directed by the eminent African novelist and director Ousmane Sembène.

The much-neglected Orson Welles version of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1961) will be screened in a new 4K restoration as will the much-loved film noir *Detour* (1945), with its lacerating femme fatale played by Ann Savage.

A very special collaboration between Bruce Beresford and Cinema Reborn, with the help of several USA film companies, has unearthed Beresford's preferred version of his highly successful American debut *Tender Mercies* (1981), winner of Best Actor (Robert Duvall) and Best Screenplay (Horton Foote) at the Academy Awards and nominated for Best Picture and Best Director.

## Bad Blood/Mauvais Sang

### Leos Carax

'The spectator's identification cannot be more profound than with the character of the orphan, the child alone in the dark'. Leos Carax is someone who has not only embraced the dream of cinephilia, but also lived out its fullest consequences, come what may. In love with films from an early age, he became not only a teenage 'cinémathèque rat' but, briefly, also a precocious contributor to *Cahiers du cinéma*. His ode to the cinephile as orphan (in a memorable review of Sylvester Stallone's *Paradise Alley* [1978]) is the key to his self-reinvention: born Alex Dupont (his mother Joan is a film journalist), he created a new name which is an anagram of Alex Oscar, i.e., winner of an Academy Award!

After several shorts, Carax burst forth with his black-and-white debut feature *Boy Meets Girl* in 1984. It announces the unusual amalgam of elements and influences that have defined his style to this day: an adoration of silent (and especially expressionist) cinema; a taste for the magic of Jean Cocteau; a will to revive the Nouvelle Vague (Godard in particular); and an intimate, sometimes cryptic autobiographical level that owes much to his friend and mentor, Philippe Garrel. True to the 1980s, Carax also reached for a New Romanticism that mixed pop culture formats and genres with cutting-edge technology – he has often spoken of his fascination with the birth of the modern 'electric world'. In this and in the subsequent, already much more ambitious *Mauvais sang* (1986), Carax revealed himself (as all the

making-of documentaries show) to be a meticulous craftsman in the tradition of Josef von Sternberg – even when his films look spontaneous and delirious, they are carefully planned and executed by himself and a recurring team that includes cinematographers Jean-Yves Escoffier (died 2003) or Caroline Champetier and editor Nelly Quettier, not to mention the on-screen *alter ego* whose acting stardom he helped propel: Denis Lavant.

After such a strong beginning, the 1990s and 2000s were not easy decades for Carax. *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (known in English as *Lovers on the Bridge*, 1991) is among the masterpieces of the '90s, but its reception was dogged by industry gossip surrounding a disaster-prone production. *Pola X* (1999), his most hermetic work (adapted from Herman Melville), affords a coded glimpse into threads of the director's private life: having already been the lover of several of his 'leading ladies' (including Juliette Binoche), he now entered into a close relationship with charismatic Lithuanian filmmaker Sharunas Bartas and his wife, Katerina Golubeva (who committed suicide in 2011). Carax's daughter with Golubeva, Nastya, today appears in her father's films.

Another thirteen years would pass – in which he made only a handful of shorts, including surreal music videos for Carla Bruni (wife of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy) – before Carax returned to the limelight with *Holy Motors* (2012), an inspired, endlessly inventive mosaic that carries traces



of several previous, unmade projects. Cinema reborn, indeed! It took another nine years (including the start of a global pandemic) for Carax's musical collaboration with Sparks, *Annette* (2021), to reach screens – a lyrical, tormented tale that once again offers a disguised, dreamlike version of incidents and currents from his life.

#### Notes on Leos Carax © Adrian Martin

##### The Film

In what serves as the near future of its 1986 release date, Leos Carax's second film, *Mauvais Sang*, the title of which comes from Arthur Rimbaud's 1873 extended prose poem 'Une Saison en Enfer' ('A Season in Hell', which translates literally as 'Bad Blood' but was also called 'The Night is Young' in some English language markets) concerns the adventures of the young Alex

(Denis Lavant). A mysterious epidemic looms that exclusively threatens young people who have impersonal sex and he becomes ensnared not only with gangster Marc (the great Michel Piccoli) but the older man's mistress Anna and Alex's own teenaged girlfriend Lise (Juliette Binoche and Julie Delpy, respectively, both breathtakingly luminous).

Yet for the receptive viewer *Mauvais Sang* is a visionary yet somehow classic French caper film – a genre inspired by Hollywood studio films noir but adapted brilliantly to Paris and its surrounds by a legion of domestic filmmakers – that masquerades, barely, as an art-house movie in the romantic tradition of the avant-garde master artist Jean Cocteau (*La Belle et la Bête*) and the gloriously unhinged do-or-die spirit of Jean-Luc Godard (*Breathless* is the obvious inspiration here).

Note there's a disarmingly off-handed meticulousness to the film that belies its inspiration from the French New Wave. That attention to detail is a career-spanning trait for which Carax has become known, and is evidenced here by his sure hand at blocking and close-ups, as well as the commanding yet markedly intuitive cinematography of the late Jean-Yves Escoffier. Perhaps the best, and certainly the most emotional, examples of this collaboration (Escoffier also shot both Carax's debut film *Boy Meets Girl* and the 1991 *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*) are the set-pieces for which *Mauvais Sang* is best known: the terrifying yet somehow exhilarating skydiving sequence and Lavant's lacerating but joyous blocks-long dance to David Bowie's 'Modern Love' (Carax also uses the music of Benjamin Britten and Sergei Prokofiev to make his points).

In his introduction to the sweepingly epic live version of the Velvet Underground chestnut 'Sweet Jane' in front of a packed house on a rainy night in May 1978 at Manhattan's legendary and now-shuttered Bottom Line nightclub in New York City, the eternal maverick Lou Reed announced 'I'm gonna quote a line from Yeats, I think it is... "The best lack all conviction and the worst are filled with a passionate intensity." Now you figure out where I am.'

A random observation in this context to be sure, but the juxtaposition fits snugly with the legacy of *Mauvais Sang*, which displays Carax at the height of his passion and his powers.

'You many change your mind,' someone says early in the film. 'It's easy at your age.' As single-minded a sophomore effort as one could wish for given his then-tender years, Carax's tribute to what came before leaves no doubt where he falls on Yeats' scale. *Mauvais Sang* is nothing if not the poster child for passionate intensity; in a perfect world of inspiring and exhilarating cinema, Carax is holed up somewhere preparing a new film.

Please don't make us wait too long.

#### Film Notes by Eddie Cockrell

##### The Restoration

4k Restoration by Théo Films.

Director: LÉOS CARAX; Production Companies: Soprofilms, FR3 Films, Unité 3, CNC, Sofima, Les Films Plain-Chant; Producer: Alain DAHAN; Script: LÉOS CARAX; Director of Photography: Jean-Yves ESCOFFIER; Editor: Nelly QUETTIER; Production Design: Michel VANDESTIEN, Thomas PECKRE, Jacques DUBUS; Costumes: Robert NARDONE, Dominique GREGOGNA, Martine METERT; Sound: Harrik MAURY, Joël RIAN, Claude HIVERNON, Henri MORELLE, Julien CLOQUET, Jacques LÉVY, Gérard ROUSSEAU, Hélène MULLER, Jérôme LÉVY; Choreography: Christine BURGOS // Cast: Dennis LAVANT (Alex); Juliette BINOCHÉ (Anna); Michel PICCOLI (Marc); Hans MEYER (Hans); Julie DELPY (Lise); LÉOS CARAX (The Voyeur, uncredited)

France | 1986 | 116 mins. | 4K2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.66:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | French with Eng. subtitles | U/C15+

## Black Girl/La Noire de... + The Wagoner/ Borom Sarret

### Ousmane Sembène

The great Senegalese writer and director Ousmane Sembène (1923–2007) is the most important and discussed of all African filmmakers, commonly credited with being the first director from the continent to make both a feature, *La Noire de.../Black Girl* (1966), and perhaps even any film, the 19-minute *Borom Sarret* (1963). Initially coming to prominence within Francophone culture as a novelist in 1960 with the celebrated *Les bouts de bois de Dieu/ God's Bits of Wood*, an anti-colonial story based on a 1947 Senegal railway strike in which he had participated, Sembène was well aware that by writing in French and unable to use his home country's local Wolof (a non-tonal language without standardised or indigenous written forms), he was speaking only to Francophone European and bourgeois colonial African audiences – a reality that did not sit well with the author's communist politics. This motivated an extended trip to Moscow in 1962–3 to learn filmmaking at the Gorky Film Studio under Mark Donskoy, so that his characters and work could communicate to local audiences via the spoken word. The result was a stunningly original and influential mode of filmmaking spanning nine features plus shorts combining self-conscious realist, expressionist, and modernist tendencies, powered by a Marxist vision and generative anger at colonial and postcolonial realities.

*La Noire de...* is one of the founding gems of a genuine world cinema's initial post-colonial chapter, a series of films by directors from recently independent former colonies (or working from Europe as exiles) and other typically poor non-Western countries that essay the ongoing effects of such history. If European cinema of the early-mid 1960s is justly celebrated for its modernist aesthetics and formal consolidation, throughout the second half of the decade Sembène and these other non-Western directors from the 'second' (communist bloc) or 'third' worlds offered fresh formal-stylistic approaches and entirely new perspectives often marked by radically internationalist visions and Marxist critique. The result was not only a substantive deepening of cinema's already glorious 1960s story, but a first rush of what film scholars now call 'political modernism' that both predates more famous (to Western centric eyes and minds) leftist European films of the 1968–'75 period while also forcing into being the very concept, reality, and unfinished challenge of 'world cinema'. No-one is more central to both this history and, even more obviously, filmmaking on his home continent than Ousmane Sembène. While much has been written on his life and work over a long period of time, especially in France – considering the frequent Euro-centric nature of film commentary in the West – Sembène's achievements and contribution to cinema history are only just starting to be reckoned with beyond the filmmaker's long-dedicated following.



### The Film

Commentators have long cited Sembène's filmmaking as a cinematic version of the *griot* (a kind of traditional West African bard or troubadour). In this understanding, a precise historical reality is rendered on screen – providing a realist materiality – accompanied by inherently 'reflexive' commentary that analyses any such reality via a loose, self-conscious narration via a voice-over by one of the characters at the centre or edge of the story, or more subtly Sembène's own authorial voice, avoiding the well-known pitfalls of 'objectivity'. Closely connected to this idea is the role and importance of linguistic specificity, diversity, and enunciation. Following *La Noire de...*, Sembène would insist – in keeping with his founding motivation to become a filmmaker – on using appropriate language, so that his stories and political essaying could be narrated in a proper (local) tongue. That his debut feature does not follow this principle is important to note. Co-production

realities were likely such that *La Noire de...* could only be made if spoken in French. Nevertheless, the apparent compromising of such a key principle for his first film can appear to undermine its purpose. Viewers may indeed be easily confused when the protagonist, Diouana (Mbissine Thérèse Diop), is described by her new French employers during a lunch with friends as not speaking French when we have heard her do exactly this in her extensive 'interior' voice-over narration both in France and during flashbacks to her life in Senegal, not to mention that she appears to understand their instructions.

The on-paper flaw of its French soundtrack ultimately gives *La Noire de...* a generative, reflexive touch, a kind of 'scar' marking the material and thereby also ideological reality of an African director making a film part-set in Africa. Offering in the process a basic point of political economy and how the market operates by way of a gravitational pull born of colonial history and its

ongoing impacts (while this film was made half a decade into Senegal's official independence, Sembène would later mount a merciless satirical attack on the postcolonial regime's subservience to France and the capitalist West in his 1975 black comedy, *Xala*), the frequently glaring inappropriateness of its dubbed French-language soundtrack works to further problematise any 'realist' aesthetics that may be assumed in light of the director's training and politics. To make the effect even more striking, not only is Diouana's voice dubbed (by Haitian singer Toto Bissainthe) but so are those of the actors playing her French employers. This linguistic aspect only reinforces the film's other stylistic elements to suggest a presentational, elliptical, and loose modernist sensibility rather than a more representational or realist one.

The original French title of the film, *La noire de...* refers to a subject as owned or bought by somebody, making clear in three words and suggestive ellipses that this film is about fundamental connections between colonial history, race, gender, and capital. Discussing his political radicalisation, Sembène often cited working as a labourer on the Marseilles docks in the late 1940s – following a stint at the Paris *Citroën* factory, after initially stowing away on a ship to France – where he met left-wing unionists, many of them *Parti communiste français* activists. The anti-colonial Marxist internationalism that so marks the future novelist and filmmaker's work can also be traced to his membership of the Senegalese *Tirailleurs*, African soldiers who fought as part of the Free France Army in World

War II, many of them (after fighting the Nazis and in multiple cases surviving concentration camps) later mistreated and, in one notorious 1943 incident, mass-murdered at the behest of the white commanders after demanding to be paid their wages in French francs (a story told in the devastating 1988 film *Camp de Thiaroye*, co-directed by Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow).

Considering such a space's significance for the filmmaker, it is notable that *La Noire de...* starts on the French Riviera docks with a long establishing shot under the credits showing the working waterfront and its large ships, a scene that comes across as both material reality and a kind of theatrical stage or crucial background against which the film's almost 'chamber' version of a trans-continental story will be set. In addition to being the site where the filmmaker came to political maturity, here the fraught, intertwined cultures and economies of Europe and Africa meet – a nexus-point without which colonial history and its ongoing reverberations and renovations would be impossible. While such a border space is marked by gross inequality and exploitation at the macro level, when it comes to real people doing actual work it potentially provides a different kind of intermixing with far more radical outcomes, as Sembène's own personal story attests.

If the film's portrayal of the docks and other material spaces, most notably apartments, frequently features a bringing together of material reality, the ideological and the figurative, the latter sometimes takes centre stage but only as first given content by the former. After an image of an African mask hung

on the wall of her employers' Antibes living room after Diouana's arrival in France from the docks, a subsequent flashback shows us her giving it to the new 'mistress' as a gift – or we may later wonder, perhaps a warning – after first being hired in Dakar. (When the wife shows her husband the mask with a confused expression, he inspects the gift and says approvingly: 'Looks like the real thing'.) By film's end, the mask has become symbolic of a much larger struggle not just between two women but spanning an entire continent, colonial history, and ongoing economic system. *La Noire de...*'s devastating and masterful final sequence will feature this same mask as once more donned by its original Dakar owner, our protagonist's kid brother – but less now a plaything than an object enabling a new gaze upon colonialism's 'liberal' agent seeking to 'do the right thing'.

If Sembène's own politics and investments are never in doubt, *La Noire de...* avoids easy clichés. The French couple are at first portrayed as relatively friendly in their dealings with Diouana. The husband comes across throughout the film as feckless yet also making occasional comments to his increasingly angry wife that suggest the need to try and understand Diouana's position. Thanks to the filmmaker's elliptical approach to the ordering of scenes, we first hear our protagonist complain via voiceover about her mistress shouting at and mistreating her before we have seen any such behaviour take place. This initially risks the viewer thinking the film may have an 'unreliable narrator', potentially undermining its political impetus. While the mistress' interactions with her new

maid soon enough match Diouana's early description, this behaviour mainly post-dates her gradual rebellion by refusing to get out of bed and failing to perform a maid's duties. Through the wife and husband characters' differing responses to the unfolding situation, Sembène shows in miniature how colonial and 'post-colonial' power structures are sustained with remarkable continuity through different iterations of the same ideology, both explicit and more 'liberal' or reluctant.

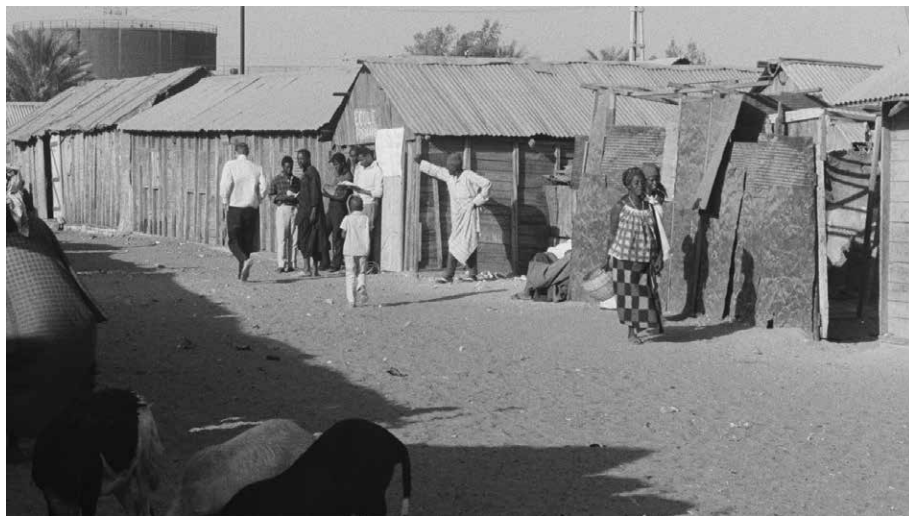
One of the many striking things about the film is that, despite its very short running time we see extensive scenes of work, here traditionally gendered domestic labour – a subject that narrative cinema, especially in the West, often strikingly avoids. Throughout *La Noire de...* featured extensive scenes showing Diouana engaged in the sheer drudgery and claustrophobic nature of such work as she cleans the Antibes apartment, but with a catch. This reluctant maid wears very glamorous clothes and heels. Although this is initially a curious, unexplained fact, the wife becomes increasingly annoyed at such inappropriate attire ('You're not going to a party', and 'remember, you're a maid', she tells her maid), and we gradually realise that – consciously or otherwise – this is part of the young woman's protean, gradual rebellion from the start. It also suggests, along with later snippets of voice-over and flashback dialogue, that far from a firebrand revolutionary, the glamorous-looking Diouana appears to have been initially rather seduced by the idea of consumerist France and longs to see the fashionable boutiques initially described

by her employer. The film is in part about how someone not especially political can become radicalised when material reality so sharply undermines received myth and ideology.

Another effect of *La Noire de...*'s elliptical ordering of scenes is felt with the Dakar flashbacks, bringing about some generative confusion between Antibes and Dakar through the presence of similar architecture. Colonial reality is both alive in the former colony and in the motherland as represented by the best synecdoche for atomisation: anonymous white apartment complexes. Expressing initial frustration in voiceover that having assumed her job was to look after the couple's children in France she has instead become a cleaning woman, Diouana describes the atomised reality of Western lifestyle and culture, noting how everyone is shut away in box-like dwellings with 'the doors always shut'. If atomisation has often been a familiar theme for left-wing Western discourse, here it is seen and evoked with truly fresh eyes. And

this reality is portrayed as in nobody's interests. When the husband announces he's going for a nap after lunch with friends, the basic vacuumness and ennui of the couple's lives becomes apparent when the wife cries out: 'Of course you are!', before complaining: 'I'm sick of this life'. In the following voice-over, Diouana then comments: 'She wasn't like that in Dakar. Nor was he.' In the film's final minutes, the husband suggests that they return to Senegal, with the implication that things will be better back in the former colony.

The lunch scene, an event for which the wife has advertised Diouana as providing 'authentic African cooking' (subsequently admired by the visitors, despite being 'very spicy'), is the film's most over-set piece. Complaining via voiceover as she sits alone in the kitchen that 'they eat like pigs and jabber away', Diouana is even more affronted when an older male guest says: 'I've never kissed a black woman' and proceeds to take the liberty of doing so as she serves



the food. By way of an explanation for her apparent disquiet and return to the kitchen, we hear from the dining room: 'Their independence has made them less natural.' If the white character suggests that Africans are more relaxed in their home country, it seems that the French are somewhat the other way around, as if they don't truly exist out of their overtly colonial (no matter its official 'post-prefix) context.

In the lunch scene and throughout, the film evokes the relationship between powerful and subaltern colonial subjects (or nations) becoming mutually, regressively co-dependant. In the process, we see play out the psychopathology of colonialism, the retarding impact on both parties. Sembène also thereby emphasises a theme that goes right back to Hegel's famous notion of the master-slave dialectic radically adapted by Marx, and later writers such as Edward Said and *Gayatri Spivak*: While the violence, economic exploitation and personal suffering is experienced by the 'other', the (European, colonial) 'subject' is in another sense the truly imprisoned party because desperately in need of the relationship's continuation so that a very sense of self – or its illusion – can be sustained. Without it, these people are nothing, with no home to return to. The film makes this clear at every turn, most powerfully of all in its concurrently devastating, radically foreboding yet somehow hopeful final scene, emphasising that such one-way desire has inevitable and potentially world-shaking consequences.

The last piece of the film's political puzzle emerges with the late arrival of

money as a visual motif driving *La Noire de...*'s final movement: An image just as resonant and important as the mask, together making up the twin – ultimately fused – rails of Sembène's critique: colonialism and capitalism. Following the two women's circular tussle over the mask by way of striking cuts between point-of-view shots, the husband seeks to pay Diouana for what may be the first time after his wife retreats. The complex and intuitive nature of this one-woman revolution is then performed in miniature, first falling to her feet upon the appearance of the bank notes (prompting the husband to call his wife so she may witness this reaction, before they return to the living room) and almost immediately giving it back, thereby rejecting a radically unequal business arrangement. This theme of money's white offer and black refusal – no matter how deserved it might be as payment for work done – achieves a whole new level of pathos and political significance in the film's masterful final minutes, featuring the return of Sembène himself in the role of Diouana's school-teacher older brother. The filmmaker's very brief look to camera after their mother's refusing the husband's offer of money is powerful indeed.

Both the debut film of a consistently brilliant career and central tenet in world cinema's first and most radical chapter, *La Noire de...* exemplifies perfect political cinema: forceful, direct, polemical, but never simple, overly didactic, or prosaic, featuring a formal approach and aesthetic style seamlessly matched to its purpose, eschewing representational transparency while insistently showing and analysing

a precise material reality. Tied at number 95 in the 2022 BFI *Sight and Sound* international critics' poll, Sembène's first feature – like those of most great filmmakers – is not his best work (I would nominate *Xala*, *Camp de Thiaroye*, or his final film, 2004's *Moolaadé*). That it snuck into the BFI's top 100 reflects *La Noire de...*'s historical importance and obvious quality, while also reflecting the commercial vagaries of film restoration and digital distribution. (More particularly, the undue canon 'gatekeeper' influence enjoyed by The Criterion Collection, having recently released the film on Blu-ray/DVD and which pays highly belated and limited attention even to world cinema's core heritage.) A terse, succinct masterpiece, *La Noire de...* provides an entrée for even greater things to come, which together comprise one of the great, radical, and for many film-lovers still undiscovered glories of cinema history when taken in its proper sense: as encompassing filmmaking across the world.

### BOROM SARRET

*With Borom Sarret* – 'The Wagoner' in English – Ousmane Sembène sets out many of the key themes that will mark his major work, highlighting the inherent inequalities of colonialism's heritage and modern capitalism, enunciated via a style that carefully avoids representational claims to realism. Predicting *La Noire de*, this 19-minute film's dialogue is presented in voice-over from the start. Notably, it is Sembène's own voice we hear articulating thoughts and observations attributed to his protagonist, the titular wagoner, but that

take on a dimension later in the film more suggestive of the author himself as literally announcing his core concerns directly to the viewer.

