

MATTHIEU TAROT ET JANI THILTGES PRÉSENTENT

BENOIT POELVOORDE

LAETITIA CASTA

obéir
punir
souffrir
asservir
subir
envoûter
exciter
résister
mépriser
pardonner
humilier
jouir



OFFICIAL SELECTION
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2013

UNE HISTOIRE D'AMOUR

UN FILM DE HELENE FILLIERES

D'APRES LE ROMAN DE REGIS JAUFFRET SEVERE PUBLIE EN FRANCE AUX EDITIONS DU SEUIL

AVEC RICHARD BOHRINGER
REGIS JAUFFRET
REDA KATEB HERVE SOGNE ET AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DE PHILIPPE NAHON ET JEAN-FRANCOIS STEVENIN
SCENARIO ET DIALOGUES HELENE FILLIERES
MONTAGE PHILIPPE BOURGUEIL
SON PASCAL JASMES
GERT ETIENNE DAHO
JANSSEN MICHEL SCHILLINGS
REGIS VERONIQUE SACHREZ
COSTUMES LAURENCE STROZ
UN FILM PRODUIT PAR MATTHIEU TAROT ET JANI THILTGES
COPRODUCTEUR DIANA ELBAUM
MUSIQUE
UNE COPRODUCTION ALBERTINE PRODUCTIONS SAMSA FILM ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP
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MATTHIEU TAROT AND JANI THILTGES PRESENT

BENOIT POELVOORDE LAETITIA CASTA

TIED

A FILM BY HÉLÈNE FILLIÈRES

Adapted from the novel SÉVÈRE by RÉGIS JAUFFRET

published by Editions du Seuil



**INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM**

Love stories are secret planets.

They vanish into thin air when their inhabitants have left them.

They obey laws unfathomable to the rest of the universe.

Unfathomable even to those who have dwelt there.

We shall be judged according to laws that weren't ours at the time of the events.

- Régis Jauffret

MATTHIEU TAROT and JANI THILTGES present

BENOÎT POELVOORDE LAETITIA CASTA RICHARD BOHRINGER

TIED

A film by **HÉLÈNE FILLIÈRES**

Adapted from the novel ***SÉVÈRE*** by **RÉGIS JAUFFRET** published in France by Éditions du Seuil

Original Music by **ETIENNE DAHO**

FRENCH RELEASE DATE 9th JANUARY 2013

Running time: 1h20 - Image: SCOPE - Sound: Dolby SRD

Photos and Press Kit available on the TIED website:
www.unehistoiredamour-lefilm.com/presse

SYNOPSIS

The Banker meets the Young Woman one spring evening. He is a man of enormous power and wealth. That night she becomes his mistress. Together they enter a world of endless erotic desire – the desire to fuck and to be fucked, to possess and to be possessed, to be forced past all limits. To submit and to dominate. Their games grow ever wilder, ever more dangerous. Day by day, night after night, they are consumed. One by one, all boundaries are destroyed. The Husband looks on passively. The Banker gives her a gun and teaches her to shoot. The Young Woman is a willing pupil. She provokes him into abuse and humiliation. Their hunger is insatiable. He promises her a million dollars – then rejects her – and the deadly bond between them is sealed.

Hélène Fillières

Hélène Fillières stars in **MAFIOSA**, broadcast on Canal +.

She has appeared in numerous films, including:

A MOI SEULE by Frédéric VIDEAU / **COUPABLE** by Laetitia MASSON / **LADY CHATTERLEY** by Pascale FERRAN / **FRANCE BOUTIQUE** by Tonie MARSHALL / **VARIETE FRANCAISE** by Frédéric VIDEAU / **A MAN, A REAL ONE** by Arnaud and Jean-Marie LARRIEU / **VENDREDI SOIR** by Claire DENIS / **NEAREST TO HEAVEN** by Tonie MARSHALL / **SEASIDE** by Julie LOPES-CURVAL / **REINES D'UN JOUR** by Marion VERNOUX / **OUCH** by Sophie FILLIERES / **VENUS BEAUTY (INSTITUTE)** by Tonie MARSHALL / **PEUT-ETRE** by Cédric KLAPISCH / **ENCORE** by Pascal BONITZER / **GRANDE PETITE** by Sophie FILLIERES...