The main character's lips, it turns out, never move throughout the film. And when secondary figures speak, the words we hear on the soundtrack do not match the movements of their mouths (where it can be detected), Sembène making no effort to mask the dubbing and instead emphasising it as central plank of his deliberate, reflexive strategy. This highlighting of dubbed sound already in train from the first scene (when we hear his wife offer him luck for the day, her mouth remains closed), upon the arrival of an aerial shot of their Dakar neighbourhood the effect is of a carefully demarcated and framed space or 'set' rendered via a self-consciously heightened camera position. This approach to would-be establishing shots will recur at the very start of *La Noire de...* and as key moments punctuating later Sembène films right up to his final masterpiece, *Moolaadé*, providing for a 'presentational' effect.

As with *La Noire de...*, Sembène doesn't strain to initially offer us especially reliable, likeable, or sympathetic characters. Here his protagonist comes across as irritable and rather self-pitying from the start (and one suspects, a little hopeless), likens crippled beggars to flies, and complains about a pregnant client putting her head on his shoulder while resting on the way to hospital (and tells the viewer: 'These modern women! Impossible to understand'). When he reluctantly takes a fare going uptown after first telling the suited client

that wagoners are not allowed there due presumably to their 'backward' appearance in a space dominated by nice cars and sleek architecture, the film cuts to the same environment seen extensively in *La Noire de...* in both its French and Dakar scenes, dominated by white apartment blocks and here accompanied by light classical music. This is a film about stark demarcations of different yet connected spaces, classes, worlds.

After the wagoner is ripped off by his uptown client while being interrogated by a security guard – a fear motivating his initial refusal of the job – Sembène voices the following lament on the soundtrack: 'That guy said he had contacts. Thieves, most likely. Who: Who can we trust? It's the same everywhere in the world. They know how to read, and they know how to lie. ... Yesterday it was the same thing. The day before, too. ... This jail. This is modern life. This is life in this country.' As we hear these lines, the camera shows rows of impersonal, matching apartment building windows while the wagoner/Sembène homes in on the very issue of space and radically unequal development, but also – a theme taken up with some real penetration in *La Noire de...* – the void at the heart of such fundamentally unequal modern life itself: 'These houses... That's it. These houses.'

The film ends with the defeated wagoner returning home upon which his wife hands him their baby and leaves the house to seek food, without complaint. Prefacing his many feature films with female protagonists, *Borom Serrat*'s final scene thereby strongly suggests a theme Sembène emphasised in multiple

interviews. Men having effectively failed, or too much the agents of ongoing regression, any future hope of improvement, let alone revolutionary change, lies with women. Exactly how the wagoner's wife will procure money for food, the personal cost and risks she and other women pay every day to enable their own survival and often that of their families, let alone becoming potential agents of revolutionary change, is and remains a lingering question.

### Notes by Hamish Ford

#### The Restoration

*Black Girl* was restored by Cineteca di Bologna/ L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory, in association with the Sembène Estate, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, INA, Eclair laboratories and the Centre National de Cinématographie. Restoration funded by The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project. The restoration of *La Noire de...* was made possible through the use of the original camera and sound negative provided by INA and the Sembène Estate and preserved at the CNC – Archives Françaises du Film. A vintage print preserved at the Cinémathèque Française was used as reference.

*Borom Sarret* was restored by Cineteca di Bologna/L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory and Laboratoires Éclair, in association with The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project, the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, and the Sembène Estate. Restoration funded by Doha Film Institute. The restoration of was made possible through the use of the original camera and sound negatives provided by INA and preserved at Éclair Laboratories.



**La noire de...** | Director: Ousmane SEMBÈNE; Production Companies: Filmi Doomireew, Actualités Françaises; Producer: André ZWOBADA; Script: Ousmane SEMBÈNE, from his short story 'La noire de...'; Director of Photography: Christian LACOSTE; Editor: André GAUDIER // Cast: N'bissine Thérèse DIOP (Diouana, dubbed by Toto BISSAINTHE); Anne-Marie JELINEK (Madame, dubbed by Sophie LECLERC); Robert FONTAINE (Monsieur, dubbed by Robert MACEY); Momar Nar SENE (The Young Man); Toto BISSAINTHE (Narrator)

Senegal, France | 1966 | 55 mins. | 2K Flat

DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | French, Wolof with Eng. subtitles | U/C15+

**Borom Sarret** | Director: Ousmane SEMBÈNE; Production Companies: Filmi Doomireew, Actualités Françaises; Producer: Ousmane SEMBÈNE; Script: Ousmane SEMBÈNE; Director of Photography: Christian LACOSTE; Editor: André GAUDIER // Cast: Ly ABDOULAY (The Wagoner); ALBOURAH (The Wife)

Senegal, France | 1963 | 18 mins. | 2K Flat  
DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. |

French, Wolof with Eng. subtitles | U/C15+

## Blind Spot/Die Reise Nach Lyon

### Claudia von Alemann

Born in 1943, Claudia von Alemann began making films in the late 60s. Little of her work has been seen in Australia though recent exhibitions of her work in Europe recall that in the early 70s she made a number of documentaries concerned with interrogating the status of women in relation to imperialist violence and capitalist exploitation. Following from these, von Alemann, together with Helke Sander, organized the First International Women's Film Seminar held at the Arsenal cinema in West Berlin.

Her breakthrough feature *Blind Spot/Die Reise Nach Lyon* screened widely at festivals around the world, including the Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals, in 1980 and 1981. Respectively, it was followed by two dramatic features made for television and a number of shorts.

### The Film

*Die Reise nach Lyon* is the story of a woman who abruptly leaves her partner

and young daughter in West Germany to travel to Lyon. There, she wanders near-empty streets in pursuit of Flora Tristan, the socialist feminist activist and writer who spent time in the French city in 1844, just months before her death. Although it is ostensibly a fictional narrative, *Die Reise nach Lyon* is also a metahistorical gambit, a cinematic search for a feminist approach to the feminist past. Claudia von Alemann emphasizes the necessity of bringing greater attention to women's achievements, while pointing to the limits of any approach that would leave how history is written unchanged. *Die Reise nach Lyon* suggests that the way forward might reside in the adoption of unconventional, self-reflexive modes of confronting the past and claims filmmaking as a site where this can occur.

The woman historian (played by Rebecca Pauly) refuses the traditional way of 'looking' at history and gets caught up in a complex multi-layered pattern of

reverberations. History and 'her' story become a network of resonances. One life/voice imprints in another. A visually fascinating film, but nevertheless one of the few real 'sound' films ever made.

When the film was released, the text that follows was written by Claudia von Alemann. It remains as good a lead as ever. Not just the why of making such a film but the how as well...

'I have been interested in nineteenth-century women – especially feminists – for many years. In this film, however, I was concerned with more than just the reconstruction of a historical personage; also with questions of how one can possibly track down a person from another age, how memory relates to history, and how women remember. These various questions emerged from my work on the film and caused me to modify my original conception

considerably. The original script already deviated from tradition by making use of the sort of collage technique found in the novels of Anna Seghers and John Dos Passos, for example. Its underlying structure was nonetheless architectonically traditional: it had a beginning, a dramatic climax and an end; the twelve-year period in Flora Tristan's life was presented chronologically; the costumes and decor were historically accurate, and so on. At a certain point, however, I began to question this, conception. The form reinforced the notion that a film attempting an authentic historical reconstruction must necessarily represent the historical truth. Yet it was precisely this notion that I wanted to call into question. I decided that this position had to determine the very form of the film itself, rather than exist outside of and behind it.



'I therefore replaced the original chronological conception with a kaleidoscope of short, self-enclosed sequences. More importantly, I shifted the focus from the historical personage to a contemporary woman, and the relationship of her life to her almost obsessive attempt to reconstruct Tristan's ...

'Because the relationship to the reconstruction of the past remains central, the film remains a historical one. The woman who undertakes the search for the lost Flora Tristan is a former historian who has very consciously broken with her academic past. Her experience has made her mistrustful of traditional modes of transmitting historical knowledge. She has found the diary of the nineteenth-century woman and would like to

uncover traces of her but isn't sure how. And that is precisely what concerns me: how does remembering, forgetting, re-remembering function?

'However, I didn't want to construct a simple antithesis between intellectual and naive modes of appropriating history. That would be too simple, and would fit too well into a male-determined scheme. That is why I had the woman, Elisabeth, reject the intellectual mode that she herself had mastered. The question then becomes the possibility of other forms of perception and reconstruction – forms which still have to be developed ...

'Apart from the diaries of Flora and Elisabeth, the most important medium in my film for reconstructing the past is sound. Using a cassette recorder, the woman tries to discover sounds that people in 1844 could have heard. She

does go to Lyon, where Flora Tristan worked towards the end of her life. But then she follows paths that she imagines the historical person could have taken. She expends a great deal of energy in the form of "phantasy work" which is demanded from the spectator. The film frequently collides with the public's audio-visual expectations. The searcher frequently goes up dead-ends – what I would call positive dead-ends – which lead away from Flora Tristan's life but lead to her own life, and the lives of others she encounters. A decisive role in this search is played by the trail of sounds she follows. Remembering is largely effected acoustically. I have tried to make a sound film in which sound is neither a mere background nor the means by which an illusion of authenticity is induced. I use many sound elements in order to transmit differentiations in hearing. Just as one can speak of "subjective camera", I would like to speak of the "subjective microphone".'

### The Restoration

The digitization and restoration of the film in 2017/18 was performed by Marie Bendl and Thomas Bakels of Alpha-Omega digital in Munich, supervised by Martin Koerber of Deutsche Kinemathek and Claudia von Alemann herself.

The film element to be scanned was the original A/B-cut 16mm negatives, scanned at 2K resolution and color corrected after the digital cleanup of dust and scratches. There was a first color grading done in the process, and another final color grading on a cinema screen in Munich, in presence of Claudia von Alemann and Martin Koerber.

The grain of the 16mm negative purposely was not manipulated or digitally reduced in the process, to ensure the original look of the film wouldn't be altered.

Some difficulties were found in remastering the German and French audio to the film. The subtitles for each version were incoherent and needed revisiting by the director herself. Also some audio elements that were digitized seemed incomplete. In the French audio version a passage with a poem appeared missing on the tape, but needed to be there to understand the connection.

Ultimately Claudia von Alemann visited the lead actress Rebecca Pauly in Paris at the final stage of the restoration and re-recorded these poems with her original voice, which hadn't changed too much over the years.

The deliveries of the restoration is in 2K-DCP in French and German versions, as well as TV-broadcasting master files.

The restoration was supported by the German Federal Film Board (FFA).

### Restoration notes by Thomas Bakels

Director: Claudia VON ALEMANN; Production Company: Alemann Filmproduktion; Photography: Hille SAGEL; Editor: Monique DARTONE; Music: Frank WOLFF; Sound: Daniel DESHAYS // Cast: Rebecca PAULY (Elisabeth); Denise PÉRON (Bistrowirtin); Jean BADIN (Fernand)

West Germany | 1981 | 112 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.66:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | German with Eng. Subtitles | U/C15+



## City of Contrasts/Contras' City

This film screens in a program of films from Senegal. See also on notes *Black Girl/La Noire de* and *The Wagoner/Borom Sarret*

### Djibril Diop Mambéty

Mambéty (1945, Senegal – 1998, France) was a Senegalese filmmaker, actor, orator, composer and poet. Despite his small oeuvre, he holds a legendary status within

African Cinema. Besides being trained as an actor at the National Daniel Aorano Theatre in Dakar, he had no formal training in filmmaking. In 1969, at age 23, Mambéty directed and produced his first short film, *Contras' City (City of Contrasts)*. The following year Mambéty made another short, *Badou Boy*, which won the Silver Tanit award at the 1970 Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia.



His first feature *Touki Bouki* (1973) received the International Critics' Prize at Cannes and the Special Jury Prize at Moscow Film Festival. It also gained him international acclaim for the unconventional cinematic technique and narrative style. Although more experimental than many of his African contemporaries, Diop Mambéty shared their use of the cinematic medium to comment on the political and social conditions in Africa.

Despite *Touki Bouki's* success, nearly twenty years passed before Mambéty made another feature film. During this hiatus he made one short film in 1989, *Parlons Grandmère (Let's talk Grandmother)*.

*Hyènes* (1992), Mambéty's second and final feature film, was an adaptation of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit* and was conceptualized as a continuation of *Touki Bouki*. At the time of his death, the film director had been working on a trilogy of short films called *Histoires de Petites Gens (Tales of the Little People)*. The first of the three films was *Le Franc* (1994). At the time of his death Mambéty had been editing the second film of that series, *La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil (The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun)*, which premiered posthumously in 1999.

On July 23, 1998, Mambéty died of lung cancer at age 53 at a hospital in Paris, France.

### The Film

A fictional documentary that portrays the city of Dakar, Senegal, as we hear the conversation between a Senegalese man (the director, Djibril Diop Mambéty) and a French woman, Inge Hirschnitz. As we

travel through the city in a picturesque horse-drawn wagon, we chaotically rush into this and that popular neighborhood of the capital, discovering contrast after contrast: A small African community waiting at the Church's door, Muslims praying on the sidewalk, the Rococo architecture of the Government buildings, the modest stores of the craftsmen near the main market.

### The Restoration

Restored in 2020 by Cineteca di Bologna/L'Immagine Ritrovata and The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project in association with The Criterion Collection. Funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation.

This restoration is part of the African Film Heritage Project, an initiative created by The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project, the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers and UNESCO – in collaboration with Cineteca di Bologna – to help locate, restore, and disseminate African cinema.

The 4K restoration of *Contras' City* was made from the inter-negative as well as the original sound negative provided by Teemour Mambéty and preserved at LTC Patrimoine. A vintage print of the film was used as reference for color grading.

Director/Script: Djibril Diop MAMBÉTY;  
Production Company: Studio Kankourama;  
Director of Photography: Georges BRACHER;  
Editors: Jean-Bernard BONIS, Marino RIO // Cast: Djibril Diop MAMBÉTY; Inge HIRSCHNITZ

Senegal | 1968 | 18 mins. | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | Wolof with Eng. subtitles | U/C15+

## Detour

### Edgar G Ulmer

In the later years prior to his death in 1972, prolific Austrian-American B-movie director Edgar G. Ulmer described himself to at least two interviewers as 'the Frank Capra of PRC,' and he wasn't wrong: amongst the many visually distinctive low-budget melodramas he made for Poverty Row studio Producers Releasing Corporation, his 1945 masterwork *Detour* is a concentrated 68-minute blast of purely nasty film noir that displays his affinity for the perhaps cynical yet essentially decent common man who finds himself at the mercy of a cruel fate and a meaner woman.

Ulmer was born in Moravia, now in the Czech Republic, in 1904. He studied architecture and philosophy in Vienna, and counted amongst his earliest fledgling film industry contacts F.W. Murnau, Billy Wilder, Robert Siodmak and Fred Zinnemann (all of whom, of course, as did Ulmer, eventually relocated – or maybe the right word is fled? – to Hollywood).

Ulmer made his first Hollywood picture in 1933, and the following year segued to Universal and the significantly successful *The Black Cat*, with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. A messy scandal involving studio head Carl Laemmle's nephew's marriage



derailed that career trajectory (though it did bless him with a life partner, Shirley, who was script supervisor on nearly all of his best work), so he pivoted to making foreign language films – then called 'ethnic pictures' – in Ukrainian and Yiddish before becoming a kind of house director at PRC in the early 1940s.

He thrived, if you could call it that, though he later confessed to adoring fan Peter Bogdanovich in the 1997 book 'Who the Devil Made It?' that 'I am really looking for absolution for all the things I had to do for money's sake.'

The Edgar G. Ulmer papers are held at the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy Film Archives in Los Angeles. Symposia and academic conferences have been held on his approximately 85 titles, and his name and distinctively intense style will live on in such disparate, eccentric and timeless films as *Green Fields* (1937), *The Strange Woman* (1946, with Hedy Lamarr), *Carnegie Hall* (1947), *Ruthless* (1948) and *The Man from Planet X* (1951).

Yet when all is said and done, it inevitably and finally comes down to this: absolution, thy name is *Detour*.

### The Film

At New York City's bustling nightclub Break o'Dawn, talented pianist Al Roberts (Tom Neal, who looks for all the world like Leonardo Di Caprio's grandfather and wears the hell out of his battered fedora) is smitten with easy-on-the-eyes and clearly natural vocalist Sue (former vaudevillian and future low-budget westerns staple Claudia Drake, née Olga Gloria Fishbine) and they're planning a bright future. But when Sue makes the out-of-left-field decision to

strike out to Los Angeles to make her fame and fortune – even though she promises her lover she'll return to fetch him – Al is understandably devastated.

Thus begins an inevitable odyssey that finds the penniless yet determined Al hitchhiking across the country to reclaim his ambitious partner and make her his wife. It's a vivid picture of a confident yet restless America, where independent women forged their own paths and obsessed men tried to keep up with them whilst maintaining their dignity. Yet, as Al eventually concludes, 'Fate, or some mysterious force, can put the finger on you or me for no good reason at all.'

The film is framed by Al's recollection of the story's tragic events as he sits in a dingy diner in Reno, Nevada and relates his ordeal. Ulmer and cinematographer Benjamin H. Kline, himself a director of westerns and cameraman for a good fraction of the crudely brilliant Three Stooges shorts for Columbia Pictures, darken the joint and place a key light on Neal's eyes as his reveries begin, amping up the haunting doom of his tale.

In Arizona, Al is picked up by pill-popping horseracing bookie Charles Haskell, Jr. (Boston-born Edmund MacDonald, a Broadway and radio veteran who died tragically young at 43 of a brain haemorrhage). The supremely confident hustler is driving a dazzlingly white 1941 Lincoln Continental convertible, a customized battleship of a car that was actually Ulmer's own personal ride pressed into service for the picture.

In a distinct precursor to Antonioni's *The Passenger*, tragedy ensues and Al is forced by impulsive, desperate logic to assume Haskell's identity.

It's at this point that the picture pivots to a much darker and more desperate path. Whilst stopped at a lonely petrol station in the California desert, the still somehow good-hearted Al, now posing as Haskell and behind the wheel of an obnoxiously beautiful machine, offers a ride to a seemingly bereft woman standing by the side of the road with a single bag.

Thus enters one of the most magnificently manipulative femmes fatale in all of cinema.

No spoilers here, but as it happens this woman knows exactly what Al is up to and their later scenes together in the picture leading up to the bizarre yet inevitable denouement are charged with an electric ferocity.

The beautiful yet utterly venal Vera is played with a possessed, bug-eyed intensity by Ann Savage (née Berniece Maxine Lyon), who had a dignified enough career in a handful of B-movies in the 1940s and 1950s but is far from a household name. True film Catholics remember her revival in the mid-aughts on the strength of *Detour's* renewed popularity (as a result of it falling into the public domain) when Canadian visionary Guy Maddin hired her to play his mother in the 2007 docu-fantasia *My Winnipeg*. As a career highlight, however, Savage's performance here makes Jane Greer's Kathie Moffat in Tourneur's magnificent 1947 noir *Out of the Past* (aka *Build My Gallows High*), look like a nun.

It prompts one to wonder if Tourneur and/or Greer ever saw Savage in the part and may have been influenced by her focused lunacy...

A movie with the raw emotion of *Detour* doesn't write itself; that honour goes to novelist Martin Goldsmith, who adapted one of his three pulp novels and in doing so perfectly captured the resigned cynicism and sexual tension that is the essence of the genre.

There's more to say about *Detour*, much more. Yet for now, just revisit or discover a movie that proudly and instinctually represents the urgency and inventiveness of the low-budget, can-do ethic, smack dab in the middle of the golden era of Hollywood filmmaking.

### Notes by Eddie Cockrell

#### The Restoration

Restored in 2018 by the Academy Film Archive and The Film Foundation in collaboration with the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, MoMA The Museum of Modern Art, Cinémathèque Française with the support of the George Lucas Family Foundation.

Director: Edgar G. Ulmer; Production Company: Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC); Producer: Leon FROMKES; Script: Martin GOLDSMITH [Martin MOONEY, uncredited], based on Goldsmith's novel; Photography: Benjamin H. KILNE; Editor: George MCGUIRE; Art Direction: Edward C. JEWELL; Sound: Max HUTCHINSON; Music: Leo ERDODY; Costumes: Mona BARRY // Cast: Tom NEAL (Al Roberts); Ann SAVAGE (Vera); Claudia DRAKE (Su Harvey); Edmund MACDONALD (Charles Harkell Jr.); Tim RYAN (Diner Proprietor)

USA | 1945 | 66 mins. | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | English | (G).

## I By Day You By Night/Ich bei Tag und du bei Nacht

### German Musical Comedies 1930–32

Like most other countries, Germany was rapidly won over by sound cinema. To meet the demands of a growing and changing market, producers looked out for new talent, and often found it in Berlin's world-famous cabaret and revue theatre scene. Among the most successful genres emerging in the early 1930s were comedies, musicals and, combining both, the specific German genre of *Tonfilm lustspiel* (sound film comedy). Rooted in the operetta tradition of the 19th century, but adapted to contemporary aesthetics and mores, these films introduced popular comedians and singers to the movie audience, while celebrating the urbane, sophisticated, hedonistic modernity of Weimar culture. For a few precious years, just before the Nazi takeover, a decidedly light-hearted, sensual, frivolous and uninhibited spirit swept through German cinemas.

The musical comedies of the late Weimar Republic are swarming with false countesses, tramps and drifters. Policemen and other figures of authority, on the other hand, are mocked constantly, while social, sexual and gender identities are in a constant state of flux.

Even more than other genres of German cinema of the Weimar Republic, the *Tonfilm lustspiel* is inextricably linked to the work of Jewish directors, screenwriters, producers, composers

and actors originating from all over Germany as well as, quite often, Austria, who had found the blossoming cultural metropolis Berlin to be a welcoming place during the 1920s. Almost none of them were able to continue working in Germany after Adolf Hitler's rise to power, culminating in his chancellorship starting on 30 January, 1933. Directly afterwards, the exclusion of Jewish German citizens from all important positions in daily life started, as well as the anti-semitic pogroms. UFA, the most important production company at the time, cancelled the contracts of the majority of their Jewish staff a mere two months after the Nazi takeover.

The fate of the Jewish film workers mirrors the fate of German Jewry in general. Some managed to escape, others, tragically, did not make it out of Europe in time and were killed in the concentration camps, including Otto Wallburg, one of the most iconic character actors of his generation, and a mainstay in the musical comedy genre.

Today, the *Tonfilm lustspiel* is almost a glimpse into an alternative pathway of history; a window into a lost world, never to be fully regained by German postwar cinema. Except for a few UFA productions that have become evergreen favourites such as *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* or *Der Kongress tanzt*, the *Tonfilm lustspiel* tradition is all but forgotten today, with only a handful of films available on DVD or streaming.

### Ludwig Berger

Ludwig Berger (born Ludwig Bamberger; 6 January 1892 – 18 May 1969) was a German-Jewish film director, screenwriter and theatre director. He directed more than 30 films between 1920 and 1969. Berger began working in the German film industry during the Weimar Republic. At Decla-Bioscop and later UFA he established a reputation

as a leading director of silent films. He left Germany after making a number of successful musical comedies in the early 30s. Among films he made after his departure were a version of GB Shaw's *Pygmalion* made in Hollywood, and *Three Waltzes*, a biopic of the composer Johan Strauss made in Franc. He was one of many directors who worked on Alexander Korda's lavish 1940



production *The Thief of Bagdad*. He emigrated to Hollywood, but was unable to establish himself and returned to Europe. From 1954 to near his death in 1969 he worked extensively in German television.

### The Film

Willy Fritsch, probably the biggest German film star of his time, was closely connected to the success of the *Tonfilmlustspiel*, especially regarding the lavish musical extravaganzas Erich Pommer produced for UFA in the early 1930s. In the most famous of these, Fritsch was coupled with Lilian Harvey, a supremely athletic dancer and dynamic physical comedienne. The finest hour of both the actor and the Pommer unit might be *Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht*, though. In 'one of the crowning glories of the German musical' (Peter von Bagh), Fritsch encounters not Harvey, but Käthe von Nagy, a completely different and more versatile actress with the ability to gently poke fun at the signature cockiness of her co-star, while at the same time still falling under his spell.

Ludwig Berger's fluid, elegant direction does not try to emulate the expansive spectacle of UFA blockbusters such as Erik Charell's *Der Kongress tanzt*, but opts for a smaller, more intimate framework. A tale of interiors and interiorities, a comedy of mistaken identity that folds in on itself. The designated lovers, manicurist Grete (von Nagy) and waiter Hans (Fritsch), sleep in the same bed from the start, she at night and he during the day... so it's just a question of getting both of them in there at the same time; a question of synchronizing, of blending two lives, two space-times – and also, by way of an irony-fuelled meta-filmic

discourse – two movies into each other. So in the end *Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht* is not about romantic conquest, but about matchmaking and filmmaking becoming one and the same: an artistic practice giving us access to our own desires.

### Notes on German Musicals and the film by Lukas Foerster

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### The Restoration

Restored in 2014 by Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung in collaboration with Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv with the support of BKM at ARRI laboratory, from a nitrate positive print and a clip out of dupe negative preserved by Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv

Director: Ludwig BERGER; Production Company: UFA; Producer: Erich POMMER; Script: Robert LIEBMANN, Hans SZÉKELY; Photography: Friedl BEHN-GRUND; Editors: Viktor GERTIER, Heinz G. JANSON; Production Design: Otto HUNTE; Sound: Gerhard GOLDBAUM; Music: Werner R. HEYMANN; Costumes: Jo STRASSNER // Cast: Willy FRITSCH (Hans); Käthe VON NAGY (Grete); Amanda LINDNER (Cornelia Seidelbast); Julius FALKENSTEIN (Herr Krüger); Elizabeth LENNARTZ (Trude Krüger); Albert LIEVEN (Wolf)

Germany | 1932 | 98 mins | | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | German with Eng. subtitles | U/C15+

# Ieoh Island

**This film is presented with the generous support of the Australia-Korea Foundation**

## Kim Ki-Young

Born in Seoul, 1922. Graduate of Dentistry School, Seoul National University. After working as a performer, as well as a director of those performances, he debuted as a film director in 1955 with *The Box of Death*. It was followed by more than 30 film works, including *The Housemaid* (1960), *The Sea Knows* (1961), *Woman of Fire* (1971) and *Chungnyeo* (1972).

'Kim Ki-Young began his career making pro-American propaganda, then went on to specialize in pieces of psychological horror, usually melodramas filled with themes of sexual obsession. He first made his name in that arena with *The Housemaid* whose lusty young title character makes her way into and gradually destroys a previously untroubled middle-class household. That movie, now widely considered one of Korea's finest, came out in 1960. That year began an abundant decade in Korean cinema, despite the restrictions the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee would place on the film industry after seizing power in 1961.' (Colin Marshall, BLARB: the blog of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*)

After the acclaim of *The Housemaid*, Kim was one of the the most successful Korean film director of the 1960s. But in the early 1970s, and during a period of strict censorship and control in South Korea, Kim's career stalled. His 1975 film *Ban Geoum-ryeon* (aka *The Story of Pan Jinlian*) was initially banned, then not

released until 1981, minus 40 minutes of footage. His following films largely failed both critically and at the box office. From the mid 1970s and through the 1980s, Kim Ki-young worked on his own, largely self-funded, low-budget productions, and under harsh conditions. After the failure of *Carnivorous Animal* (aka *Beasts of Prey*) in 1984, he was largely forgotten by the Korean film industry for more than a decade.

But in the early 1990s, Kim was acknowledged again as a master of Korean cult movies and in the spotlight in South Korea and abroad once more, especially after the retrospective screening of his films in 1997 at the then newly-established Busan International Film Festival. By early 1998 he was preparing a new feature, and planning a retrospective of his films at the Berlin Film Festival. However, on 5 February 1998 Kim Ki-young and his wife were killed in a house fire, caused officially by an electrical short circuit.

Kim's reputation has only grown since his death. In 2008 *The Housemaid* was restored by Film Foundation's World Cinema Project, and received renewed, global acclaim. Films such as *Goryeojang* (1963), *Woman of Fire* and *Ieoh Island* (1977) have also been restored by the Korean Film Archive, and successfully re-released in Seoul cinemas.

'It's amazing. Not only to discover a true artist of film named Kim Ki-young, but also to discover totally unpredictable art through his works.'

– Jean-Michel Frodon, former editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

## The Film

It may be no accident that one of Korean cinema's most compelling, unnerving depictions of the primal forces that drive humankind was conceived during the mechanizing, industrializing era of the 1970s. As the military government pushed ahead with an all-out campaign for modernization, the warped genius of the cinema Kim Ki-young was busy shooting a film that peels off the many layers of modern society to expose human experience at its most primitive.

*Ieoh Island* is centered on an island off the south coast of Korea populated by women who live off the sea, and who structure their lives 'according to the old traditions'. Removed from the modern influences of the mainland, the island stands as a detached society where ancient customs prevail and the local shaman wields a great deal of power. When one of the island's native sons (Choi Yoon-seok), who had gone to the mainland, disappears off the deck of a tourist ship, a businessman (Kim Jong-cheol) suspected of killing him travels to the island in hopes of uncovering the truth behind the man's disappearance. This visitor comes to learn the tangled

history of the man's supposedly cursed lineage, while also getting caught up in the affairs of the island himself.

Not an easy film to absorb in one sitting, *Ieoh Island* is told through a complex structure of flashbacks (each flashback signalled by the sound of bubbling water) that slowly lead us to an understanding of the film's central narrative. The film juxtaposes and contrasts modern and traditional social practices, from environmental activism and aquaculture to superstitious rites and exorcisms. But what unites the primitive and the contemporary is an obsession with procreation. Whether for humans, pigs, or artificially farmed abalone, the ability or inability to successfully reproduce determines the fate of nearly everyone in the film.

From the opening shots of this work, Kim Ki-young dispenses with any pretext of pursuing psychological realism. With its breathless tempo, sudden detours, highly dramatized dialogue and extreme close-ups, the film revels in its own unpredictability and force. This, combined with the zoom shots, dated hairstyles and cheap special effects, makes the film seem at first to be inviting parody. Yet *Ieoh*



*Island's* genius lies in the cohesiveness and weight of its central themes, together with its strange, unexpected beauty.

One unforgettable element of this work is the mesmerizing performance of Lee Hwa-shi as a barmaid who works on the island. Lee Eun-shim's turn in Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid* may rank as the most astonishing performance in 1960s Korean cinema, but Lee Hwa-shi's collaboration with the director in the late 1970s and early 1980s is no less of an achievement. Seven of her first ten films, which were shot between 1976 and 1981, were directed by Kim, and the intensity, sensuality and intellect which she brings to the screen is the perfect complement to Kim's madly inspired direction.

However, what viewers inevitably talk about as they file out of a screening of *Leoh Island* is its ending. The penultimate scene culminates with one of the most brazen, jaw-dropping sequences ever shot by a Korean director. It goes without saying that this image was censored from the film's release print in 1977, but an uncut version was exported to Japan, and so modern-day viewers can enjoy *Leoh*

*Island* in all its glory. Thank god for that, because this film is the very opposite of cheap thrills, or shock for shock's sake. It's one of the best Korean films ever made.

#### Film Notes by Darcy Paquet

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#### The Restoration

Restored by KOFA, the Korean Film Archive.

Director: KIM Ki-young; Production Company: Dong-A Exports Co. Ltd.; Producer: LEE Woo-seo; Script: HA Yu-sang, from Lee Chung-Joon's novel; Photography: JEON Il-seong; Editor: HYEON Dong-chun; Art Direction: LEE Myeong-su; Music: HAN Sang-gi // Cast: LEE Hwa-shi (Barmaid Sohn Min-ja); KIM Jeong-cheol (Sun Wu-hyun); CHOI Yun-seok (Cheon Nam-seok); KWON Mihye (Park Jung-ja); PARK Jeong-ja (Shaman); PARK Am (Editor)

South Korea | 1977 | 110 mins | 2K Scope DCP (orig. 35mm, 2.35:1) | Colour | Mono sd. | Korean with Eng. Subtitles | U/C15+



Australian Government



Australia-Korea FOUNDATION

## The Last Emperor

**This film is presented with the generous support of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Sydney**

#### Bernardo Bertolucci

Poet, cineaste and member of the Italian Communist Party, Bernardo Bertolucci graduated from the 16mm shorts of his teenage years to become Pier Paolo Pasolini's assistant on *Accattone* (1961).

He has likened the experience to being present at 'the birth of cinema'.

Bertolucci then turned a Pasolini story into his first feature *La Commare Secca* (1962), a police investigation into the murder of a prostitute that many have compared with *Rashomon*.

His critical break-through, however, came with his second feature *Before The*



*Revolution* (1964), a psychological study of a young Palma radical torn between political action and his bourgeois upbringing.

*Partner* (1968), based on *The Double* by Dostoevsky also looked into the conflicts between radical politics and conformism and *The Spider's Stratagem* (1969), from a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, followed a son's return to his father's village to learn the truth about the death of his father at the hands of fascists.

*The Conformist* (1970), from a novel by Alberto Moravia, brought Bertolucci international acclaim and his vibrant, flamboyant directorial style created a riveting account of a man espousing fascist ideology as he tries to be 'normal' and hide doubts about his homosexuality.

The transgressive sexuality of *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) was regarded by some as scandalous, but the film cemented Bertolucci's reputation as a brilliant director who could take art-film content and turn it into box office success.

In 1976, he embarked on the five-and-a-half hour *1900*, a mammoth undertaking attempting to portray the political history of Italy during the first half of the 20th Century. In *Luna* (1979), he returned to transgressive sexual relationships, this time between an opera singer and her teenage son. *The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man* in 1982 followed a dairy farmer's search for his son and ransom demands from terrorists.

Five years later, the director returned with his greatest triumph, *The Last Emperor* (1987). Allowed access to Beijing's Forbidden City, Bertolucci delivered a sprawling account of the life of Pu Yi, a child made Emperor of China shortly before his third birthday and who ended his days as a municipal gardener during the Cultural Revolution. It won nine Academy Awards – every category in which it was nominated.

Two further 'epics' followed, *The Sheltering Sky* (1990) and *Little Buddha* (1993). As he moved into the latter part of his career,



Richard Roud noted the absence of his previous 'elaborate camera movements,' and suggested Bertolucci 'achieved that classical simplicity of *mise en scène* that is, if not invisible, then translucent.'

Bertolucci lived in the gap between the art-house and the commercial cinema and he stayed there through his final films *Stealing Beauty* (1996), *Besieged* (1998), *The Dreamers* (2003) and *Me and You* (2012).

Martin Scorsese: 'When I think of Bertolucci – the man, the artist – the word that comes to mind is refinement. Yes, he was flamboyant and provocative, but it was the mellifluousness and the grace with which he expressed himself, and his deep understanding of his own history and culture, that made his filmmaking and his presence so special, so magical.'

### The Film

'The scope of David Lean...enriched by the vision of Ozu.'

– David Thomson

Thirty-five years ago, this film swept up nine Academy Awards. It has aged majestically, and cinema today is no more lavish; its imagery no more ravishing; nor its historical scope more compelling than *The Last Emperor*.

Yet within this sumptuous production lies a delicate, domestic tale of a boy who two months before his third birthday, became China's last emperor. Four years later, in 1912 when China became a republic, Pu Yi was forced to spend the remainder of his childhood and adolescence imprisoned in the Forbidden City.



In 1924, he was expelled from the City and languished as a playboy in exile in Tientsin. Ten years later, the Japanese made him the puppet ruler of Manchuria, and at the end of WWII, he was eventually captured by the Red Army and imprisoned in a re-education camp for a further ten years. Released, Pu Yi ended his days as an ordinary Chinese citizen, gardening in Beijing's Botanical Gardens.

Monarchies often make for engrossing stories, but seldom do they come as poignant as a toddler scampering through gigantic billowing curtains into vast Forbidden City courtyards, where thousands await his coronation. Or then imprisoned in ancient rooms, tended by obsequious servants and simpering eunuchs whom he treats like children's toys.

Shooting the entire film within the People's Republic of China and on sound stages in Italy, Bertolucci was the first foreign filmmaker granted permission to film in the Forbidden City, and he revels in the opportunity, setting nearly half the film in this fairy-tale location spread over 250 acres, crammed with opulent buildings and boasting 9,999 rooms.

The Chinese government provided Bertolucci with 19,000 extras including 2,000 soldiers – who shaved their heads – and 1,100 film students.

Producer Jeremy Thomas and Bertolucci first approached the Chinese government with two potential projects – an adaptation of Andrei Malraux's Shanghai-based novel *Man's Fate* (aka *The Human Condition*) or, alternatively, an adaptation of *From Emperor to Citizen*, the autobiography by China's last emperor Pu Yi.

The government favoured the emperor's story, offering studio facilities and an unlimited supply of extras in return for Chinese distribution and the right to approve the script.

Bertolucci has said the only changes requested were the correction of historical inaccuracies and the deletion of one scene considered too demeaning of the emperor.

Interviewed by Sandy Lieberon at the 2006 Berlinale Talent Campus, Jeremy Thomas said: 'It was less difficult than working with the [Hollywood] studio system. They made script notes, and made references to change some of the names, then the stamp went on and the door opened and we came.'

And in *The Los Angeles Times*: 'We had a two-page contract which opens with the statement, in the spirit of friendship and collaboration. It's rather like the Preamble [to the Constitution]. There's no first-party-this and second-party-that stuff.'

Despite the Chinese Government's apparent acquiescence to the historical events in the script, Stefano Baschiero cites a number of Chinese authors who, nevertheless took issue. The appearance in 1988 – one year after *The Last Emperor* – of the 28-episode Chinese series *Modai Huangdi*, based on Pu Yi's autobiography, made East-West comparisons possible, particularly as the domestic television series reportedly paid much stricter attention to the accuracy of Pu Yi's writing.

Baschiero reports the Chinese writers saw the biggest divergence between the two versions of Pu Yi's life as concerned with the 'realist materialism' of the Chinese series compared with the

‘emotional approach’ of Bertolucci’s work.

There were also pointed references to the Orientalism in Bertolucci’s film and his version of Chinese history made for Western eyes. Ding Ling (1988) stresses ‘how the Chinese value an historical film according to its faithfulness to the facts, demanding a high level of accuracy’.

Haibo Lu (1988) suggests the scene where the emperor sleeps with two women would never have happened in the imperial palace.

Baschiero also states: ‘It is interesting to note that an authorial approach emerges in these early Chinese criticisms, mostly in the attributions of the historical imprecisions to Bertolucci’s artistic goals, while there is no mention of the involvement of the Chinese government in the approval of the script. On the contrary, this feature was constantly underlined by the Western press, both to stress the idea of collaboration and the agreement with the facts portrayed.’

For his part, in 1998, Bertolucci was quite unapologetic about where his film came from: ‘I think it is a very Italian movie, *The Last Emperor*. It is very operatic, like Italian opera, and I think it one of my more Italian movies. The other reason is that I was and I am a bit fed up with reality in my country – even here, everywhere in the West, and so I go looking for a cultural atmosphere which has not been completely invaded and polluted and suffocated and killed by consumerism monoculture. And that’s why China is okay. And North Africa, Africa is okay.’

There’s no denying the strength of the Italian creative input. Bertolucci is

joined by those Oliver Stone calls the Italian director’s ‘holy trinity of creative genius – cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, production designer Ferdinando Scarfiotti and costume designer James Acheson.’ Along with co-writer Mark Peploe, musicians Ryuichi Sakamoto (who also acts in the film), David Byrne, Cong Su and the editor Gabrielli Cristiani: it’s a formidable team.

There’s also no denying that Bertolucci’s preoccupations with Marxism, Communism, Freud, eroticism and sexuality from his previous films surface once again in *The Last Emperor*. Bertolucci even includes Pu Yi’s exotic cousin Yoshiko Kawashima (Eastern Jewel) as part of his imperial family in Tientsin and Manchuria. Once a princess, Kawashima announced her gender fluidity at the age of 18 in 1925. Here, she appears as an opium-smoking, cross-dressing, bi-sexual, Japanese spy who likes a little foot fetish.

Bertolucci has described film editing as ‘...going into an underground mine where you find incredible precious metals you didn’t know were there while shooting. You see things for the first time. It is magic.’

Oliver Stone agrees: ‘Film is endlessly supple; it can be cut dozens of different ways to reveal. Like music or painting, film is ultimately outside left-brain logic, closer to Eisenstein’s hyperwarp of the senses, long ago described by the Hindus as a dreamscape.’

A great admirer of *The Last Emperor*, Stone calls it: ‘...a masterpiece – a fully shaped historical epic that allows us to understand the complex character of Pu Yi...it is a true epic expressing the fate of

the collective – in this case, the Chinese empire intertwined with the destiny of one individual ... as Mr Bertolucci describes it ‘The Dragon becomes a man.’

‘The visual magnificence of Bertolucci’s film is so great that he has removed the project almost beyond criticism.’  
– Hilary Mantel, *The Spectator*

‘In many ways, he has created what many thought impossible – an intimate epic.’  
– Michael Blowen, *Boston Globe*

‘When this film really sings, it’s as if Bertolucci had tapped the well-spring of cinema and, ecstatic, discovered the eroticism at its essence.’  
– Peter Rainer

‘Everything involving the life of Pu Yi was a waste. Everything except one thing: the notion that a single human life could have infinite value.’  
– Roger Ebert

#### Academy Awards:

Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Film Editing, Best Original Score, Best Sound.

#### Golden Globes

Best Motion Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Original Score.

#### BAFTAS

Best Film, Best Costume Design, Best Make-Up.

#### Film notes by Rod Bishop

#### The Restoration

A 4K scan of the original anamorphic 35mm negative and supervised by Turbine Medien, Munster, Germany.

Director: Bernardo BERTOLUCCI; Production Companies: Yanco Films Limited, TAO Films, Recorded Pictures, Screenframe, AAA Soprofilms, Hanway Films, Hemdale Film Corporation; Producer: Jeremy THOMAS; Script: Mark PEPLIE & Bernardo BERTOLUCCI, Enzo UNGARI, based on Puyi’s autobiography; Director of Photography: Vittorio STORARO; Editor: Gabriella CRISTANI; Production Design: Ferdinando SCARFIOTTI; Art Direction: Maria Teresa BARBASSO, Gianni GIOVAGNONI, Gianni SILVESTRI; Sound: Mike HOPKINS, David MOTTA, Bill ROWE, Ivan SHARROCK, Les WIGGINS; Music: David BYRNE, SAKAMOTO Ryuichi, SŪ Cōng; Costumes: James ACHERSON // Cast: John LONE (Pu Yi as an Adult); Richard VUU (Pi Yi as child); Tsou TIJGER (Pi Yu 8 years); Tao WU (Pi Yu 15 years); Joan CHEN (Wan Rong); Peter O’TOOLE (Reginald Johnston); Jade GO (Nursemaid); Cary-Hiroyuki TAGAWA (Chang); SAKAMOTO Ryūichi (Amakasu Masahiko); CHEN Kaige (Captain of Imperial Guard); Vivian WU Jun Mei (Wen Xiu); YING Ruo Cheng (Camp Governor); Victor WONG (Chen Paochen); Dennis DUN (Big Li); Maggie HAN (Eastern Jewel)

Italy, UK, USA | 1987 | 163 mins. | 4K Scope DCP (orig. 35mm, 70mm, 2.39:2) | Colour | Dolby Stereo Sd. | Mandarin, Manchu, Japanese, English, with English subtitles | (M)



## The Long Farewell/Dolgie Provody

### Kira Muratova

The Ukrainian Kira Muratova (1934–2018) was entirely absent from the shake-out of *Sight and Sound's* 2022 'Best Films of All Time' canon poll. That is a crime. But is it really so surprising? Muratova, intransigent and uncompromising to the end of her days, never fitted into anyone's categorisation of her, and never tried to flatter the sedimented perceptions of even her most devoted fans and champions. Intellectualising her cinema on the festival circuit left her cold; she just wanted to be left alone to create. And create she did: from *Brief Encounters* in 1967 to *Eternal Return* in 2012, her work was one, giant blast of energy, by turns lyrical and rude, absorbing and alienating. There are few figures in film history to whom she can be validly compared, although Dina Iordanova makes a good case for pairing her with the Czech Věra Chytilová (1929–2014), another frequently misunderstood maverick. Chytilová, however, cracked the *Sight and Sound* list with her anarcho-feminist classic, *Daisies* (1966). How many more decades before we see Muratova's ascension?

Muratova's career began earlier than *Brief Encounters*, in two films of the early '60s co-directed with her first husband, Alexander Muratov. She disliked them and wished they could be struck from her filmography; she resented researchers who foraged around in them for signs of her later style. *The Long Farewell* was put on ice by the Soviet film authorities in 1971, and did

not emerge from the vault until 1987 – when it received immediate acclaim. Between those two dates, Muratova made at least two key works – *Getting to Know the Big Wide World* (1978) and *Among Grey Stones* (1983) – but her path was clouded by a kind of semi-exile, moving from place to place (especially Odessa) to work. After '87, new co-production opportunities emerged for Muratova (already in her mid 50s), and she plunged into them with indefatigable zest – in close collaboration with hubby no. 2, painter-designer Evgeny Golubenko.

Muratova often proclaimed her sovereign distance from historical and political subject matter. Only once did she willingly testify to her times: in the corrosive masterpiece *The Asthenic Syndrome* (1989), a bleak view of collective, interpersonal confusion and chaos in the immediate post-Perestroika period – and a film like no other. For an in-depth appreciation of Muratova's life and work, I heartily recommend the dossier of written & video essays, 'Re-Discovering Kira Muratova', assembled by Dina Iordanova for the online publication *Frames*, no. 18 (Summer 2021).