TIED is her first feature film as director.

A Conversation with Hélène Fillières

How did you become interested in this story?

For my first film, I didn't want to write an original story, which could be too personal. I felt more comfortable with someone else's story, a roundabout way of expressing something intimate. Then I read *Sévère* by Régis Jauffret. His artistic approach touched me. I know his novels, I've admired him for a long time, his style of course, but mostly his pitiless scrutiny of the human heart. The discovery of *Sévère*, which he had chosen to write based on actual events, really inspired me. The novel he had drawn out of it seemed to be fantastic basis for a film.

So it was the news item that attracted you?

I find that news items are often ideal material through which to talk about human nature. They are by definition real stories, often extreme, out of control, sometimes irrational. Irrational behaviour in others makes us acutely aware of our own vulnerability: what makes someone else lose control but not me... or at least not yet? News stories remind us of our own madness, thus of our humanity. We are told to believe that there's such thing as normality. We are pushed to deny our dark sides, our dysfunctions. News items fascinate us because they utter a certain truth about mankind, however unimaginable it can be.

Why did this story in particular fascinate you?

Whereas crimes of passion are as old as the world itself, the story of these two lovers, with its issues of dominance and submission, fascinates because it overturns conventional moral standards and embarrasses frustrated people.

Because it takes us beyond our limits, because it helps us understand the dark paths of our desires, because it leads us into our own shadows and asks a fundamental question: what is love? How do we love? Why do we love? What are the intimate, inaccessible fantasies that trigger the sexual pleasure of the other?

For me, the real issue raised by this story is the weight of prejudice and public opinion regarding the lovers' practices, deemed "unclassifiable". They disturb first and foremost because they belong only to the people who experience them, and I wanted to pay tribute to the two protagonists. I wanted to salute their irreverence.

How do you reach this dramatic tableau: a man found dead in latex, killed by his mistress?

Do you think your film answers this question?

I don't think cinema – or fiction in general – is meant to give answers. I think cinema should question, disconcert and even disturb and leave the viewer free to choose his or her point of view. If I'm interested in human flaws, it's not in order to standardize them by giving them a rational explanation. That's why the film doesn't take sides. I didn't try

to explain, judge or justify. I did no research – I imagined. I tried to follow the characters' paths, feeding myself with Régis Jauffret's work, and I have chosen the viewer's point of view, to make him or her a witness to this adventure, to suggest that he or she should observe, without taking sides, the way these two peculiar characters operate. I have the feeling that I have made a proposition – simply a proposition. Jauffret made his, and I made mine.

Do you think the audience's perception and experience of the film might be 'contaminated' by the comments that will inevitably accompany its release, naming characters you chose to keep nameless?

The news item tells of two fragile beings engaged in a lethal sexual game. The 'real' story is evidently more complex. I created the characters in the film from those imagined by Régis Jauffret. So there's nothing or no one to recognize... unless yourself.

From the 'real-life facts', above all you kept the final image?

It's the only thing of which we are certain in this tragedy. The rest is conjecture and interpretation. There is no reality; I offer my fiction.

Why "Une histoire d'amour" (French title: A Love Story)? It seems perhaps a provocation?

No, to me it's obvious, because the three words of this title are important. All love stories are remarkable, "secret planets that obey laws unfathomable to the rest of the universe, unfathomable even to those who have dwelt there", as Jauffret writes in *Sévère*. There are thousands of ways to love, as there are thousands of ways of making love. Where love is concerned, nobody owns the truth. I wanted to share this story by freeing myself from the judgment that has been made on the news story. It's not a plea, a justification or an accusation, simply my vision of the relationship between this man and this woman. And for me this is a love story. Should this title become the object of a debate, and raise questions, so much the better.

The novel is a first-person narrative told from the Young Woman's point of view; why did you choose to do something different?

Probably because I was interested in the man first. The film is a tribute to the male figure, particularly through this deviant incarnation offered by the Banker. It's a woman's look at that great enigma – male pleasure. What fascinated me in this story is the mystery of this man, and through him, the mystery of men in general. Confronting this woman with three completely different male figures was a way for me to give an account of the masculine enigma. The Banker is the man she wants, the Husband is the man she has and the Passenger in the airplane is the one she could have but doesn't want. Each holds some kind of mystery that intrigues me.