### The Film

At the centre of *The Long Farewell* is a room. As we take in different aspects of it across the film, we may well wonder just what kind of room it is: spare bedroom, den, living room? What matters most to Muratova is that it is a space redolent with near-magical, imaginary transformations: slide images

are ceaselessly projected onto doorways (and thus on anybody who happens to enter); dolls and other intriguing objects line the shelves. This room is the seed or germ of everything that Muratova's cinema will become in later years: baroque, deliberately excessive, hyper-textured, gleefully artificial, anti-realistic. In 1971, however, Muratova – still somewhat constrained by the strictures of 'socialist realism' in the USSR – was still situating her plots in recognisably everyday milieux of work and leisure.

Like its superb predecessor *Brief Encounters*, *The Long Farewell* can show and tell us much – in passing, as it were – about the lived experiences of people under a Socialist system. Certain inequalities still linger (Muratova had to tone down what was perceived by the authorities as a dangerous 'class difference' between various characters) and women, especially, get the raw end

of professional dealings. The film drily bears out what was once explained in a seminar by the great Russian-Australian scholar Julia Vassilieva: that Russian society invites all women to take up their role as citizens on an equal footing with men – but, once admitted as citizens, they will no longer be regarded, in any meaningfully political way, as women.

This, in a nutshell, is the dilemma of Evgenia (Zinaida Sharko) in *The Long Farewell*, caught between motherhood and independence, public and private life. Some commentators (including the redoubtable Mikhail Iampolski) see a triumphant progression in the film from Evgenia wearing masks and performing roles to, in the end, becoming herself (as signalled by the act of tearing off her wig) – but Muratova never offers resolutions that are this neat and tidy.

Irresolution, drifting, agonised suspension: such is the predominant



mood-board of Muratovan cinema. It is often said that Muratova paid more attention to the murky space of interpersonal emotions – love, desire, friendship, family – than to timely social issues, and that this was the principal cause of the troubles she faced as a filmmaker within the Soviet system (ideological propaganda was decidedly not her thing). In this film which was considered ‘too bourgeois’ by the cultural commissars – a complaint the director often had to endure – it’s easy to see why the drama (such as it is) becomes immersed in the micro-movements, transfers and short-circuits, the smallest flickers of emotion: for this play of affects is veritably bottomless, infinite. Valeria Mutc has explained the colloquial sense of the title, which alludes to a famous Russian saying: ‘long farewells cause unnecessary tears.’ And in the back-and-forth between Evgenia and her son, Sasha (Oleg Vladimirovsky) – an immortal embodiment of teenage surliness – we may never reach the end of parting, returning and crying.

As often in Muratova – for whom the notion of a ‘central character’ seems a pretext at best, and a nuisance at worst – Sasha’s dark presence threatens to hivel off into a film of its own. The pains he suffers in proximity to his Mum are, more or less, the same pains he suffers in relation to all girls – and, indeed, all boys – of his own age: awkward hesitations, unreadable cues, unanswered questions, interrupted flow.

*The Long Farewell* is a jewel that allows us to gauge the evolution of Muratova’s approach and style. Although Muratova, at the time, may not have been aware of this affinity, the film makes a delightful

double-bill with another from 1971: John Cassavetes’ *Minnie and Moskowitz*. Like Cassavetes – another master of painstaking, fine-grained montage – Muratova experimented with including traces of multiple takes, and constructed halting dialogues through ceaseless verbal repetition (‘like in life’, she always said). Such repetition-and-variation, on both macro and micro scales, would become the sometimes maddening and provocative hallmark of her work in the 1990s and beyond, pushing it into an avant-garde realm all her own.

However, in *The Long Farewell* – a film of touches, glances, hesitations, outbursts and withdrawals – there is a poignant simplicity and directness that can draw any viewer in.

#### Notes © Adrian Martin

##### The Restoration

Restored in 4K by StudioCanal in collaboration with The Criterion Collection at L’Image Retrouvée laboratory, from the 35mm original negative preserved by Gosfil’mofond

Director: Kira MURATOVA; Production Company: Odesskaya Kinostuiya; Producer: G. KOGAN; Script: Natalya RYAZANTSEVA; Director of Photography: Gennady KARYUK; Editor: V. OLEYNIK; Production Design: E. RODRIGEZ; Sound: I. SKINDER; Music: O. KARAVAYCHUK; Costumes: N. AKIMOVA // Cast: Zinaida SHARKO (Yevgeniya Vasilyevna Ustinova); Oleg VLADIMIRSKY (Aleksander Sasha Ustinov); Yuriy KARUROV (Nikolay Sergyevich); Svetlana KABANOVA (Tatyana Kartseva)

USA | 1983 | 100 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.85:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | English | (R)18+

## The Mother and the Whore/La Maman et La Putain

### Jean Eustache

Jean Eustache has largely been an elusive figure of cinema; the scant availability of his films and his premature death afforded a cultish aura around this auteur. Even though his films drew deeply from an autobiographical root, and you are immediately plunged into his world when you watch one of the 15 films made during his 15 year career. His aura, nonetheless, remains intact and opaque. His films, however, come to tell a cohesive story of observation and despair.

Eustache was an autodidact. Born in 1938 in Pessac to a working class family; he was first brought up by his maternal grandmother, Odette Robert, who was also the subject of his film *Numero Zero* (there are two versions of this film, the shorter version at 50 mins is simply named *Odette Robert*), and at 13 years of age, he moved in with his mother at Narbonne. It was here where he gave up further schooling and gained an apprenticeship to become a certified electrician. His film *Mes Petites Amoureuses/My Little Loves* (1974) was a look back on this period of his life.

His love of films started at a young age; when Eustache moved to Paris in 1957, he frequented the Cinémathèque Française on weekends. He especially adored Pagnol and Renoir. It’s true to say that Eustache was delivered into the *Nouvelle Vague* esprit when it was in full swing. His wife, Jeanne Delos, worked as secretary at *Cahiers du cinéma* at the time. Eustache moved easily into that circle, mixing with Jean-Luc Godard,

Éric Rohmer, Jean Douchet and Jean-Pierre Léaud amongst others.

Upon going to Rohmer’s shoot of *La Boulangère de Monceau* (1963) he felt this experience brought him a step closer to the world of film. With the help of Paul Vecchiali, Eustache was able to make his first short film *La Soirée* (unfinished) in the same year. This was followed in rapid succession by *Les Mauvaises Fréquentations* | *Robinson’s Place* (1964) and *Le père Noël a les yeux bleus* (1966), the latter film was made using the film remnants from Godard’s *Masculine Feminine* (1966) and marked his first collaboration with Jean-Pierre Léaud. During these early years, Eustache also worked as an editor for Rivette and others, sometimes making uncredited guest appearances in films including Godard’s *Weekend* (1967) and later in Rivette’s *Celine and Julie Go Boating* (1974).

Eustache was quick to develop his own style. His documentaries took on a Wiseman-esque approach, bearing witness by neither glorifying nor intervening. Over the next seven or eight years, with as many films made, these stories poured out of him, as though he was a medium, a vessel. The French film critic, Serge Daney, called Eustache’s oeuvre a ‘film-river’ – and this river took a course away from traditional narratives or documentaries. Eustache directed almost a film a year until his death in 1981.

His shooting style was very different to the norm; largely due to the sparse resources and lack of finance available to him, he shot both *Le Cochon* and *La*



*Rosière de Pessac* in a day. Although he was meticulous in his preparation, to produce a one hour documentary from a single day's shoot was not easy and Eustache found this way of working to be increasingly perilous. When he finally arrived at *La Maman et la Putain*, regarded by Eustache as his first true feature film, he felt there was a lot to say about his situation.

The film's working title was *Du Pain et des Rolls* or *Bread and Rolls*, but during the shoot and in post-production, Eustache felt a 'shift' occurring – of something else taking over; 'an invasive, omnipresent character' overshadowing the protagonist's presence. He felt that Alexandre (his mouth-piece) became increasingly 'frail and dependent' to this other force, Lebrun's.

This film was inspired by his fractured real-life relationships with three women: his failed union with Catherine Garnier, his breakup with Françoise Lebrun, and his love for Marinka Matuszewski. This web became more intriguing and

tangled onscreen, mixing reality with fiction: Bernadette Lafont plays Marie, the character that Garnier is based upon; Isabelle Weingarten embodying the character Lebrun inspired, Gilberte; and finally, (I'm assuming) Veronika's character, played by Lebrun is based on Marinka Matuszewski.

Having put his life on screen, Eustache also suffered the consequences – his ex-lover Catherine Garnier, (not only was she Marie on screen, she additionally worked on the costumes for the film) committed suicide after watching a screening of the film (some believed her mother's recent death was also a trigger), leaving a note for Eustache that read, 'The film is sublime. Leave it as it is.'

Eustache frequently said in interviews that he needed the distance of history to protect himself in his films, and his next autobiographical feature (and also his last), *Mes Petites Amoureuses*, was infinitely more free and lyrical, most notably through an absence of dialogue.

Throughout his life, Eustache suffered greatly from depression, the tragedy of life that was his source material became weighted and suffocating. It exsanguinated him. He described it as a kind of vampirism: 'I sucked my own blood.' Whilst his desire for cinema was what held the wolves at bay, a contradictory force – of not having to make another film again, was just as strong. These irreconcilable differences tore him up.

After he broke his leg holidaying in Greece, he became depressed and reclusive upon learning that he would never be rid of his limp. Having locked himself in his Paris apartment for days on end, he finally shot himself in the heart with a revolver after a long phone conversation with Alix Cléo-Roubaud on the 5 November 1981. Alix was a photographer and wife of the writer, mathematician and Oulipo poet Jacques Roubaud, as well as the subject of Eustache's last short film *Les photos d'Alix*, together with Eustache's son, Boris. It is an intelligent and enigmatic cinematic essay. Eustache had pinned a note to the door of his room, 'Frappez fort. Comme pour réveiller un mort', 'Knock hard. As if to wake the dead.'

### The Film

To describe a film that is near to four hours in length and filled almost entirely with dialogue would be an impossible task; at best, it'd be a living simulacrum like that of Borges short story 'On the Exactitude of Science' where the art of cartography grew to such exacting magnitude that the map of the Empire came to be the size of the Empire, covering it from edge to edge, and rendering the map itself useless.

More succinctly, Eustache's *La Maman et la Putain* can perhaps be best described as a lament, a rhapsody on the word 'fuck'. It is spectral cinema at its core – haunting us, even as we watch it unfold...no one can escape its melancholic take on relationships, life and sexual politics: a worldview through the micro-cosmos of Eustache's own life at that particular point in time.

No wonder he described it as a film that he 'detests', because for him, it is a film without history, where the distance of time protects those who reveal their hidden selves. Here, the narrative is fuelled by the pain of his impotence: his inability to obtain funding for his films, despite their success and good reviews and also of his devastated love life, despite his taking many lovers. *La Maman et la Putain* is both raw and eloquent, it is a tale of a man twice failed, questioning the world into which he has been cast.

Eustache's shorts and documentaries up until that period have been successful, much lauded by other filmmakers. He had received favourable reviews from critics, but his funding came only from Godard and ORTF for his documentaries. Increasingly frustrated by this contradictory space he found himself in, Eustache began writing a response in his fury. This became an outpouring of dialogue, or rather, monologues, without any shot structures that 'piled up every day to form the basis of a colossal film running 5–6 hours.'

The film follows Alexandre (Jean-Pierre Léaud), an idle Parisian intellectual who is living with, or squatting with, his latest lover, Marie (Bernadette Lafont).

Alexandre is adrift – literally, drifting through life as he does girlfriends, and through the streets of Paris too – around the Left Bank on Boulevard Saint Germain, hanging out with friends or to read in cafés like the *Flore* or *Les Deux Magots* – in this latter space, conjuring up its band of artistic and writerly patrons: Verlaine, Rimbaud, Camus, Hemingway, Breton, Sartre and de Beauvoir to name but a few. It is also the milieu in which he meets with his latest potential love interest, Veronika (Françoise Lebrun), a Polish-French nurse.

The story unfolds in words. Eustache made it known that every single word heard had been scripted – in fact, he had memorised the script in its entirety; to make sure the actors stuck to every single syllable that was written. Although at times, the monologues seem meandering, excessive and paradoxical; they imbibe with a sense of truthfulness and banality that casts a strange and almost hallucinatory power over us. Absorbing and repellent; neither the *ménage à trois* nor the camera gives way to action at any point. Eustache's chamber piece, this strange trio of Léaud, Lafont, and Lebrun, comes to consume the inhabitants of the film as well as the viewers. We are confronted with what Lafont calls 'dialogue on fire', its searing content is without sentimentality and scorches those who stay to watch: we are left with more than afterimages as the film builds to its finale – Lebrun's 10 minute monologue – the entire length of a 16mm reel.

Lebrun's Veronika hypnotises us with her harsh voice and inflexible countenance – hunched over in her black shawl. It's hard to imagine that this was only her third film – her performance was astonishing;

intimate and morose; and outshone Léaud's manufactured presence. He seemed to be out of kilter to the rhythms of Lafont and Lebrun; but in rhythm with his own fabricated existence as 'actor'. Aptly described by Truffaut, who said of Léaud to be 'an anti-documentary actor', in that he only has 'to say 'good morning' and we find ourselves tipping over into fiction.'

On set, Léaud found it difficult to memorise the lengthy dialogue (he had the most words) and the pressure of getting every precise detail correct gave a peculiar energy to his performance, one that added to the texture of the film. For Lebrun's final 10 minute piece to camera, she had the script on her lap if she needed it, she didn't – the first take was used.

Launched at the Cannes Film Festival in 1973, the film was divisive from the start. The fact that it won the Grand Prix did not prevent it from a stormy reception. Ingrid Bergman, the President of the Jury that year let it be known that she found it 'regrettable that France saw it fit to be represented by these two films' (the other was *La Grande Bouffe*), which she deemed as 'the most sordid and vulgar of the Festival.' Its initial 1973 theatrical release was only to an audience of 343,000.

Because the camera never looks away, time stretches. The trio come to be your friends for the duration. You are attentive to their whims and react viscerally to their decisions or indecisions; their very disposition makes you respond in a very guttural way.

In an interview, Eustache commented on how films are frequently reduced to 1 or 1½ hours in duration, with some exceptions; epic or grand films could go

for 3–4 hours, 'but why can't an intimate film also be grand or be as long?' And this is true of his masterpiece. As the film had not been in ready circulation on DVD, nor shown in the theatres – in fact, it has been rarely seen beyond the small screen of one's computer. *La Maman et la Putain* had been, for me, the perfect bedroom cinema, and Eustache: a bedroom auteur.

So, who is the 'mother' and who is the 'whore'? Even without Eustache's intense exploration into sexual politics of the time, we should come to know that there is no mother, just as there is no whore. Instead, on screen are 'the lost children of May '68', who have now grown older, and perhaps more disenchanted, it is Eustache who was able to give them a voice – and for this voice to be carried through to the present; and rightfully on the big screen.

The Eustache milieu is not necessarily a happy one, but it aims to tell it as it is, and only of the things he loves: 'women, dandyism, Paris, the country and the French language', as explicated by Serge Daney in his tribute to Eustache. There is indeed an aura around Eustache, our patron saint of the text of fire and the guardian of our melancholies of love.

### Notes by Janice Tong

#### The Restoration

The rights to *La Maman et La Putain* were held by the family for almost 50 years, and only recently released by Boris Eustache to Les Films du Losange for this new restoration.

*La Maman et La Putain* was restored and remastered in 4K in 2022 by Les Films du Losange with the support of CNC and

the participation of La Cinémathèque suisse and Chanel. Image restoration by L'Imagine Ritrovata/Éclair Classics, supervised by Jacques Besse and Boris Eustache (Jean Eustache's son), with sound restoration by Léon Rousseau-L.E. Diapason and a Janus Films release. To launch the restoration of this rarely-seen film, it was screened as part of the Cannes Film Festival in 2022 as part of the *Cannes Classics* selection on May 17 and then previewed in Paris on June 2 at the MK2 Odéon to a full house. June 8 marked the film's theatrical release, with 60 prints distributed across France. A special screening was also held at the Lincoln Centre in NYC in October, with an introduction by Françoise Lebrun and Q&A session with restoration producer Charles Gillibert.

Director: Jean EUSTACHE; Production Companies: Elite Films, Ciné Qua Non, Les Films du Losange, Simar Films, V.M. Productions; Producer: Pierre COTTRELL; Script: Jean EUSTACHE; Photography: Pierre LHOMME; Editors: Denise DE CASABIANCA, Jean EUSTACHE; Sound: Nara KOLLERY, Paul LAINÉ, Jean-Pierre RUH; Costumes: Catherine GARDINER // Cast: Jean-Pierre LÉAUD (Alexandre); Bernadette LAFONT (Marie); Françoise LEBRUN (Veronika); Isabelle WEINGARTEN (Gilberte); Jacques RENARD (Alexandre's Friend); Jean DOUCHET (Man in Café de Flore, uncredited); Jean-Claude BIETTE (Man in Café dux Magots, uncredited); Bernard EISENSCHITZ (Gilbert's Husband, uncredited); André TÉCHINÉ (Man in Café deux Magots, uncredited); Caroline LOEB (Girl reading newspaper uncredited)

France | 1973 | 216 mins. | 4K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | French with Eng. Subtitles | U/C15+.

## The many points of departure for Jean Eustache's masterpiece

Like being trapped into confrontation with a pit of wild creatures is how Jean Eustache's masterpiece has been seen. The film is so confronting for some audiences that screenings are best rumoured rather than known. Perhaps so, but the film is nonetheless regarded as one of the most important French films of all time. Some say the most important. A recent poll of French film critics placed it at the top of the list of 100 best French films, ahead of Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963) and Jean Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu* (1939). *La Maman et la Putain* marks the very end of the Nouvelle Vague while also expanding its very inventiveness by abandoning the movement's usual decorum. So, just how is it possible that a 3-hour 40-minute low-budget black-and-white film shot on 16mm by a (then) lesser-known director could so electrify audiences that it should win the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury at Cannes in 1973?

*The Mother and the Whore* examines the relationship of Alexandre (played by Jean-Pierre Léaud) with an older woman Marie (played by Bernadette Lafont) and a promiscuous nurse named Veronika (played by Françoise Lebrun). Fundamentally of course the film is about human relating, always the stuff of great drama, which in this case is mostly depicted through unusually subtle performances. The dialogue – at times positively torrential – seems mostly improvised when in fact it is very tightly scripted.

Performances are heightened by a *mise-en-scène* that employs masterful camerawork by Pierre Lhomme. Eustache eschews conventional cutting together of wide-shots, medium-shots, closeups and so on by leaving the camera in the room with his characters. This almost Zen-like avoidance of glossy artifice means the camera never seems to move (it does) and Eustache skilfully channels our attention onto his characters as they undergo great anguish and despair. In another departure, by rejecting infidelity within middle-class marriage as the harmless quotidian *cinq-à-sept* tryst, Eustache powerfully reworks the love triangle with comic poignancy. It was probably inevitable that in 1973 such an encounter between the radical and the reactionary would be too much for some attending the premiere screening in Cannes. Like for the Catholic Church, for them the film was an abomination, though fortunately for the rest of us just as many championed its reflective exploration of eroticism.

Towards the end of the film, in her now famous monologue, Veronika exalts the holy trinity of love, sex and procreation while expressing the pain of the divided female psyche. Eustache shows how unfulfilled desire intertwines with men's erotic attachments to uncover a hidden source of misogyny. By defining the psychic split between the two women he shows the unconscious tendency of men to turn their wives or lovers into mothers. Which is to say

the film offers that rare instance in the French cinema where the battle of the sexes is not portrayed exclusively from the male point of view.

The inconvenient (though justified) length of the film has obviously worked against its availability over the years. By the same token the film's distribution has also been forever thwarted through various disagreements and disputes including with Eustache's son Boris, current owner of the rights. In one of these Boris claimed the Cinémathèque Française in Paris had stolen a print in 2017 and screened it without permission. He was later quoted by *Le Monde* as saying that he didn't give a fuck about cinephiles or for that matter what anybody said about him. In 2019 – and just in the nick of

time – the film's rapidly deteriorating duplicating materials were finally able to be rescued by archivists and the film digitally restored to 4K.

*The Mother and the Whore* is indeed an overwhelming film. For all his extraordinary talent, his obvious emotional intelligence and ability to penetrate the veil of deep psychological impulse, Jean Eustache never attained ongoing equilibrium. The film is dedicated to one of his former lovers, Catherine Garnier, on whom it is said the character of Marie is based and who took her own life after viewing a roughcut during post-production. Nine years later Eustache followed by taking a revolver and firing a bullet into his own heart.

**David Roe**



Jean Eustache

## Ruggles of Red Gap

### Leo McCarey

Famously handsome and charming, McCarey trained and briefly practiced as a defence attorney until an irate client, intent on mayhem, chased him out of the court-room. He drifted into working for Hal Roach, independent producer of two-reel comedies. His role as 'Supervisor' required him, he said, to do 'practically everything in the film, to write the story, to cut it, to collect the gags, to coordinate everything, to view the rushes, to take care of the editing, sending copies, re-editing when the reactions to the preview had not been good enough, and even, from time to time, shooting the scenes a second time.' Among his most notable achievements was to match cerebral Stan Laurel with amiable doofus Oliver Hardy. 'Laurel wrote the films and participated in their creation,' McCarey recalled. 'Hardy was really incapable of creating anything at all. It was astounding that he could even find his way to the studio.'

McCarey was that rarest of individuals in the Hollywood community, a devout Catholic. Once he began to direct features, his stories frequently dealt, like *Ruggles of Red Gap*, with moral or social transformation. In *Love Affair*, a charming seducer discovers true love through sacrifice, and in *The Awful Truth* a married couple only bond when they try to divorce. His Catholicism also directly inspired *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St Mary's*: stories of happy-go-lucky priest Bing Crosby struggling to influence intransigent traditionalists within his own faith.

At the same time, McCarey was notorious for holding a grudge. He fought a twenty-year feud with Cary Grant, accusing him, after working on *The Awful Truth*, of copying his style. He never forgave Paramount for ejecting him from the lot following completion of a film. 'After that,' he said with satisfaction, 'every film I did for them cost half a million more than it should.'

### The Film

Leo McCarey entered the nineteen-thirties a comedy veteran, having directed, produced and written scores of two-reelers. Making *Duck Soup* with the Marx Brothers, directing Eddie Cantor in *The Kid From Spain* and Mae West in *Belle of the Nineties* appeared to set his feature career on the same comic path.

Charles Laughton was no less pigeon-holed, playing tyrants, murderers and mad doctors. (*Variety* would note of *Ruggles of Red Gap* that, 'for the first time in pictures, he has not been cast as a psychopathic subject.') Determined to transform his career, Laughton bought Harry Leon Wilson's novel about a British manservant transplanted to the American west and worked with a writer to flesh out the character. Mainly because of his work with the Marx Brothers, he specified McCarey to direct.

Valet to Roland Young's Earl of Burnstead, Marmaduke Ruggles is lost in a poker game to *nouveau riche* American Egbert Floud, who is visiting Europe at the behest of his socially-climbing wife Effie (Mary Boland). He returns with them to their home in Red Gap,



where he's mistaken for a distinguished military man and the Flouds' house-guest. Despite the efforts of Effie's snobbish sister and brother-in-law, Ruggles embraces Red Gap and in turn is embraced by its people. He courts a local widow (Zasu Pitts) and together they open a restaurant that celebrates Anglo-American friendship.

In the process, Ruggles adopts American values, particularly those of social equality, which inspire a key scene in the film. When locals in a bar can't recall the words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Ruggles stuns them by reciting the entire speech from memory. Laughton called the experience of filming this scene 'the most moving thing that ever happened to me'. He repeatedly broke down during the day-and-a-half it took to shoot. (At such moments, editor Edward Dmytryk shrewdly cuts away from Laughton to show only his back and the awed faces of watching barflies.)

Production was beset with problems. Shooting was briefly suspended when

he was hospitalised. (A masochist, Laughton habitually suffered injuries inflicted by local 'rough trade' rent boys.) He had still been at MGM when shooting started, playing Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield*, a role that required his head to be shaved. MGM grudgingly replaced him with W.C. Fields, but for some scenes as Ruggles Laughton obviously wears a wig. (Laughton fulfilled his MGM contract with an Oscar-winning performance as Captain Bligh in *Mutiny of the Bounty* – for the cast and crew of which, on the last day of shooting, he reprised his recitation of the Gettysburg Address, also repeated on the set of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.)

Reviews praised his performance as the British fish out of his depth in American waters. 'Laughton gives us a pudgy, droll and quite irresistible Ruggles,' wrote the *New York Times*, 'who reveals only the briefest taint of the Laughton pathology.' Arguably, however, it was his skill in embodying Quasimodo, Nero and vivisectionist Doctor Moreau that freed him to play a drunken Ruggles,



emitting tentative whoops at unexpected moments, leaping on the backs of unsuspecting fellow boozers, and reclining in alcoholic placidity on the saddle of a carousel horse.

### Notes by John Baxter

#### The Restoration

World Premiere of the 4K Restoration of *Ruggles of Red Gap*. Universal Pictures utilized the 35mm Nitrate Fine Grain borrowed from the Library of Congress, and the 35mm Optical Track Positive from the Universal Studios archive. The picture elements were scanned in 4K on an ARRI film scanner for a 4K workflow. Universal applied digital processes to improve flicker and stability, and to clean up dirt, projection cues, and damage in Reels 2 and 4. The audio elements were scanned, and digital audio restoration tools were applied to reduce anomalies,

noise floor, hum, and overall level adjustments. Universal Pictures created a black and white 4K Digital Master and a 4K DCP. Restoration services conducted by Universal StudioPost.

Director: Leo MCCAREY; Production Company: Paramount Pictures; Producer: Arthur J. HORNBLOWER; Script: Walter DELEON & Harlan THOMPSON, Humphrey PEARSON, based on the novel by Harry Leon Wilson; Photography: Alfred GILKS; Editor: [Edward DMYTRYK, uncredited]; Sound: [Philip WISDOM, uncredited]; Music: [John LEIPOLD, Heinz ROEMHELD, uncredited]; Costumes: [Travis BANTON uncredited] // Cast: Charles LAUGHTON (Ruggles); Mary BOLAND (Effie Floud); Charles Ruggles (Egbert Floud); Zasu PITTS (Prunella Judson); Roland YOUNG (Earl of Burnstead); Lelia HYAMS (Nell Kenner)

USA | 1935 | 90 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | English | (G)

## Serious Undertakings

### Helen Grace

Helen Grace (b. Gunditjmara Country) is an artist, writer and teacher, based in Sydney (Wangal Country) and (formerly) Hong Kong. She was the Founding Director of the MA Programme in Visual Culture Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong and is now Associate, Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney; in 2012–13 she was Visiting Professor in the Department of English, National Central University, Taiwan on a National Science Council Fellowship.

Helen is an award winning filmmaker and new media producer. Her photo media work is in the collections

of Artbank, National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of NSW and Art Gallery of South Australia as well as private collections nationally and internationally.

Her recent projects include *Justice for Violet and Bruce*, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 2022, *The Housing Question* (with Narelle Jubelin), Penrith Regional Galleries, Home of the Lewers Bequest, 2019, *Thought Log*, SCA Galleries, Sydney (2016) and *Map of Spirits*, Gallery 4A, Sydney (2015). Her recent books include *Culture, Aesthetics and Affect in Ubiquitous Media: The Prosaic Image* (Routledge, 2014) and *Technovisuality: Cultural Re-enchantment*

*and the Experience of Technology*. (Co editors, Amy Chan, Kit Sze and Wong Kin Yuen) IB Tauris, 2016)

In 1983 *Serious Undertakings* won the Rouben Mamoulian Prize for Best Short Film, Sydney Film Festival (judged by an international panel, Ken Wlaschin, Director, London Film Festival, Linda Myles, British Film Institute, Peter Greenway, film director), the Greater Union Award for Best Film in the General Category, Sydney Film Festival. Australian Film Institute Award for Best Experimental Film, Non-feature Section, Australian Film Institute. It was selected for screening at the Edinburgh Film Festival, London International Film Festival, Festival d'Automne, Paris, and festivals in Figueira da Foz, Melbourne, Rotterdam, San Francisco, Sceaux, Ann Arbor, Hong Kong and many others.

### The Film

'I have the impression [some feminists] are relying too much on an existentialist concept of woman, a concept that attaches a guilt complex to the maternal function. Either one has children, but that means one is not good for anything else, or one does not, and then it becomes possible to devote oneself to serious undertakings.' (Helen Grace)

*Serious Undertakings* is a fascinating film about the construction of history, culture and politics.

Divided into five segments headed by quotes, the film explores how dominant ideas of Australian history, national character and sexual difference are determined by who is telling the story and how it is told. It manipulates sound and image in the film to expose and subvert these ideas.

*Serious Undertakings* breaks new ground in understanding the construction of meaning itself and was a landmark Australian film when it was made in 1983. It had a profound influence on many of the independent documentaries that followed it, including films such as *Landslides* (Sarah Gibson and Susan Lambert, 1985), *Camera Natura* (Ross Gibson, 1986) and *All that is Solid* (John Hughes 1988). Funded by the Women's Film Fund, Alex Gerbaz described it in the *NFSA Journal* as 'a powerful piece of oppositional feminist cinema' (2008, Vol 3, No 1).

The film exemplifies the impact of 1970s screen theory on the making of independent films. This theory proposed that challenging established political power meant subverting the very language in which it is embedded. Helen Grace's brilliance lies in using the language of cinema to deconstruct and ridicule dominant cultural and political ideas. By exposing its own construction, *Serious Undertakings* self-consciously illustrates how the meaning we give to events and ideas is constructed by who reports them.

Underlying the film is the attempt to show that there are many other experiences and perspectives that, if documented, would tell a very different story. In this regard *Serious Undertakings* highlights the lack of women's voices and experience in the construction of cultural and historical analysis. By inserting this female voice, the film challenges the male-dominated discourses of the day. A central and recurring theme throughout the film is the experience and imagery of motherhood and maternity. Grace introduces the film with this voice over:



Woman's voice: She wanted to make a film about childcare. Man's voice: I'd rather make a film about the Baader-Meinhof gang than about childcare.

This underlines the difficulty of getting the everyday experience of women's lives up on the screen.

*Serious Undertakings* was a dramatic break away from more traditional documentary forms. It was conceptual not descriptive. The content was not observed, not simply experiential, and didn't tell a story. It was in no way factual or based around an event. It was constructed using all the cinematic techniques available to documentary and fiction films. As a film it blurs the boundaries between drama and documentary, fiction and non-fiction. Episodic in structure, it is divided into five chapters each exploring a different perceived 'truth'.

Fundamental to the film is the use of filmic techniques to remind the viewer that cinema itself is a construct. Juxtaposition of voice and image, fragmentation of the narrative and altering the film's texture through optical techniques all serve to subvert the

power of interviews with 'experts', classic moments in cinema, and accepted myths about Australian culture and history. Sound grabs from radio, news, ads, children's voices reading poetry, sound effects and personal stories all provide the soundscape, set against non-literal images to give them a different meaning.

Throughout the film academic experts are filmed in interviews discussing the history of Australian art, film and sexual politics. These interviews are often drowned out by a woman's voice espousing a different perspective. Increasingly the interviews are interrupted – a woman vacuums though the frame, another does the dishes in the background – as the male interviewees continue to pontificate. Finally, the interview is visually interrupted with optical effects that obliterate the 'talking head' as it keeps talking.

*Serious Undertakings* was a groundbreaking film when it was made and today remains a valuable reminder of how important form is to content in cinema and to the meaning we give to our understanding of culture, politics and history.

### Film Notes by Susan Lambert

Reprinted from *Australian Screen* a website produced by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

### The Restoration

The remastering is based on the 4K frame-by-frame scan which the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) originally did from a print, the A&B rolls having been lost when Colorfilm closed. The NFSA scanned the print but did not colour-correct or work with the sound track. The film-makers have added in freshly scanned material from the original 35mm photographic material which had been downsized to 16mm in the original edit in 1982. Also added in is a new section on the McCubbin *Pioneer* painting, based on a hi-res digital version. This work has produced

a much crisper version, both of image and sound, also achieving inter-title sharpness, which was wanted at the time but could not be achieved on 16mm. The completion of the restoration has been funded by the film-makers.

### Restoration Note by Helen Grace

Director: Helen GRACE; Production Company: Stunned Mullet Productions, with the assistance of the Woman's Film Fund; Producer: Erika ADDIS; Script: Helen GRACE; Photography: Erika ADDIS; Editors: Sara BENNETT, John MORRIS; Sound: John CRUTHERS, Alasdair MACFARLANE; Artwork and Animations: Lee WHITMORE // Cast: Judy Ferris, Helen Grace, John Witteron, Robert Hughes, Julie Rigg, Chris Winter, Robin Laurie (Narrators)

Australia | 1983 | 26 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 16mm, 1.37:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | English | (G)

## Shoeshine/Sciucià

**This film is presented with the generous support of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Sydney**

### Vittorio De Sica

In a 1971 interview with Charles Thomas Samuels, Vittorio De Sica made a sad summation of his career in film: 'All my good films, which I financed myself, made nothing. Only my bad films made money. Money has been my ruin.'

Good films. Bad films. In De Sica's filmography, it is relatively easy to distinguish them. It seems almost as if they were directed by two different men. For how could the man who made *The Bicycle Thief* (*Ladri di Biciclette*, 1948) have made *Woman Times Seven* (1967), a

showcase for Shirley MacLaine's dubious talents in seven equally moribund roles? Or, *A Place for Lovers* (*Amanti*, 1968), wherein Mastroianni pursues Faye Dunaway, who is dying from a brain tumor (or was it the other way around)? Or, *The Voyage* (*Il Viaggio*, 1974), his posthumous film, a turgid romance with the unlikely pairing of Sophia Loren and Richard Burton?

If we look closer, however, it becomes obvious that De Sica's career did not follow so simple a trajectory. It would be perilous, in fact, to uphold his criterion in the face of some glorious exceptions. For, in which category would De Sica have placed *The Gold of Naples* (*Loro di Napoli*, 1954), which he didn't produce

and which made money? Or the film that represented his comeback, *Two Women* (*La Ciociara*, 1961), which was produced by Joseph E. Levine and starred Sophia Loren and Jean-Paul Belmondo (and which, incidentally, won a few Oscars)? Or, *Filumena Marturano* (1964), produced by Carlo Ponti and distributed in the U.S. by Joseph Levine, who doubtless gave it the asinine American title *Marriage Italian-Style*?

*The Gold of Naples* was originally a six-part film, derived from a Giuseppe Marotta novel depicting the picaresque lives of Neapolitans. Two of the episodes were cut for its American release, presumably because they were considered too esoterically Italian. Of the four remaining parts, two stand as monuments to De Sica's ability to regenerate the sometimes forgotten art of film acting. They both climax at momentary character *epiphanies* that required the actors to undergo emotional transformations before our very eyes. Yet De Sica and his actors make the transformations so understated that the effect is altogether astonishing. The first of these two parts depicts a local hood who tyrannizes a family, until, having finally had enough, the family stands in unison against him. The hood stands there, in the family's kitchen, ready to tear them limb from limb, when he suddenly sees the desperate determination in their faces, even on the face of their little boy. He looks down, fiddles with his hat, and backs away, quietly closing the front door behind him.

The second great episode shows us Teresa, a prostitute approached with a marriage proposal from a wealthy

young man. Never once questioning the unlikelihood of her good fortune, Teresa is informed by her new husband on her wedding night that he only married her in order to atone for the suicide of a virtuous young girl whose affections he had ignored. He assures her that she will enjoy the comfort of her new social position, but the whole town is to know of his marriage to a streetwalker so that he might spend the rest of his life paying for his unthinking cruelty to the dead girl. Tearfully fleeing from her humiliation, Teresa leaves the house and hurries down the dark street. But before getting more than a few blocks away she suddenly stops, gazing at the night and the inevitable return to her old life. Silvana Mangano gives the performance of her life as she communicates, with a few sobs and the stamp of a lifetime of hard choices on her face, how wealth and comfort can render the unthinkable somehow preferable to a hell she knows only too well. She goes back to the house – her house, and raps entreatingly on the huge wooden door.

*Two Women* was based on an Alberto Moravia story named after its heroine, Cesira, 'la Ciociara' (i.e., woman from Ciociara). *The Gold of Naples* introduced a voluptuous young actress to the world named Sophia Loren. By the time Loren's producer-boyfriend Carlo Ponti approached De Sica with the project of adapting the Moravia story to film, she was on the verge of international stardom. De Sica had made only two films in the seven years after *The Gold of Naples*. He had produced *The Roof* (*Il Tetto*, 1956) with his own money – again addressing social concerns, this time a young couple's attempts to put a



Publicity still

roof over their heads. True to De Sica's dictum, it made no money. Two years later, he made Gina Lollobrigida a star in *Anna of Brooklyn* (*Anna di Brooklyn*, 1958), without managing to contribute a tincture of luster to his own reputation. With *Two Women*, De Sica returned to familiar terrain, in a thoroughly neo-realist mode. The *other* woman in *Two Women* is Cesira's daughter, Rosetta. Together they leave war-ravaged Rome for the relative safety of the countryside – eventually returning to Cesira's village. Along the way, they encounter various instances of war's ultimate obscenity. Spared in their encounters with Germans and fascist Italians, both mother and daughter are ultimately raped by the Allies – a truckload of leering Moroccans – within the presumed sanctuary of a derelict church. Nothing and no one is spared the indiscriminate barbarity. De Sica, by concentrating less on events than on the effects they elicit in his characters, managed once again to humanize his

material, to subsume history in the life of his heroine.

By the time De Sica made *Filumena Marturano* in 1964, neo-realism was quite belatedly dead, and no one but its inveterate hardliners were lamenting its passing. Nonetheless, De Sica managed to discover, in widescreen Eastmancolor, a style to suit the Eduardo De Filippo play he had chosen to adapt – a dramatic approach to life embracing both the glorious and the ridiculous. Here we are once again introduced to a familiar acting pair, Marcello Mastroianni and Sophia Loren. But we are quickly convinced through superb acting and a genuine feeling for the city of Naples that this is to be something more than yet another bathetic love story. Sure, the flashbacks are handled rather quaintly, and the music is awful, but the film embraces so much that it would be useless to complain that its embrace is sometimes clumsy. De Sica takes

us well past the usual melodramatic conclusions in his characters' lives to an ending that is neither final nor quite fulfilling. It may be the cheeriest ending to any of his films: Filumena/Sophia marries Domenico/Marcello. But why is Filumena crying as the camera tracks discreetly away from her?

In 1952, after his last 'good' film – *Umberto D* – flopped (read: 'made no money'), De Sica answered the call of David O. Selznick and directed *Stazioni Termini* (1952), clumsily renamed *Indiscretion of an American Wife* in the U.S., starring Selznick's wife, Jennifer Jones. Living up to her reputation as a notorious pain in the neck, Jones was required to wear a Christian Dior hat that she hated so intensely she attempted to flush it down a toilet. De Sica explained to her morosely that he could have made another *The Bicycle Thief* with what her hat was worth.

De Sica never made another *The Bicycle Thief*. He became the pampered captive of the likes of Joe Levine and Carlo Ponti. Even his old comrade, Cesare Zavattini, with whom he first found his authentic voice in *I Bambini ci Guardano*, (*The Children Are Watching Us*, 1943), would follow him into obscurity. Their commitment to examining the lives of the poor was derived from their devotion to Communism, which Mussolini helped arouse, and which a crippled economy after the war allowed to blossom into what is probably the single most important movement in film – only later to be codified by the term *neo-realism*.

Neo-realism would quickly become a political, as well as an artistic, creed. Every Italian film was scrutinized for

its fidelity to an inviolate code. What saved De Sica from becoming merely doctrinaire, and what would arouse the disfavor of doctrinaire Italian critics, was his unflinching honesty and his unwavering compassion for what most of us have since forgotten – the 'invisible ones' who unwittingly fell through the cracks in our universe: the shoeshine boys of Rome; a paper-hanger who has to sell his nuptial linen to buy a bicycle; an orphan boy whose only escape from a Milanese shanty town is with an enchanted dove; an old man driven to beg for a few lire so that his dog can have a saucer of milk. It is the measure of the humanity of any age if it can sometimes find its heroes in such company.

#### Notes on Vittorio De Sica by Dan Harper

These notes first appeared in *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 11, December 2000 and are reprinted by kind permission of the Editorial Board.

#### The Film

Sergei Eisenstein emphasized 'the look of the child' in his essay *Charlie the Kid*. That is also the core of the mise-en-scène of Vittorio De Sica in his first three significant films as a director (*I bambini ci guardano*, *Sciuscià*, *Ladri di biciclette*) and to some extent his fourth one, *Miracolo a Milano*.

In *Sciuscià*, war, having brought about a huge growth of the lumpenproletariat, is now being continued in other forms, as a street war in the urban jungle. Situations that the state, the bureaucracy and the prison system submit people to that are profoundly and inhumanly absurd with respect to the look of the child.

Whereas the accusation in *I bambini ci guardano* was directed at the parents, it is here transferred to the machinery of the society. Against the background of a cruel statement is a constantly marvellous purity of observation. When a film screening – consisting of poor war newsreels – takes place at the prison, a little tubercular boy is ecstatic: 'There is the ocean.' He has but a few more moments to live. The ephemeral moving image may amount to next to nothing, but filtered through the boy's consciousness, this flash of nature recorded on film becomes durable testimony that life is precious and even the most disadvantaged person has not lived in vain.

The true subject matter of *Sciuscià* is the friendship of Pasquale and Giuseppe. It sustains insurmountable adversities and finally transcends a death that happens by accident and is pitilessly cruel in its very arbitrariness. The depth of the emotion between the boys – testified to by the destructive intensity of their conflict – is the measure of all things.

The white horse bought by the boys signifies the absolute finality of their bond. For others it is a mere commercial contract to be brokered at will. *Sciuscià* is a new version about the two worlds of Jean Vigo – One, the world of the grownups and their war, fascism and corruption has been depicted in terms of a cool mundane realism, sometimes as a comic trifle; and then the world of the children is largely invisible, hidden, a dream. It can be experienced on their faces or in images conceived in the strange chiaroscuro of a legend. The vision of the two boys in the forest on the back of a white horse is like a fairytale hovering over evil times.

#### Film notes by Peter von Bagh

Originally published as *Taikayö* [A Night of Magic], Love Kirjat, Helsinki 1981 (translated by Antti Alanen). This excerpt first appeared in the catalogue for *Il Cinema Ritrovato* 2023 published by the Cineteca Di Bologna and reprinted here by kind permission.

#### The Restoration

Presented by The Film Foundation and Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna. Restored in 4K by The Film Foundation and Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata in association with Orium S.A. Restoration funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation.

Director: Vittorio DE SICA ;Production Company: Societa Cooperativa Alfa Cinematografica; Producer: Paolo William TAMBURELLA; Script: Sergio AMIDEI & Adolfo FRANCI & Cesare Giulio VIOLA & Cesare ZAVATTINI; Photography: Anchise BRIZZI; Editor: Nicolò LAZZARI; Production Design: Ivo BATTELLI, G. LOMBARDOZZI; Sound: Tullio PARMEGIANI; Music: Alessandro CICOGNINI // Cast: Franco INTERLENGHI (Pasquale Maggi); Rinaldo SMORDONI (Giuseppe Filippucci); Aniello MELE (Raffaele); Bruno ORTENZI (Arcangeli); Emilio CIGOLI (Staffera)

USA | 1983 | 100 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.85:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | English | (R)18+



## Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans

**This program is presented with the generous support of David and Leith Bruce-Steer**

### Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

After distinguished service in the 1914–18 War F. W. Murnau returned to Germany and established a film company with the actor Conrad Veidt. Between 1919 and 1926 Murnau made 18 feature films including the classics *The Haunted Castle / Castle Vogeloed* (1921), *Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror* (1922) and *Der Letzte Mann / The Last Laugh* (1924).

After two more films, *Tartuffe* and *Faust* (both 1926), he accepted an invitation from William Fox, the head of the Fox Company to come to America. Murnau signed a four-year, four-picture deal with an annual salary beginning at \$125,000 and rising in increments to \$200,000.

The first picture Murnau made under this contract was *Sunrise* (1927) and Murnau used many of his own team from his German productions, notably scriptwriter Carl Mayer and designer Rochus Gliese. Photographer Charles Rosher had just spent a year working with Murnau in Germany.

Murnau made only two more films for Fox. *The Four Devils* (1928) is now regarded as lost and *City Girl* (1930) was a box office disappointment even though it is now regarded among his best work.

In 1931 Murnau joined forces with the documentarist Robert Flaherty to make *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas*. Richard Koszarski, one of the best chroniclers of the silent film era noted ‘The

Murnau-dominated film that emerged, *Tabu* (1931), remains the last great achievement of the silent cinema.’

Murnau died in a car accident a week before *Tabu* opened.

Following its release *Sunrise* won three Oscars for Best Actress (Janet Gaynor), Cinematography, and a never-repeated award for ‘Unique and Artistic Picture’. *Sunrise* was recently voted #11 in the 2022 *Sight & Sound* poll of the greatest films ever made.

### The Film

What can one say that hasn’t already been said about F.W. Murnau’s lyrical masterpiece, *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927). The film marks the German auteur’s first American film after being coaxed out of Germany to the burgeoning Hollywood by producer William Fox, the founder of Fox Film Corporation. Much like Orson Welles with *Citizen Kane* (1941) at RKO Studios, Murnau was given carte blanche by Fox Studios to make *Sunrise* entirely in his own vision. Murnau meticulously planned the film whilst still in Germany, eventually arriving in America where he and his crew would create one of the most elaborate sets the studio had seen at the time, building city streets, a theme park and the idyllic nameless village. Despite these efforts, like *Citizen Kane*, *Sunrise* was a commercial flop upon its initial release. Yet only two years later, in 1929, the film was critically reassessed and hailed at the inaugural Academy Awards, winning the ‘Most Unique and Artistic Picture’ (the only year this award

was presented), ‘Best Cinematography’ and ‘Best Actress in a Leading Role’ for Janet Gaynor who plays The Wife. Since then, the film has continued to stand the test of time, praised as a cinematic masterpiece for its poetic portrayal of the human struggle between faith and temptation.