What is the mystery of men?

For me, above all, it's the mystery of their pleasure. We always talk about female pleasure but I'm most interested in men's pleasure – the secret in men. There is something unfathomable in man, like an impenetrable secret: what gives him sexual pleasure? To illustrate this haunting question I have found with my male characters something very inspiring: a troubling, morbid pleasure with the Banker; with the Husband a silent, almost passive pleasure, which is just as disturbing and disconcerting. And with the Passenger in the airplane a restrained pleasure that also raises questions.

Is this why Benoît Poelvoorde often appears naked?

I wanted to expose him, literally and figuratively speaking. For me the Banker is a kind of metaphor for male mystery. The deviance of his pleasure fascinates me.

He is a Black Prince, bewitching, unfathomable and mysterious. A solitary, melancholic man, a wounded man you want to take in your arms. He carries a huge emotional wound. But he's also cruel, violent, uncontrollable. He hurts others because he loves to suffer and knows no other way to experience pleasure.

I wanted him to be hard to resist. To love him you must endure everything. His pleasure is organized as he likes it and if you want to appeal to him you have to follow his rules. And one of them is to take sexual pleasure in pain. As unimaginable as that might seem, it's how he gets pleasure and no one will ever change that.

He's a man you want to love, precisely because he doesn't love himself. He attracts because he is enigmatic. But there is nothing more painful or more exhausting than to give love to someone who doesn't love himself.

Why Benoît Poelvoorde?

When I began thinking about adapting Régis Jauffret's novel, I learned that Benoît Poelvoorde was also interested in it. When we met we didn't talk so much about the book as about life and human psychological dysfunction. In just a few hours we found ourselves on common ground: the dark side in each one of us that reveals the human spirit.

The fact that this character had touched him moved me deeply. Benoît is a very sensitive man – very intelligent and very fragile. The comic mask he is often made to wear doesn't hide the complexities of his own shadows. He's the most melancholic man I know – sometimes very dark but extremely touching. I love him sincerely and deeply.

It was very brave of him to accept that this character attracted him. Without us ever needing to explain the text, Benoît was immersed in it each time, very instinctive, empathetic with his character. I saw clearly that he was touched by the part, by the Banker's irreverence, his unforgivable yet endearing nature. In his own way he too wanted to pay tribute to him.

The fact that our ideas on the novel and the shooting of the film were in agreement allowed us to become very close. Like a secret pact.

And Laetitia Casta?

I immediately thought of her, and no one else. The young woman facing Benoît Poelvoorde had to be 'too beautiful for him': a woman who almost hurts his eyes, a woman whose love for him he would have good reasons to doubt at every moment. I wanted the Young Woman to be disconcerting, both innocent and evil, despite herself. I wanted an angel who was also a demon.

Laetitia was the obvious choice. She has an insolent beauty and at the same time she's completely harmless when it comes to the power of her charms. Entirely uncalculating, she's nonetheless difficult to figure out. She doesn't weigh up her dangerous aura. The couple formed by the two main characters had to work like an entity where one embodies the psychological dysfunction of the other.

If Laetitia was an obvious choice it's because – like Benoît – she is a wounded woman, but it shows less.

Her wounds are interiorized. The way in which she is seen is clearly a heavy load for her to carry. For a long time, she was granted a commercial value only. She became a model when she was very young and had to learn about life and the relationship between money and flesh. She knows what it means to sell her body and to check if the attention she is given has financial or emotional value.

For me, Laetitia is a sort of modern Marilyn. A girl who knows what it is to appeal to get men but who is desperately looking for something else. Who wants to be loved. Like Marilyn she carries her beauty almost as a burden that isolates her from others.

I sensed this part meant a lot to her. Like Benoît she gave her best. Like Benoît she didn't come out of the shooting unscathed. Roles like this leave scars. Both of them gave all they had. The emotions weren't faked and neither was the suffering.

Why is the role of the Husband more important than in Jauffret's novel?