Murnau penned the script for *Sunrise* with his writing collaborator Carl Mayer, who had worked with Murnau previously on *Tartuffe* (1925) and *The Last Laugh* (1926), along with Robert Weine on his hugely influential German expressionist horror film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). Due to the success and unique aesthetics of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Fox was eager for Murnau to make a film styled in the German expressionist aesthetic, which

the director and fellow Deutschlanders Fritz Lang and Robert Weine established in Germany throughout the 1910s and 1920s. In their films they employed abstracted, angular set designs and cinematography paired with harsh chiaroscuro lighting to invite the audience into their characters’ troubled inner-worlds. Although adopting a similar visual style, *Sunrise* would mark a stylistic leap forward for Murnau who transformed his harsh and angular German expressionism by contrasting it with a softer, romantic, naturalist aesthetic. The effects of this visual dichotomy effortlessly weaves us in and out of the characters’ inner and outer worlds, most evident in one of the most iconic scenes from the film where the camera tracks The Man walking through



a dark, foggy swamp in the middle of the night to meet his mistress, only for the camera to suddenly pan away from him and move into his inner world by morphing into his point of view as he embraces his mistress under the cover of moonlight.

Although this singular visual style and lack of recorded dialogue has led *Sunrise* to be praised as a landmark of silent cinema, it's actually one of the very first films to feature a synchronised soundtrack using an optical sound-on-film system known as 'Movietone' to fuse the score and sound effects to the film. It was also released in the same year as *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) which is regarded today for pioneering

synchronised dialogue in cinema, positioning *Sunrise* in a transitory moment in cinema history, bridging the gap between the silent cinema before it and the sound films that quickly followed by combining synchronised sound with the aesthetics of silent cinema. This amounted to a level of immersion and emotional depth to the film that wasn't common or technically possible in the silent films that preceded it.

Furthermore, the film is also rarely broken by intertitles as Murnau was known to detest them, famously using only one in his film *The Last Laugh*. Hence, intertitles are used sparingly throughout the film's first half and gradually become non-existent by its



second half. This lack of intertitles paired with the textured sound effects enhances the sensorial immersion into the film.

Another element of the film that is often overlooked is its use of comedy in its second half. The slapstick nature of the comedy marks the film as a forebearer to the screwball comedies that would rise to prominence twenty years later in the 1940's which would frequently feature dysfunctional married couples breaking up, only to be brought back together in a series of humorous happenings. Murnau however was not known for comedy, which led to the belief that it was the studio who added these sequences into *Sunrise*. However, it was later proven that this was unfounded, as Murnau was given full creative control over the film.<sup>1</sup> Although, from a modern perspective these comedic sequences can seem awkward and drawn out at times – most notably the pig chase and couple's dance sequence which frequently cuts to a prudish man in the crowd around them, obsessively tidying a woman's dress straps – it marked a new style for the director whilst also acting as a breath of fresh air after the claustrophobic dread that permeates the first half of the film.

Considering Murnau's blending of genres, synchronised sound and silent cinema, as well as German expressionism with romantic naturalism in *Sunrise*, it's a shame to know that he would only complete two more films before tragically passing in 1931 in an automobile accident at the age of 42. At the rate of his artistic success, who truly knows what heights Murnau could have reached and the films we would have been blessed with. However, lamentations aside, *Sunrise*

still stands today as the German auteur's masterpiece and as one of the most artistically unique films ever made in Hollywood, transcending its German expressionist roots into a timeless parable about our grapples with faith and our compassionate resilience in the face of temptation.

### Film notes by Jacob Agius

Reprinted by kind permission of Jacob Agius and the Melbourne Cinémathèque. The notes first appeared in CTEQ Annotations published by *Senses of Cinema*, Melbourne, October 2022.

### The Restoration

The original negative of *Sunrise* was lost in a fire at Fox's storage facility in New Jersey in 1937. A print made in 1936, which included a recording of the original soundtrack, held by the UK National Film and Television Archive has been used as the basis for the restoration work that has taken place since 2002.

Director: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau;  
Production Company: 20th Century Studios;  
Producer: William Fox; Director: F.W. Murnau; Screenplay: Carl Mayer; Director of Photography: Charles Rosher, Karl Struss; Editor: Harold Schuster; Art Director: Rochus Gliese // Cast: George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor, Margaret Livingston



## Embracing Slowness

By the late 1920s silent filmmakers had learned ways to show what couldn't be said. There is, for example, a purposeful slowness in *Sunrise*, passages in which an actor's movements and gestures are designed for us to savor as they image forth a character's inner thoughts and emotions. F. W. Murnau, the director, drew this from the German Expressionist style in which he had worked. One sees this early in the movie in The Husband's (George O'Brien) reaction when he hears The Woman from the City (Margaret Livingston) whistle for him to join her outside. After turning in his seat at the dinner table to look toward the window, he very slowly begins to push himself up from the table with what seems like extra effort. He pushes himself erect and slowly begins to walk toward an armoire to get his coat. He stops when his wife enters to put dishes and utensils on the table. After she leaves the room, he goes to the door to look after her for a time. Then he looks down as though lost in thought and very slowly raises his hand to rub the back of his head several times. We understand when he glances from the dinner table to the window, that he is weighing his marriage in his mind against the lure of the woman outside. When she whistles again, he looks at her through the window and motions for her to meet him elsewhere. In a sudden burst of motion, as if The Woman from the City has defeated the thoughts of his marriage, he quickly takes off one jacket and puts on a coat from the armoire. The sudden change

in rhythm seems the result of an erotic frisson, the sudden excitement he feels in anticipation of meeting the dark-haired vamp.

When they meet and he tells her that he means to take his wife to the city by boat, she suggests he drown her on the way there so they can be together. She explains how he can make her death look like an accident. The husband returns home obsessed by her suggestion. He very slowly lays down on his bed and looks toward his wife asleep in her own bed. His thoughts are shown to us in in double exposure. A torrent of flowing water rises to cover him. The sound of a buoy's ringing bell becomes the tolling of the town church, and we see his blonde wife looking down at him in the morning. She strokes his hair lovingly, covers him with a blanket, and tiptoes from the bedroom. He awakens slowly, then suddenly sits up, jolted by the memory of the The Woman from the City's suggestion. The horrified look on his face shows his revulsion. As before, however, he struggles in his mind trying to decide what to do. He sees his wife at her chores. Then, in another double exposure, The Woman from the City embraces him from behind and kisses him. He turns his head from her, and she disappears, only to return pressing against his chest, her mouth close to his. When additional images of her appear, he puts his fists to his temples to make her images and his thoughts of her disappear—at least for the moment. The Husband's choice

remains unresolved even as he readies the boat for the trip to the city. To emphasize how heavily the choice has come to weigh on him, lead weights were put in the actor's boots to make him plod even more slowly as he prepares the boat.

The empathetic understanding that *Sunrise* invites to us interpret from

gesture, motion, and image richly illustrates the universality of late silent film. It is a cinematic language that was too frail to withstand the all-talking movies that would soon appear. Yet almost magically it becomes available again whenever, as here, *Sunrise* is presented for us to experience.

**Marshall Deutelbaum**



## The Swimming Pool/La Piscine

### Jacques Deray

Born Jacques Desrayaud in Lyon in 1929, Jacques Deray became one of France's most successful directors, particularly of films noir and crime stories (including 1970's international box-office smash *Borsalino*). He was also one of its most underrated filmmakers. Box office success can be poison for one's critical reputation in France. Just ask Claude Lelouch.

Deray worked with the biggest French stars, including Alain Delon (9 films) and Jean-Paul Belmondo (4). He was brilliant at capturing tension between Alpha males, no matter whether they were played by Delon and Jean-Louis Trintignant; Delon and Belmondo; or Delon and Maurice Ronet.

If Deray had a flaw as a director, he was sometimes too trendily stylish in his décors and costumes, which could date quickly. But he was a master stylist who has often been compared to Jean-Pierre Melville. Deray tends to suffer in the comparison, but Melville's genius was always on display, sometimes a little showily, whereas Deray hid his prodigious skill and intelligence behind a workmanlike façade.

For many Deray fans, *La Piscine* (1969) is the masterpiece, but other of his movies to seek out include 1963's *Rififi in Tokyo* (an homage to Jules Dassin's *Rififi*), that same year's *Symphonie pour Un Massacre* (a drug deal goes very wrong), 1971's *Un Peu de Soleil dans l'Eau Froide* (based on the Françoise Sagan novel about a threesome) and 1975's *Flic Story* (the nine-year

pursuit of a serial killer played chillingly by Trintignant). However, all of Deray's oeuvre deserves scrutiny and celebration.

### The Film

When writer-director Jacques Deray was preparing *La Piscine*, which is based on 'scenario original' by Jean-Emmanuel Conil (a pseudonym of British writer Alain Page,) the intention of Deray and his co-writer Jean-Claude Carrière was that the ending be changed. *La Piscine* may seem a deceptively simple story about desire and conflict amongst a foursome, but the film's amorality unsettled more than a few, and particularly Franco's Spanish government, which demanded for local release a closing shot be added of the police arriving to arrest the villain.

The setting is a villa (Domaine de l'Oumède) in Ramatuelle, the idyllic Provençal village to which British photographer David Hamilton had already moved to live and take photographs of young women for books that sold millions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and also make highly commercial films such as *Bilitis* (scripted by Catherine Breillat, no less). Hamilton's celebration of 'innocence' precisely captured the zeitgeist (though it has been the subject of much negative re-evaluation since).

*La Piscine* equally set out to capture the times, but does so across a wider age spectrum, its hermetic world the antithesis of innocent.

The film begins with Michel Legrand's bouncy title song (booming out with

what seems deliberate incongruity) as the camera glides above a pristine swimming pool to Jean-Paul (Alain Delon), who is lying in blissful self-adoration on the pool's edge. He turns his head towards camera but we can't see his eyes because of the dark-lensed sunglasses. He has been called from offscreen by Marianne (Romy Schneider) and Jean-Paul is no doubt looking at her, but it feels like he is looking at us, and it is uncomfortable.

This is a Delon characterisation that is as alarming as it is sexually exciting, with a disdain and threat in almost everything he does. But has any male star looked so beautiful, his skin so perfectly bronzed, his physique and movement as lithe as a tiger's?

'Approach at own risk' would be an appropriate warning, and we fear for Marianne as she joins him poolside for one of the most unsettling physical encounters in cinema. Against our better judgement, we are attracted by the animal-like intensity of their desire, but recoil from what feels like

its exhibitionism, even though there is no one there except us, the complicit viewers.

Marianne lies on top of Jean-Paul in a black bikini (the top of which he will soon tear away) and she asks him to scratch her back. He does so in a claw-like manner, as if he could rip away her skin at any moment, should he wish (prefiguring Walerian Borowczyk's gender-reversed *Cérémonie d'Amour*, 1987).

The edginess is intensified when what should be a playful tossing of a beloved into a pool is filled with menace.

Into this sexual cauldron come Harry (Maurice Ronet) and his 18-year-old daughter, Pénélope (Jane Birkin). There is a vibrant bonhomie between old mates Harry and Jean-Paul, but also a sense that this could just be playacting. The audience unconsciously shifts into armchair detective mode, wondering which of the foursome will pair off with whom, and whether that relationship will be loving or dangerous or both.







Even young Pénélope, with her awkward innocence, may be a viper in their midst.

After Marianne invites Harry and Pénélope to stay (which Harry's reaction makes feel both intended and sinister), Jean-Paul ushers them towards a villa entrance. Surprisingly, Jean-Paul does not wait for Pénélope to go in ahead of him (the custom of the day), but then suddenly stops to let Pénélope pass. Has he noticed his ungentlemanly act? But, if so, why did he leave so little space for her to move through?

This tiny moment, ambiguous and unsettling, is brilliantly staged, with no over-stressed change of camera position or lens. Deray's restraint is always a virtue.

If ever a film were about its casting and the handsomeness and offscreen lives of its actors, this is it. It is not a *roman à clef*, but it does play off the audience's knowledge of – and often insatiable interest in – the private lives of stars.

The press was obsessed with Delon and Schneider, who became a couple while

starring in an Italian stage version of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, directed by Luchino Visconti in Paris in 1961. They broke up in December 1963, but remained close friends.

Schneider was already world-famous for playing as a teenager Empress Elisabeth of Austria in three *Sissi* films (1955–7), a role she reprised decades later in Visconti's *Ludwig* (1973). Schneider also famously had an unrequited love for Visconti, who had an unrequited love for Delon, a seemingly ice-cool Casanova whose every affair hit the front pages and who cast his *amours du jour* (often explicitly) in films he produced and/or directed.

Apart from Burton and Taylor (who had no need of Christian names back then), it would be hard to imagine a more super-charged Sixties cinematic coupling than Schneider and Delon, or a more stellar accompanying cast than Maurice Ronet and Jane Birkin.

Ronet, who was discovered by Jacques Becker at age 22 (for 1949's *Rendez-vous*

*de Juillet*, which Becker wrote for him), was a darkly brooding and hypnotic presence in many wonderful films, including several by Claude Chabrol and François Truffaut.

As for Birkin, she was a hip 18-year old British model who was discovered by film audiences in Richard Lester's *The Knack ... and how to get it* (1965), and whose often-censored nude scene with Gillian Hills in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* (1970), private and working relationship with singer-composer Serge Gainsbourg, a naked lesbian moment with Brigitte Bardot in Roger Vadim's *Don Juan ou Don Juan Était Une Femme ...* (1973) and countless other contributions to the counter culture kept the presses spinning, and saw Hermès' create 'The Birkin' bag, still one of the world's most sought-after luxury artefacts.

These were not shy, quiet-living, self-denying thespians, but screen icons known internationally for their sex appeal and scandals, and whose lives and careers interlaced in many pop-culture ways.

Deray knows all this and uses it well in *La Piscine*, which is obsessed with objectification, iconography and physical beauty: of the landscape, the eerie tree by the pool, the Edenic view down the Ramatuelle hill to the Mediterranean, the beguiling villa and the pretty humans staying there, the camera forever honing in on their perfect skin, just as a mosquito might as it gets ready to feast on unsuspecting blood, and leave, perhaps, a poison that will eat away at its host until death.

*La Piscine* is a searingly beautiful film, shot in a Provençal paradise with actors already immortalised on bedroom

posters across the globe, but at its narrative heart it is virulent and deadly.

### Notes by Scott Murray

#### The Restoration

The film was first restored in 2007 using the original negative. The technology of the day had its limits and compromises had to be made. In order to capture details in the strong light without losing the middle and dark ranges, the compromises had their effect in the details on the paving round the pool and the sheens of the skin. Still it was a substantial improvement in returning the film to its original 35mm look.

Twelve years later for the film's fiftieth anniversary the opportunity was taken to re-examine the inevitable compromises of the earlier restoration work and go much further towards rec-creating a copy as near as possible to the original for a 4K restoration. This involved extensive work on the image, the sound recording, Michel Legrand's music and the original titles which were entirely re-shot

Director: Jacques DERAY; Production Companies: Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie (SNC), Tritone Cinematografica; Producer: Gérard BEYTOUT; Script: Jean-Claude CARRIÈRE, Jacques DERAY, Jean-Emmanuel CONIL; Photography: Jean-Jacques TARBÈS; Editor: Paul CAYATTE; Production Design: Paul LAFFARGUE; Music: Michel LEGRAND; Costumes: André COURRÈGES // Cast: Alain DELON (Jean-Paul); Romy SCHNEIDER (Marianne); Maurice RNET (Harry); Jane BIRKIN (Penelope); Paul CRAUCHET (L'inspecteur Lévêque)

France, Italy | 1969 | 122 mins. | 4K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.66:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | French with Eng. Subtitles | U/C15+

## Tender Mercies

### Bruce Beresford

Australian director Bruce Beresford is well-known for his work in both Hollywood and Australia and has made more than thirty feature films throughout his career. Beresford was born in Paddington in 1940. Before making his feature directorial debut with the film *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), which he co-wrote with Barry Humphries, Beresford graduated from Sydney University in 1964 and began his career as a film editor.

Beresford went on to direct a number of other successful Australian films, including *Don's Party* (1976), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977), *The Club* (1980), *Breaker Morant* (1980) and *Puberty Blues* (1981). *Breaker Morant* was selected for competition at the Cannes Film Festival and earned Beresford an Academy Award nomination for best adapted screenplay. This nomination led to the

opportunity to direct *Tender Mercies* (1983) starring Robert Duvall, which was in competition for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and nominated for five Academy Awards including Best Director and Best Picture.

In the 1980s, following the success of *Tender Mercies* Beresford began working in Hollywood, directing films such as *Crimes of the Heart* (1986), starring Sissy Spacek, Diane Keaton, and Jessica Lange that was nominated for three Academy Awards and the critically acclaimed *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) which won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actress for Jessica Tandy.

In the 1990s and 2000s, he directed films both in Australia and in Hollywood, including *Black Robe* (1991) which won the Canadian award for Best Film and Best Director, *Silent Fall* (1994) which competed for a Golden Bear, Berlin International Film Festival, *Paradise*

*Road* (1997), *Double Jeopardy* (1999) and *Evelyn* (2002).

Beresford has also directed the film *Mao's Last Dancer* (2009), which was adapted from Chinese ballet dancer Li Cunxin's memoir, and was nominated for eight Australian Film Institute Awards including Best Director and *Roots* (2016) (TV), a reimagining of the iconic mini-series. His most recent film was the Australian feature *Ladies in Black* (2018). In addition to his contribution to cinema, Beresford has also directed several Theatre and Opera productions. Bruce Beresford is regarded as one of Australia's most successful and well-respected directors and has helped to bring Australian cinema to international audiences.

### The Film

Critically acclaimed and widely regarded as a classic of American cinema, *Tender Mercies* (1983), Australian director, Bruce Beresford's, American debut feature, and for which Beresford was nominated for a Best Director Oscar, starring Robert Duvall, Tess Harper and Betty Buckley, is at its heart a sophisticated and introspective, anti-Hollywood drama.

*Tender Mercies* has a minimalist outlook that puts the focus on the characters and their connections. Screenwriter Horton Foote, (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), who wrote *Tender Mercies* especially for Duvall, creates a modest and richly satisfying narrative that garnered both he and Duvall, Academy Awards for Best Original Screenplay and Best Actor, respectively.

*Tender Mercies* is a nuanced work that captures the intricacy and beauty of

daily life through a subtle and stirring study of the value of small and incidental acts of kindness and the bonds they form. The film chronicles the personal troubles of a middle aged, washed-up but gifted country and western singer, Mac Sledge (Duvall). It becomes immediately obvious that Mac is an alcoholic, who has lost his sense of self-worth, his music career, and his family.

Penniless after spending the previous night drunk, the film follows Mac as he struggles to rebuild his life and reconcile with his past. Like the relentless howling wind, a recurring motif in the film, representing life's hardships and the mystery of God's will, he 'blows in' to Rosa Lee's (Tess Harper) life, and is saved and in turn saves, the young, sympathetic Vietnam War widow who owns a rundown roadside motel and gas station, deep in rural Texas.

Mac is a conflicted man who has made a lot of mistakes, yet despite his failings, he gradually tries to turn his life around and mend it back together. He begins to see the possibility of a new life for himself through his connection with Rosa Lee and her young son, Sonny (Allan Hubbard) who take him in and give him a second chance at love and fatherhood.

*Tender Mercies* is a gentle and quiet film that has escaped obscurity despite its daringly subdued and uncommon tone to that of contemporary film. Simply told the story is in no way spectacular or extravagant rather it is about the little, ordinary moments that make up life. The rhythm of the film is patient, precise and expertly paced, so much so that *Tender Mercies* never feels hurried or forced, allowing the audience to empathise



with the characters and their troubles and the story to unfold naturally and authentically.

Presented in a measured and understated manner, the film's emphasis on character growth and emotional depth produces a profoundly compelling and heartfelt narrative that lets the feelings and experiences of the characters speak for themselves. This enables the story to be emotionally evocative while deftly examining complicated issues like atonement, loss and the importance of human connection.

The idea of atonement is one of the main themes of the film. *Tender Mercies* unsentimentally examines the notion that it's never too late to change your life and atone for previous transgressions. Beresford employs a variety of motifs to communicate this central theme. The film's opening image of a hawk flying over the countryside is a metaphor for Mac's personal journey of self-realisation and redemption. Mirrors are also frequently found in the interiors, reflecting the path of the protagonist and his own uncertainty and self-doubt.

*Tender Mercies* is extraordinarily touching largely because it effectively grapples with a variety of central concerns to the human condition. The meaning of home and family as well as belonging are significant elements that are explored. The work addresses the idea that perhaps family should be defined less by blood ties and more by those who love and stand by us.

*Tender Mercies* is characterised by a sense of sorrow and regret and yet despite the grief and loss, there is still beauty and grace to be found.

This melancholic and nostalgic tone encourages viewers to think about their own lives and the things that are most important to them. Serving as a gentle reminder to value what we have and make the most of our time together.

Intrinsically a character driven drama the performances reverberate with a sensibility and honesty that is extraordinarily touching to experience. Robert Duvall is exceptional in his role as Mac Sledge. His performance is nuanced and understated, revealing the tragedy of his character's inner turmoil with a vulnerability and gentleness that is truly moving.

Duvall brings a sense of weariness, quiet dignity and fragility to the role. His performance exemplifies his astonishing versatility as an actor and his capacity to communicate, with a keen feeling of emotional candour, the intricacies of human nature. Duvall's graceful portrait has complexity and depth, the uneasiness and regret of an imperfect and broken man. He imbues his character with a powerful and devastating sense of exhaustion through the restrained physicality of his facial expressions, his tone of voice and the deliberate slowness of his movements that make the atonement of his characters journey so engrossing and affecting to behold.

The character of Rosa Lee, who has also endured heartache and loss is powerfully portrayed by Tess Harper in this, her theatrical film debut. Harper infuses the role with an air of perseverance, compassion, and loving patience that is both endearing and engrossing to watch. Her onscreen chemistry with Duvall is palpable and extraordinarily poignant, as

the two performers play off one another with tenderness and sensitivity in a way that feels real and deeply felt. Some of the most memorable and emotionally convincing sequences for the audience are between the two of them as it is Rosa Lee's love for Mac that makes him want to be a better man.

The supporting cast is as impressive. Dixie Scott, Mac's ex-wife and former singing partner, is played by Betty Buckley. She brings a sense of drive and ambition to the role which is profoundly flawed and all too human. Her scenes with Duvall are tense and emotionally charged which deepens our understanding of Mac's character and their past relationship. In her brief but impactful portrayal as Sue Anne, Mac's estranged daughter, Ellen Barkin also leaves an emotionally raw and lasting impression.

The visual language employed in *Tender Mercies* is exquisite. Beresford and cinematographer Russell Boyd combine a variety of visual methods to evoke a tone that is both modest and

contemplative. The film's naturalistic appearance is a result of the lighting and muted colour scheme. Natural light and subdued hues are used to great effect throughout the film, adding to its subtle elegance and underscoring the emotional impact of the story with a feeling of visual poetry. A variety of subdued browns, greens, and greys, are used to portray the rural American South as both sombre and beautiful. While the evening landscapes are dominated by dark shadows eliciting a sense of dread, the daytime sequences are flooded with dazzling sunlight.

Shot on location in Waxahachie, Texas, Boyd, strikingly captures breathtaking images of the desolate countryside and its vast open vistas, through a variety of long, protracted tracking shots to evoke a feeling of sparseness, seclusion and loneliness. The peaceful hypnotic nature of the endless expanses and arid highways are utilised to evoke a sense of place and identity that contrast vividly with the emotional upheaval of the protagonists' interior landscape.



The film's framing and unobtrusive camera work helps give the characters more depth and dimension. The camera frequently lingers on the actors' faces enhancing the richness of the actors' restrained performances by capturing their emotions and the finer details of their small gestures and expressions. Conveying a sense of intimacy, authenticity and reality these techniques create both a sense of alienation and closeness giving the audience the impression that they are travelling with the characters through the story and the environment and allowing the viewer to fully immerse themselves in the film's fictional world.

Ties to the austere Texas plains are also expertly woven and reinforced by the distinctive and emotionally resonant Country and Western music, which is employed to imbue a feeling of time, remembrance, gratitude and to immerse the audience into the realities and harshness of the surroundings.

The film offers an emotionally poignant and deeply moving reflection on the power of music to inspire, connect and heal. The music serves a narrative, thematic and aesthetic purpose. Mac is a musician who has lost meaning and purpose in life and his love for his art. Throughout *Tender Mercies* Duvall sings and performs traditional country and original songs such as 'It Hurts to Face Reality', 'Fools Waltz', 'If You'll Hold The Ladder' (I'll Climb to the Top) and 'On The Wings Of a Dove'. These songs perfectly express his grief and are skilfully incorporated into the story to help the listener better comprehend his experiences and feelings.

Serving as a metaphor for Mac's emotional healing, music, plays a crucial and central role adding a delicate yet significant level of intricacy and depth to the narrative. One of the most moving and heartbreaking scenes in the film has Mac singing the gospel song 'On the Wings of a Dove' without instrumental accompaniment. When Sue Ann, beautifully played by Ellen Barkin, pays Mac an unexpected visit in an attempt to connect with him she shares a memory of a tune he once lulled his baby girl to sleep to. 'There was a song you used to sing to me when I was little, I think... it was something about a dove'. Mac tells her he doesn't recall the song. Sue Ann then leaves.

Looking out the window once she has departed, Duvall begins to sing the lullaby a rendition of 'On the Wings of a Dove' with great humility and profound despair. This memory is too painful and his regret and love for Sue Anne too real. Deeply moving, Duvall's performance in this scene is one of the most quietly heart breaking and sorrowful moments ever committed to celluloid.

In *Tender Mercies* Beresford offers viewers a lasting meditation on the power of cinema to illuminate profoundly human stories. Every frame of the film skilfully displays his meticulous attention to detail, from the potent performances to the rigorous storytelling, thoughtful cinematography and stirring soundtrack. Beresford's directing is a tribute to his talent, having crafted a film that is insightful and painfully moving as a result of its faithfulness to reality.

**Notes by Helen Goritsas**

## The copy

*Tender Mercies* is presented on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the film's release. The digital copy which contains Bruce Beresford's original ending, a sequence not always included in some copies of the film, has been made available through the kind cooperation of NBCUniversal in the United States and StudioCanal in Australia.

Director: Bruce BERESFORD; Production Companies: Antron Media Productions, EMI Films; Producer: Philip S. HOBEL, Horton

FOOTE, Robert DUVALL; Script: Horton FOOTE; Photography: Russell BOYD; Editor: William M. ANDERSON; Art Direction: Jeannine OPPEWALL; Sound: Stan BOCHNER, Jay DRANCH, Dan LIEBERSTEIN, Chris NEWMAN, Maurice SCHELL, Dick VORISEK; Music: George DREYFUS; Costumes: Elizabeth MCBRIDE // Cast: Robert DUVALL (Mac Sledge); Tess Harper (Rosa Lee); Betty BUCKLEY (Dixie); Wilford BRIMLEY (Harry); Ellen BARKIN (Sue Ann); Allan HUBBARD (Sonny)

USA | 92 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.85:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | English | (PG)

## The Trial

### Orson Welles

Orson Welles' (1915–1985) first feature, *Citizen Kane* (1941), is a critical juggernaut that has defined popular understandings of the larger-than-life writer, director, and actor's peripatetic oeuvre. Yet Welles' extremely rich and much travelled career goes far beyond this extraordinary but somewhat cold film classic. It spans 50 years, from the earnest but playful beginnings of the home movie-like *The Hearts of Age* (1934) to his final string of incomplete projects, diverse acting assignments, voiceover jobs, and droll, labyrinthine essay films: *F for Fake* (1973) and *Filming 'Othello'* (1978).

Many accounts of Welles' work document the difficulties he faced in completing many of his subsequent projects – these legendary works include *Don Quixote*, *The Deep*, *It's All True*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the posthumously completed *The Other*

*Side of the Wind* (2018) – but on closer inspection the twelve features he did finish during his lifetime provide a fascinating and detailed account of his thematic, artistic, and literary preoccupations. Welles' career moves from Hollywood and peak studio production in the 1940s to Europe and the trials and tribulations of multinational, multi-partner, and multi-location filmmaking. His work is also dominated by adaptations of key writers including Booth Tarkington, William Shakespeare, Isak Dinesen, and Franz Kafka. This penchant for adaptation was a skill that he honed during his incredibly productive early career in theatre and radio in the 1930s, a shooting-star fame that led to an unprecedented invitation by RKO to make a film of his choice (though initial plans to adapt Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* fell through). Welles' second feature,

the extraordinary *The Magnificent Ambersons*, was significantly cut and partly reshot against his wishes, and much of the rest of his career is characterised by a capacity to create composite works under difficult financial and physical conditions. In keeping with this, a number of his subsequent films, like *Mr. Arkadin* (*Confidential Report*, 1955) and *Touch of Evil* (1958), exist in multiple versions and document the collage-like approach he often took to his work.

Throughout his career Welles was obsessed with representations of power, exile, corruption, old age, the loss of innocence, performance, and illusion. Arguably at war with a filmmaking establishment that sought to contain him, Welles, ever the maverick, struggled to make films with the money he earned

as an actor working on a mindbogglingly diverse slate of projects ranging from *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949), *Moby Dick* (John Huston, 1956), and *Ro.Go.Pa.G* (1962, in the episode contributed by Pier Paolo Pasolini) to *Napoleon* (Sacha Guitry, 1955), *Necromancy* (Bert I. Gordon, 1972), and *Butterfly* (Matt Cimber, 1981). Nevertheless, freed from many restrictions, Welles managed to create a remarkably cohesive, if somewhat piecemeal body of work that consistently explored his favourite themes, and that, often through necessity, pushed the boundaries of filmmaking practice. As David Thomson has claimed, Welles' 'is the greatest career in film, the most tragic, and the one with the most warnings for the rest of us.'<sup>1</sup> This is all true, but we need to fully celebrate what is there.



## The Film

The indelible signature of Orson Welles has so dominated popular understandings of the filmmaker's work that it is sometimes forgotten that he was a master of adaptation. This dominant aspect of his output dates from his extraordinarily productive work in theatre and radio in the second half of the 1930s and includes celebrated and much-discussed adaptations like his staging of a 'voodoo' *Macbeth* for the Federal Theatre Project in 1936 and his infamous *War of the Worlds* broadcast in 1938. This aspect of Welles' work has been partly downplayed due to his characterisation as a wunderkind and inventor of forms who overwhelmingly occupied and dominated almost any project he took on. This has led to some commentators suggesting that Welles often directed himself and even wrote his own lines when acting in films such as Norman Foster's *Journey into Fear* (1943) and Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949). But it has also impacted how Welles' various adaptations have been received and recognised.

Welles' career in the 1960s is dominated by three significant and fully sympathetic adaptations of the work of Franz Kafka (*The Trial*, 1962), William Shakespeare (*Chimes at Midnight*, 1966), and Isak Dinesen (*The Immortal Story*, 1968). *The Trial* is a very careful adaptation of Kafka's nightmarish 1925 novel of everyday bureaucracy and the law. As in other connected Welles films like *Chimes at Midnight*, *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice* (1952), and *The Immortal Story* there is some reorganisation and restaging of the adapted material as well as considerable

condensation. There are even some significant changes of emphasis such as the greater sense of agency granted to the central character of Josef K., particularly in his final, though still hopeless moments. But, in essence, this is a true 'collaboration' between these two giants of 20th century literature and cinema. Welles does update Kafka's world to take in the increasing mechanisation, corporatisation, commercialisation, and even corruption of the contemporary world – and there are certainly moments where Welles' more feverish and dialogue-heavy conception and characterisation seem more Shakespearean than Kafkaesque – but he still manages to recreate the clipped sparseness of Kafka's claustrophobic interiors and dialogue alongside the inexorable 'nightmare' logic that drives the narrative.

As Raymond Durgnat has suggested, Welles's adaptation communicates a sense of the 'paranoid baroque' while never settling into a consistent style or form.<sup>2</sup> In some ways, it is a composite Welles film, drawing on the key stylistic and thematic markers of many of his earlier works. There are bravura scenes characterised by fast-paced montage and the expressive use of very minimal or found settings, and others that demonstrate Welles' facility with deep space, distorting lenses and angles, and the long take. But rather than this creating an incoherent sense of space, time, place, and their relation to character, it helps illustrate Josef K.'s increasingly discombobulated and confused, but indignant state. This is supported by Anthony Perkins' slightly off-centre performance in the central

role. As Welles' voiceover announces in the animated prologue, *The Trial* has 'the logic of a dream or nightmare'. But this logic is also deeply familiar to anyone who has lived under the maddening and labyrinthine bureaucracy and everyday living of communism and capitalism and their various combinations. Kafka wrote *The Trial* between 1914 and 1915 and it was published, posthumously, in the mid-1920s. It speaks to the modernity of that era, particularly within a specific place like Prague and in relation to its Jewish population. But as with Welles' film, the implications of its story and situations spread out much wider.

Welles is commonly discussed as a quintessentially American filmmaker. This is understandable considering his upbringing and the preoccupations of his initial features: *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), *The Stranger* (1946), and *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947). His life and career are often examined in relation to overriding myths of success and failure as well as F. Scott Fitzgerald's often-misunderstood claim that 'there are no second acts in American lives'. This common career narrative positions Welles' peak of success very early in his career – with his first feature, *Citizen Kane* – and considers everything else in its disappointed and dissipated wake. Welles' subsequent career and even physical body are then perceived as ruins that sometimes coalesce or reform into brilliant but compromised artistic achievements such as *Touch of Evil* (1958) and the posthumously completed *The Other Side of the Wind* (2018). In this regard, *The Trial* is exceptional. It is one of a number of films Welles made in

Europe and that form a distinct and even dominant phase of his work. Most of these are adaptations of important works of European literature. The majority of these often wonderful, if piecemeal adaptations suffered because of a lack of physical and financial resources as well as their peripatetic shooting schedules. This would also lead to the failure to complete – at least during Welles' lifetime – projects like *Don Quixote* and *The Other Side of the Wind*. The legend of these and other 'unfinished' projects have also suggested the profligacy of Welles' filmmaking processes and his careless misuse of others' resources. But this view obscures the restless productivity of Welles in the wake of *Citizen Kane* and the extraordinary resourcefulness and creativity he brought to this often-itinerant filmmaking practice.

*The Trial* is unusual in Welles' mid-career filmography as it is a project over which he maintained almost complete control. Although Welles was increasingly and understandably seen as a risky investment, this did not stop actors and producers wanting to work with him. *The Trial* was a project initiated by producers Alexander and Michael Salkind who had become acquainted with Welles during the making of Abel Gance's *The Battle of Austerlitz* (1960). Welles was given the choice of over 80 public domain titles to adapt and felt that Kafka's distinctive novel about corrupting power and the misuse of the law was a good match – although, to the producers' chagrin, it turned out to not be in the public domain. Welles' initial conception envisaged a more abstract adaptation that would gradually remove sets and



props until K. was left stranded within a spatial and material void. It is easy to see why this approach might have attracted Welles. *Citizen Kane*, for example, creates a prismatic portrait of its title character as a means of suggesting a terrifying hollowness at its centre.

But as I noted earlier, Welles was always an inventive, adaptive, and even pragmatic filmmaker. Although *The Trial* was budgeted at 650 million francs (around US\$1.3 million) and featured several multinational stars including Anthony Perkins, Jeanne Moreau, Elsa Martinelli and Romy Schneider (the latter three in smaller roles), it still needed to cut corners to be completed on time and around budget. This is reflected in the various locations used across its ten-week shooting schedule.

Commencing at the Studios de Boulogne in Paris on March 26, 1962, it also incorporated three weeks in Yugoslavia – most evident in the material shot in an exhibition hall outside Zagreb – filming in Rome, Milan, and Dubrovnik, and, most famously, in the cavernous spaces of the abandoned Gare d'Orsay. This might suggest a wasteful globetrotting production, but it more accurately reflects the collage aesthetic of Welles' cinema and his practice of 'making do' with the resources at hand. As in the earlier *Othello*, the material gathered for various scenes in the finished film often stretch across several locations, countries, and timeframes. These disparate elements are also sutured together by a post-synchronised soundtrack – noticeably synthetic in the many moments where the mouth

movements of characters don't follow the dialogue and Welles can be heard voicing other actors – that brings together a collection of scenes, moments, spaces, and nationally diverse actors into what seems a coherent, if nightmarish world. This also helps grant the film and its situations a sense of timelessness and placelessness – while, at the same time, still very much reflecting when and where it was shot – appropriate to the material.

Nevertheless, one of the greatest achievements of *The Trial* is its palpable sense of space and place. Kafka's novel feels very much a part of the environment he lived within. Even in the more forbidding and alienating spaces occupied by the legal authorities, the environment feels claustrophobic, labyrinthine, squalid. Welles recognises the impact of the subsequent 40 years of architectural modernity on the novel's characters, but his choices are also pragmatic. Part of the reason he chose the Gare d'Orsay was because it was an available, evocative location that could be appropriated for the purposes of his film. This does not mean *The Trial* fails to draw on this location's history or its symbolic or metaphorical implications. As Welles suggested, 'I know this sounds terribly mystical, but really a railway station is a haunted place. And the story is all about people waiting, waiting, waiting for their papers to be filled. It is full of the hopelessness of the struggle against bureaucracy. Waiting for a paper to be filled is like waiting for a train, and it's also a place [of] refugees. People were sent to Nazi prisons from there. Algerians were gathered there...'<sup>3</sup> This speaks to the

deeper resonance that Welles was aiming to draw from his chosen locations. What is remarkable about *The Trial* are the ways it incorporates a spatial history of modernity from the modern office and apartment to the ruins of war, the ornate spectacle of the abandoned Beaux-Arts style of the Gare d'Orsay, and the squalor of the tenements. It even includes some moments and images that are reminiscent of the border town of *Touch of Evil*. The law officers who initially interrogate K. would seem more at home ransacking a motel room on the Mexican border than a sparse bedsit in an apartment block somewhere in middle Europe. Similarly, the interrogation/torture scenes involving these figures later in the film seem closer to an inventive no budget b-noir, in their use of just a single hanging light, a tightly enclosed space, and the suggestion of brutal violence, than the European art movie *The Trial* otherwise most resembles.

But the film's other major achievement is how it manages to acutely position K. *within* this system and environment. In Perkins' eager and productively out-of-place performance, K. comes across as both a victim and a perpetrator, a figure who is impossible to subtract from his surroundings and the system they help perpetuate. This is fully evident in the superior way that K. responds to his fellow, minion-like workers and the indignant manner with which he treats those closer to the law. K. isn't so much against the system; he is a symptom of it. Welles' *The Trial* starts memorably with a parable, beautifully illustrated by the pinscreen animation of Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker, about a man

waiting outside a door to be accepted into the 'law'. He waits his whole life before being told that the door is only meant for him, realising it will be opened *and* closed at the moment of his death. This parable speaks to the labyrinthine nature of the law and the various 'circles' one must journey through to approach its ever-distant centre. But it also, more profoundly, suggests that this figure is always already subject to and formed by the law – he is both outside and inside of it. This is a truly pessimistic worldview and communicates an overall lack of humour and sense of incessant doom in both Kafka's book and Welles' adaptation. Welles' *The Trial* does have its moments of absurd, almost surreal humour, but it is ultimately, along with *The Immortal Story*, the filmmaker's most sober and distanced film.

Welles has suggested that *The Trial* was his favourite of the films he completed. The finished film is certainly amongst the closest to his initial conception and vision. Its existence also questions the out-sized excesses often laid at the feet of Welles. Filming was completed very close to on-schedule in early June and, after several months of intense editing, *The Trial* received its French premiere on December 21, 1962, before debuting in New York in February the next year. It is an exhausting, demanding, and sometimes infuriating film – this is not a movie to seek out for strong or sympathetic female characters, for instance – but it did go on to significant commercial and critical success in several European countries including France. Although Andrew Sarris was very critical, calling it 'the most hateful, the most repellent, and the

most perverted film Welles ever made', his criticisms speak of a lack of affinity for the material, Welles' faithfulness to Kafka's text, and his embrace of the chilly, European modernity of the novelist.<sup>4</sup> My view of the film is closer to that of David Thomson. Although I'd fall short of calling it one of the 'three masterpieces' Welles made in an eight-year run between *Touch of Evil* and *Chimes at Midnight*, it is a commanding and bravura work that 'is pretty good Kafka as well as major Welles'.<sup>5</sup> As I've outlined here, it is also a fascinatingly composite Welles film that casts a shadow across his entire career.

#### Endnotes:

1. David Thomson, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film*, 4th ed., Little, Brown, London, 2002, p. 926.
2. Raymond Durnat, *Films and Feelings*, Faber and Faber, London, 1967, p. 112.
3. Welles cited in Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, *This is Orson Welles*, ed. Jonathan Rosenbaum, HarperCollins, New York, 1992, p. 247.
4. Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929–1968*, rev. ed., Da Capo Press, New York, 1996, p. 80.
5. David Thomson, 'Have You Seen...?': *A Personal Introduction to 1,000 Films*, Allen Lane, London, 2008, p. 914.

#### Notes by Adrian Danks

##### The Restoration

This restoration was produced in 2022 by StudioCanal and the Cinémathèque Française. The image and sound restoration were done at the Imagine

Ritrovata Laboratory (Paris-Bologna), using the original 35mm negative. This project was supervised by StudioCanal, Sophie Boyer and Jean-Pierre Boiget. The restoration was funded thanks to the patronage of Chanel.

Director: Orson WELLES; Production Companies: Paris-Europa Productions, Hisa-Film, Finanziaria Cinematografica Italiana (FICIT), Globus-Dubrava; Producers: Alexander SAKIND, Michael SALKIND, Enrico BOMBA; Script: Pierre CHOLOT, Orson WELLES, from Franz Kafka's novel; Photography: Edmond RICHARD; Editors: Yonne MARTIN, Frederick

MULLER, [Orson WELLES, uncredited]; Art Direction: Jean MANDAROUX; Sound: Jacques LEBRETON, Guy VILLETTE; Music: Jean LEDRUT; Costumes: [Helen THIBAUT, uncredited] // Cast: Anthony PERKINS (Josef K.); Madeleine ROBINSON (Mrs. Grubach); Arnaldo FOÁ (Inspector A); Orson WELLES (The Advocate', Narrator); Jeanne MOREAU (Marika Burstner); Suzanne FLON (Miss Pitti); Romy Schneider (Leni); Michael LONSDALE (Priest); Akim TAMIROFF (Bloch)

France, USA, Germany, Italy | 1962 | 119 mins | 4K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.37:1) | B&W | Mono Sd. | English | (PG)

## Variety

### Bette Gordon

Bette Gordon (born 1950) graduated with an MFA from University of Wisconsin-Madison film department and began making experimental films in the mid-west in the 1970s. Her early films focused on formal exploration with the layering of images and fractured movement, inspired by Michael Snow's influential avant-garde film, *Wavelength*. and the 'structuralist' period of American avant-garde filmmaking. In several of these films, Gordon collaborated with avant-garde filmmaker, James Benning.

After moving to New York City in 1979, Gordon found work with the Collective for Living Cinema, a key hub for avant-garde and experimental cinema in the city and became part of the downtown creative cultural ferment. In the 1980s, the legacy of Gordon's experimental work became woven into a new experimentation with film narrative and a strong focus on the visual dimensions

of storytelling. She wanted to explore narrative as a way for her films to be more accessible, and to reach more people, but she says, 'I've been drawn to stories in which color, texture and mood are as central to the narrative as character and plot'.

In 1982, a representative of the German television channel, ZDF's *Das kleine Fernsehspiel Workshop*, was fishing around in New York to commission and subsidise low-budget films from new directors who were breaking unorthodox thematic ground with innovative approaches. After seeing Gordon's fragmented experimental film, *Empty Suitcases* (1980), he commissioned her to make a film dealing with voyeurism and pornography. This became her first feature, *Variety* (1983). According to film scholar Amy Taubin, Gordon believed that, 'for a woman to become a filmmaker or to simply enjoy movies, she had to take pleasure in her own voyeurism'. The focus on voyeuristic dimensions of sexuality in

*Variety* put Gordon at loggerheads with much of the feminist film movement at the time. *Variety* premiered at the 1983 Toronto International Film Festival and later screened at the 1984 Cannes Film Festival.

After *Variety*, Gordon did not make another feature until her genre-bending road movie, *Luminous Motion* (1998), in which she explored her 'attraction to characters who live on the edge'. In the interim, she did some directing for television and in 1991 joined the faculty at Columbia University's School of the Arts. Her next feature, for which she is better known, was *Handsome Harry* (2009), described in *The Village Voice* as 'a set piece for the pathologies of white midlife manhood.' Gordon cast

her friend, actor Steve Buscemi, in a role that plays out the tensions between traditional heterosexual male sexual desire and homosexuality. She followed up with a tense suspense feature – *The Drowning* (2016). Here, the way she works with sound and image carries traces of her earlier experimental preoccupations.

Gordon was initially drawn to cinema by the work of pioneering American director Dorothy Arzner, who in the 1930s was the only woman directing features in Hollywood. Other key influences are the films of R.W. Fassbinder, John Cassavetes, Wong Kar-wai, Alfred Hitchcock and a passion for film noir. Gordon cites French New Wave director, Jean-Luc Godard,





as a major influence and mentor: 'his radical approach to the use of sound and image helped shape me, as much as the questions he asked the viewer to consider, most importantly the relationship between truth and fiction.'

Gordon's narratives set out to challenge the viewer with 'morally ambiguous characters': she says, 'I'm not interested in characters that are easy or conventionally likeable. In fact, that's something that drives me crazy about so much art now – the tyranny of likeability. This idea that you must like every character or that you have to relate to them somehow. Who cares about that? I don't think you have to like the characters, but you should at least find them interesting.'

Curator Chale Nafus describes Gordon's work as 'criminally under-appreciated', but she is now recognised as a pioneer of American independent cinema. The increased interest in films directed by women and several major retrospectives of her films have brought new critical attention to her work, which is held in major permanent collections, such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and Museum of Modern Art.

### The film

Bette Gordon's favourite film genre is the noir thriller – she says she loves 'all the dark-lit streets and the unrestrained sexuality of the female characters' – and the genre gave her a template to stage the narrative of a young writer exploring her sexual fantasies as she stalks a man



across the grungy old streets of New York, in a palette of dim lighting and garish neon signs.

Christine (Sarah McLeod), a young unemployed woman who in desperation has taken a job as a ticket-seller in a porn theatre in Times Square, becomes fascinated by one of the male patrons – somewhat sleazy Louie (Richard M. Davidson) – and follows him across New York. Turning the gender rules of the genre upside down, Gordon gives Christine the power of the gaze: she watches Louie as he conducts various shady transactions, tracks him across conventionally male spaces, learns about his possible mob connections and integrates him into her own sexual fantasies, eventually revealing to him everything she knows about him and menacingly demanding a meeting. The trope of the stalker has led to the film often being called a 'feminist *Vertigo*'.

*Variety* was released at the peak of feminist debates about the ways film has historically constructed the bodies of women as objects to be looked at by men. Critic Amy Taubin writes: 'Gordon realized that the objectification of women in film has less to do with the display of the body than with who has control of the narrative'. Gordon says, 'I decided to fashion my interest in voyeurism – obsession – and desire into a film, using pornography as a backdrop to explore those themes in a noir-like story about a woman who looks back. The subject of the film is desire (not pornography) ... I thought that women's pleasure has not been represented very well in cinema, especially not up through the women's movement as it examined film and I wanted to re-insert that as a question.'

Gordon's 1981 short film, *Anybody's Woman* in which her friends recounted their pornographic fantasies, became a prototype for *Variety*. In the feature, we see only small snippets of the blue movies showing in the theatre, nothing explicit, but we hear the sounds – the oohs and ahs – as Christine hangs out in the lobby during her break. Gordon describes herself as a 'voyeur with sound' and wanted to confront viewers with their own imagined images evoked by the soundtrack. The director describes the film as 'a time capsule': it is a curious testament to a world before the internet: a world of furtive men in trench coats indulging their fantasies in all-male spaces where their desire to look would not be threatened by women watching them look.

Much of the critical commentary on *Variety* has focused on the film as a polemical text about 'reversing the male gaze' and the debates about pornography, but there is much more going on in the film than the narrative premise, from its lush, stylish cinematography to its innovative play with narrative form. Gordon's pleasure in the image infuses every meticulously composed frame. In the ticket booth, Christine is boxed in, framed like one of the publicity posters for the peep shows outside. Everywhere, window frames, pillars and car windows break the space up into compartments. Streetlights cast oblique shafts of light, illuminating blocks of dusky red and purple walls and carving up the space into angular, dark shadows. The nightscape of Times Square is a choreography of coloured light: monumental towers loom over the streets like sombre sculptural guardians,

as colourful neons dance and flicker across the facades, cars course down the avenues trailing streams of red tail lights and metallic reflections glimmer off cars and buses. When the camera is not fixed to capture the flow and rhythm of these iconic spaces, it is often swinging around the space, following Christine or simulating her gaze in dynamic, fluid tracking shots.

As the camera draws us through the spaces of the city, the film becomes part-documentary, part fiction, making the city and its rhythms a key part of the experience of the film. When Christine trails Louie into the all-male space of the fish market, the camera follows huge crates of glistening, headless fish being hauled around the industrial warehouse, to the cacophony of forklifts engines and chatter, in extended sequences that have their own time-pace, the rhythm and life of the workaday world. From the tight, claustrophobic space of a car, we are suddenly in Yankee Stadium, brightly-lit, open green space as the bizarre rituals of Americana play out at a baseball game: the national anthem that goes on and on, the flag-bearing cheerleaders and the players beginning the game. This lengthy sequence seems redundant but one of the key narrative strategies of the film is to move us as viewers repeatedly out of the forward linear drive of narrative and into other rhythms, other modes.

The film has a beginning, middle and ambiguous end, but along the way we are constantly pulled out of this linear momentum of narrative into scenes that expand according to their own logic. Christine has a boyfriend, Mark (Will Patton), who likes to talk about his work as a journalist while she listens, but

when she starts to tell him about her work and progressively dominates the space between them, he becomes more and more threatened. At one point she picks up Mark's last word – story – and starts to riff on the word, as writers do, until it becomes a sentence and grows into a pornographic story – perhaps something she has seen, perhaps a fantasy of her own. Each time they meet she breaks into these recitations, always staring straight ahead, as if she is seeing the images she so graphically describes projected on a screen before her eyes. The monologues draw us out of the forward drive of the narrative and into a moment of pure performance with its own dynamic. This push and pull between narrative and performative modes is reminiscent of a time when there was much more experimentation with narrative in independent cinema, more of a commitment to disrupt the viewer's seamless immersion in narrative, and lure us into watching more actively and thinking about film as film.

In one of Christine's recitations, she sits facing Mark, looking off into the distance, as he plays pinball. As her story becomes more lurid and he becomes more agitated, the story is punctuated by the incessant clicks, flicks and bells of the pinball machine. This unorthodox pairing of sound and image is echoed across the soundscapes of the film. John Lurie's cool, moody saxophone phrasing accompanies the voice of the spruiker at Variety theatre, calling out to passers-by, so the beckoning becomes like a musical incantation. In the most radical – and therefore most thrilling (for a cinephile) – moment in the film, Christine is listening to a relaxation tape,

lying on a bed of bright red satin sheets in a purple top, framed against a grid-like meshed black wall. The monotonous drawl leads her – and us – around the body: relax the eyes, relax the forehead, relax the chin ... on and on, drawing us into a soporific state of suspended animation, when suddenly projected images fill the wall behind Christine with a series of shots of Louie meeting and shaking hands with different men, over and over, splitting us between the stasis of Christine and the hypnotic intonation and the agitated repetition of what appears to be going through her mind, projected onto the screen. This moment of cinematic experimentation with disjunction between sound and image, a sure trace of the influence of Godard on Gordon's work, is motivated within the narrative, but pulls us as viewers into two conflicting modes that make us aware of the playfulness of the editing.

The film is a product of the creative culture of downtown New York in the early 80s when, Gordon says, people could engage with each other to produce art rather than for commercial gain and were motivated by 'joy, energy and fearlessness'. The director drew into the project a stellar crew of people who would go on to become key figures in American culture: radical experimental writer Kathy Acker who wrote the script; photographer Nan Goldin who plays herself as a barmaid; John Lurie, jazz musician from The Lounge Lizards, who starred in *Down By Law*; cinematographer Tom DiCillo, who later worked with Jim Jarmusch; production assistant Christine Vachon, who went on to produce Todd Haynes' *Poison* and spearhead the queer cinema

movement; actor Luiz Guzmán, familiar from *Carlito's Way*; actor Cookie Mueller (John Waters' *Divine*), and others.

The unorthodox pairings of sound and image, the meandering narrative structure, the hybrid modes of narrative and performance and the gorgeous cinematography make the film worth watching as a genre-bending cinematic exploration of the possibilities of how to play with sound, image, narrative and performance. Watch the film, let the narrative play out, but stay closely attuned to how that narrative is staged and the film will offer invigorating pleasures for the film-lover.

#### Notes by Anne Rutherford

##### The Restoration

New 2K restoration from the original camera negative overseen by director Bette Gordon.

Director: Bette GORDON; Production Companies: Channel Four, Variety Motion Pictures, ZDF; Producer: Renée SHAFRANSKY; Script: Bette GORDON, Kathy ACKER, Jerry DELAMATER & Peter KOPER, Nancy REILLY; Photography: Tom DICILLO, John FOSTER; Editor: Ila VON HASPERG; Sound: Scott BREINDEL, Michael CATON, Helen KAPLIN; Music: John LURIE; Costumes: Elyse GOLDBERG // Cast: Sandy McLEOD (Christine); Will PATTON (Mark); Richard M. DAVIDSON (Louie); Luis GUZMÁN (Jose); Lee TUCKER (Projectionist); Nan GOLDIN (Nan); Spalding GRAY (Obscene Caller)

USA | 1983 | 100 mins | 2K Flat DCP (orig. 35mm, 1.85:1) | Colour | Mono Sd. | English | (R)18+

## Writers and Presenters

**Jacob Agius** is a film critic, audio producer and podcast producer based in Melbourne, Australia. They are a committee member of the Melbourne Cinémathèque, *Senses of Cinema* and the Czech & Slovak Film Festival of Australia. Their most recently published articles covered Federico Fellini's *Amarcord* for the Melbourne Cinémathèque and a long form piece on the actor and drag queen Divine in *Senses of Cinema*.

**Lynden Barber** is a Sydney-based freelance journalist specialising in film and a former lecturer in screen studies at TAFE Randwick and Sydney Film School. Born and raised in the UK, Barber moved to Australia in 1985. His professional journalism has appeared in many publications including *Limelight* magazine, where he has reviewed both film and television productions; *The Australian*, where he was the staff film writer for a decade, & before that, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, where he was staff film critic for five years. His roles have included curating Australian Screen Online (a National Film and Sound Archive website) and being artistic director of the Sydney Film Festival. His work has also been published in *The Guardian*; *Lumina* (journal of AFTRS – the Australian Film, Television and Radio School); *The Drum* (at the ABC website); *New Matilda*; *Melody Maker*; *NME*; *Meanjin* and *Rolling Stone* (Australia).

**John Baxter** is an Australian-born writer, scholar, critic and film-maker who has lived in Paris since 1989. The

many books he has written include the first ever critical volume devoted to the Australian cinema as well as studies of Ken Russell, Josef von Sternberg, Stanley Kubrick, Woody Allen, Federico Fellini, George Lucas, Robert De Niro, Luis Bunuel and a number of studies of Paris. His most recent book is a biography of Charles Boyer. He writes a blog about Paris and other things French at [johnbaxter.substack.com/](http://johnbaxter.substack.com/)

**Bruce Beresford** was born in Sydney and graduated from Sydney University. He worked for the British Film Institute and directed his first feature film, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, in the 1970s. Since then, he has directed over 30 more feature films, including *Breaker Morant*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, *Don's Party*, *The Club*, *Puberty Blues*, *Tender Mercies*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Bride of the Wind*, *Paradise Road*, *Black Robe*, *Mao's Last Dancer*, *Mr Church* and *Flint*. His latest is *Ladies in Black*. Bruce was nominated for an Academy Award for the script of *Breaker Morant* and the direction of *Tender Mercies*. *Driving Miss Daisy* won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1990. *Black Robe* won the Canadian award for Best Film and Best Director in 1992. In 2009, his feature film *Mao's Last Dancer* was nominated for nine AFI awards including Best Director. It failed to win anything! In 2013 he directed an acclaimed 3 hour *Bonnie and Clyde* for TV. Bruce has also directed a number of operas, including *Rigoletto* for Los Angeles Opera, *La Fanciulla del West* for the Spoleto Festival, *Elektra* for State Opera of South Australia,

*Sweeney Todd* for Portland Opera, *The Crucible* for Washington Opera, *Cold Sassy Tree* for Houston Grand Opera and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Die Tote Stadt* for Opera Australia. *Macbeth* for Melbourne Opera, *Otello* for Melbourne Opera, *Albert Herring* for Brisbane opera.

**Rod Bishop** has worked as an educator, film critic, film maker and film producer. He co-wrote and produced *Body Melt* (Philip Brophy), was Director of the Australian Film Television and Radio School from 1996 to 2003 and a member of the committee that set up NITV. He is a foundation member of the Cinema Reborn Organising Committee.

**Richard Brennan** has been in love with cinema since he was ten. At various times in the last 60 years he has worked at the ABC, the Commonwealth Film Unit, the Australian Film Institute and Screen Australia. His producer credits include *Homesdale*, *Mad Dog Morgan*, *Love Letters from Teralba Road*, *Long Weekend*, *Newsfront*, *Stir*, *Starstruck* and *Cosi*.

**Ivan Cerecina** is an independent researcher and film writer. He has lectured in Film Studies at The University of Sydney and has been a recipient of residency fellowships at the Cité Internationale des Arts and the Centre Internationale d'accueil et d'échange des Récollets in Paris. He is currently working on a book on the idea of montage in post-war French film.

**Eddie Cockrell** was most recently a television critic for the *Weekend Review* section of the national newspaper *The Australian*. His first job out of college was programming The American Film Institute repertory cinema at the

Kennedy Center in his hometown of Washington. D.C. in the late 1970s, and he's been a committed and enthusiastic film tragic his entire life. His movie reviews and writing have appeared in *Variety*, *The Washington Post*, the Sydney Film Festival catalogue, *indieWIRE*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the now defunct *Nitrate Online* website and elsewhere. He'd like to see Bruce Springsteen perform one last time.

**Adrian Danks** is a teacher, editor, curator, and award-winning critic. He is Associate Professor, Cinema Studies and Media, at RMIT University, co-curator of the Melbourne Cinémathèque, and was an editor of *Senses of Cinema* between 2000 to 2014. He is the author of the edited collections, *A Companion to Robert Altman* (2015) and *American-Australian Cinema* (2018), with Steve Gaunson and Peter Kunze), and the monograph, *Australian International Pictures* (2023, with Con Verevis).

**Marshall Deutelbaum** is Professor Emeritus in English at Purdue University in the U.S. His research interests as a film historian include the widescreen American films of the 1950s and 1960s and the films of the South Korean director Hong Sangsoo. His most recent essay is 'The Play of Parallel Editing in Hong Sangsoo's *The Day After*'.

**John Duigan** is a film writer/director and novelist, best known for award-winning films *Mouth to Mouth*, *Winter of our Dreams*, *The Year My Voice Broke*, *Flirting*, *Romero*, *Sirens*, *Lawn Dogs*, *Head in the Clouds* and *Careless Love*. He lives in Australia and the UK and is a frequent visitor to the Cyclades Islands in Greece.

**Dr Russell Edwards** currently teaches Film Studies at Monash University. A professional film critic since the early 1990s, Russell reviewed for *Variety* (2003–2012) and served as President of The Film Critics Circle of Australia (2004–2006). A former advisor to the Busan International Film Festival, Russell recently contributed to Edinburgh University Press' book *The Films of Kim Ki-young*.

**Hamish Ford** is a senior lecturer in Screen and Cultural Studies at the University of Newcastle. He has previously published scholarly essays on Sembène's films *Moolaadé* and *Camp de Thiaroye*, and is working on a lengthy analysis of *Xala*. A well-known writer on post-war European cinema, he is currently co-editing what will be the largest ever volume devoted to Ingmar Bergman's films as well as writing a monograph on the Swedish director's 1960s cinema.

**Samba Gadjigo** is Helen Day Gould Professor of French at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. His research focuses on French-speaking Africa, particularly the work of filmmaker Ousmane Sembene. His 2015 documentary, *Sembene!*, co-directed by Jason Silverman, is a biopic focusing on Sembene's life and work, exploring the themes developed in the biography through interviews and extensive footage from Senegal, Burkina Faso, and France. In 2016, Samba received the Faculty Award for Scholarship in recognition of his 'international, multi-disciplinary career – a career throughout which his own story-telling has merged with that of Sembene's, interweaving African literature, film, history, politics, and

indeed these with language and with life itself'. His writing has appeared in *African Cinema and Human Rights*, *Research in African Literatures*, and *Contributions in Black Studies*.

**Geoff Gardner** is a former director of the Melbourne Film Festival and has worked in film distribution with the art and documentary company Ronin Films. During the early years of the Hawke Government he worked as an advisor to the Attorney-General and the Minister for Finance. He is the founding Chair of the Organising Committee of Cinema Reborn.

**Dr Helen Goritsas** holds a PhD in Visual Arts, from the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. She is the Course Coordinator of the Bachelor of Interactive Media program (2D/3D Animation, Film & Video and Game Design) and Senior lecturer of Film Studies and Film Production at the Academy of Information Technology. Helen has served as President of Women in Film and Television NSW, Program Manager for the Media Mentorship for Women, Screen Composers initiatives with APRA-AMCOS, and Director of the Greek Film Festival of Australia. Helen Associate Produced the Australian Feature film, *Alex and Eve* (2015) and is a filmmaker, film critic and radio presenter. She has published on film studies, film authorship and the cinemas of Satyajit Ray, Jane Campion and George Miller. Her research interests include film aesthetics, screen craft, and increasingly virtual production.

**Helen Grace** is an award-winning new media artist, filmmaker, writer and academic whose work has played

an active role in the development of art, cinema, photography, cultural studies and education in Australia and regionally for over 30 years.

**Professor Jing Han** is the Director of Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. Prior to that, she worked at SBS for 23 years as the Chief Subtitler and Head of SBS Subtitling Department. She was the leading sub-titler of the Chinese dating show *If You Are The One* on SBS.

**Linda Jaivin** is the author of twelve books comprising seven novels and non-fiction including the acclaimed *The Shortest History of China*, which has been widely translated and published overseas as well as in Australia. She is also an essayist, cultural commentator and translator specialising in translating Chinese film.

**Adrian Martin** is an Australian-born film critic based in Spain. His most recent book is *Mysteries of Cinema* (University of Western Australia Publishing, 2020) and his website gathering over 40 years of writing is [www.filmcritic.com.au](http://www.filmcritic.com.au).

**John McDonald** is film critic for the Australian Financial Review and art critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. A former Head of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia, he has written about art and film for Australian and international publications. He has also worked as a freelance lecturer and curator. [johnmcdonald.net.au](http://johnmcdonald.net.au)

**Jane Mills** is an Associate Professor in Film Studies at the University of NSW. She has a production background in journalism, television and documentary,

and has written and broadcast widely on cinema, media, screen literacy, censorship, feminism, sociolinguistics and human rights. She's the Series Editor of *Australian Screen Classics*, a member of the Sydney Film Festival Advisory Panel, a Programmer for Antenna Documentary Festival and a Member of the NSW Education Standards Authority Advisory Group for Visual Arts. Her books include: *The Money Shot: Cinema Sin and Censorship*; *Loving and Hating Hollywood: Reframing Global and Local Cinemas*; and *Jedda*. Her all-time favourite film changes regularly but is currently either *Man with a Movie Camera* or *Some Like It Hot*. And almost any and every film by Agnès Varda.

**Scott Murray** is an Australian filmmaker and author. He was one of the founders of *Cinema Papers*, which he edited for much of the next 30 years. Scott has also written, edited or contributed to 12 books and monographs on the cinema, as well as co-editing the online *Senses of Cinema*. In the early 1970s, he wrote and directed three short films (*Paola*, *Denial* and *Summer Shadows*) and co-directed a documentary about student unrest, *Beginnings*, before later making the feature film *Devil in the Flesh*, which was selected for Critics Week at Cannes in 1986. While continuing to write weekly on film for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, he is readying for publication a 4-volume illustrated bibliography of the Arsène Lupin novels and short stories.

**Margot Nash** is a filmmaker and a Visiting Fellow in Communications at the University of Technology Sydney. Her collaborative documentary credits include the experimental short *Take*

(2019 Victoria Hunt, Margot Nash) and the feature documentary *For Love Or Money* (1983 Megan McMurchy, Margot Nash, Margot Oliver, Jeni Thornley). In 2021 her remastered feature drama *Vacant Possession* (1994) screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival and her remastered short *Shadow Panic* (1989) screened at Cinema Reborn. Her personal essay documentary *The Silences* (2015) screened nationally and internationally and in 2016 she won an Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Award for the screenplay.

**Darcy Paquet** is an American-born, South Korean-based film critic, university lecturer, author, programmer, translator and occasional actor. A native of Massachusetts, he has been living in Seoul since 1997. He is the author of *New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves* (2009), co-ordinates the influential koreanfilm.org website, and his film translation credits include the English subtitles for Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning *Parasite* (2019). In 2010, Paquet was awarded the Korea Film Reporters Association Award for his contributions in introducing Korean cinema to the world. Paquet is also the founder and organiser of Wildflower Film Awards Korea.

**David Roe** is a film producer who has been making and marketing films since the 1970s and has worked on some of the most renowned Australian films. His own productions were selected by such prestigious film events as the Cannes Film Festival (*The Coca-Cola Kid*) and Sundance Film Festival (*Storyville*). A former Chief Executive of the Australian Film Institute, Head of Production and Marketing for the NSW Film

Corporation, David is a voting member of BAFTA.

**Anne Rutherford** is a freelance film critic and Adjunct Associate Professor (Cinema Studies) at Western Sydney University. She is the author of *What Makes a Film Tick* and numerous film essays. Her recent work has appeared in *The Monthly*, *Australian Book Review*, *Meanjin* and *Movie: A Journal of Film Criticism*. In 2022 she won the Australian Film Critics' Association award for best international review.

**Noa Steimatsky** is author of the award-winning *The Face on Film* (Oxford University Press, 2017), of *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), and of numerous articles. Her scholarship braids historical research on post-war cinemas with questions of realism and modernism, film theory and aesthetics. She was faculty member at Yale University's Department of the History of Art, tenured at the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago, and visiting faculty at Stanford, University of California-Berkeley, and Sarah Lawrence College. She was recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, the National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship, the American Council of Learned Societies senior-level Fellowship, the American Academy in Rome Prize, the Getty Research Grant, and the Fulbright Award. She has lectured internationally on the World War II vicissitudes of the Cinecittà movie studio – a project which inspired a documentary film, and is being expanded into a book.

**Janice Tong** is a cinephile and one-time film scholar. By day she runs a digital brand agency, by night she enjoys watching films and good Brit and Nordic crime dramas. She is particularly interested in the intersection of film, philosophy and literature, the cinema of Wong Kar-wai, as well as French and German cinemas. You can check out her film blog at: [nightfirehorse.wordpress.com/](http://nightfirehorse.wordpress.com/)

**Quentin Turnour** is a film historian, archivist and silent film programming specialist

**Angelica Waite** is a film programmer and organising committee member at Cinema Reborn Film Festival. With a BA (Hons) in Film Studies, her Honours research explored generative processes of truthmaking in documentary film, with a focus on Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (1990). She is a co-founder of collaborative film screening and publication project The Film Group.

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#### Contact

Cinema Reborn  
129 Ebley Street  
Bondi Junction  
NSW 2022, Australia

P O Box 717  
Waverley  
NSW 2024, Australia

#### Website

[www.cinemareborn.com.au](http://www.cinemareborn.com.au)



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