The Husband is the second male figure who, in his own way, embodies the male mystery. In my story, his part had to be developed. Inevitably, he is an actor in this tragedy. His passivity doesn't make him a spectator. That's the way I see him anyway. Why does he accept his role? What does his silence say about him? Doesn't he care? Is he deeply hurt? What does he really think? Does he also experience pleasure in suffering even in making the other suffer while remaining impassive? I wanted to film all this.

When Richard Bohringer agreed to play the part, he talked about the script as if I'd written the part for him. Immediately I knew he'd be great on screen – he is an actor who knows how to preserve his mystery and his strengths whatever life throws at him. He doesn't show what's happening inside. He's as solid as a rock and handsome as a god, but we don't know what's going on the inside. And his voice is unique. It's only after we had shot the first few scenes with Richard that I thought he should speak the voice over at the beginning of the film. He has become the story's narrator. He embodies temporality. He isn't omniscient, he's a survivor.

You opted for a big age difference between the Husband and the Young Woman. Why?

Because the Husband also had to represent a father figure – an encumbrance for both her and the Banker.

He refuses to play that role for the Young Woman – “I’m not your father, don’t be ridiculous” – but in spite of himself, he embodies it for the Banker. He is an obstacle (even if harmless) that must be bypassed or destroyed: to despise, to hate the father, for want of killing him... because the Banker is, above all, a son. While I wanted to talk about a man, I didn’t want to forget about the son that man had been. I wanted his emotional past to be implicit. Hence the father figures represented by the Minister (political power) and the Analyst (intellectual power): domineering figures crushing him. I wanted to emphasize the Banker’s extraordinarily complex emotional status... the original wound, without ever naming or showing it.

There seems to be a sort of empathy between the two male characters.

They embody two different ways of being a man. It’s not for me to say which one of the two is worthier but I thought it was important to show, while they have absolutely nothing in common, that they could understand each other and even respect one another.

Do you think it could have been the case?

I don’t know. The reality of this news story doesn’t interest me. My characters have their own dimension and their relationships are those I have imagined.

What role does money play in the film?

Even if the film never shows money, I wanted it to be present everywhere – in the sets, the costumes, but also in the characters’ language. The word *money* keeps coming back, like an obsession, a verbal tic, the symptom of a pathology that, for the Banker will be fatal.

I wanted money to be a permanent issue, and one of the main unresolved questions: how do love and money coexist? To what extent is a love relationship devalued if a price can be put on it?

All we see is the promise of a million dollars, which is only their own sick way of quantifying the love they have for each other (first him, when he makes his promise, then her by demanding he keeps it). That’s the romantic dimension that money can play in their relationship, like a ring, another symbolic object that is being passed between them.

As for the rest, in a world like this one, money can be a terrible weapon. It’s synonymous with power but also with humiliation, both using it as some sort of transitional object, a troublesome hot potato.

Your direction is very assured, with its own strong aesthetic. What were your objectives?

I wanted to tell a love story first and foremost, I wanted it to be beautiful and elegant. Cinema had to sublimate everything, hence the choice of a very precise aesthetic. And like in a fairy tale, a dark poem, I wanted the characters to become almost unreal. First by respect for the real protagonists of this story, and also by choice, I wanted to move as far as possible from any kind of realism. I wanted a particular atmosphere with the light, and a true narrative style. Christophe Beaucarne, the DP and I talked about it at length, and it was when he showed me the work of Australian photographer Bill Henson that we decided to create a chiaroscuro light, where faces and skins would emerge luminous from the shadows, where love scenes would be shot in silhouette, seen always from a certain distance. I wanted the film to be like a painting.

Music plays a big part in your film. What inspiration did you draw from Etienne Daho's score?

Again, the idea of fairy tale, or a poem, I wanted to create a dreamlike atmosphere through the sound as well, one that would sound recognizable, like a familiar tune being hummed. Etienne Daho was a luminous encounter in this adventure. It all started with my desire to use one particular song of his: *L'adorer*. I knew it would be the base for the film's music. Then when we talked about the screenplay, Etienne suggested two other tracks that seemed to fit with my story perfectly (*Mythomane* and *Les Liens d'Eros*). I listened to them and immediately found the mood I was looking for. He entrusted them to me and that's how the soundtrack was born.

TIED is your first film. If you had to compare with your experience as an actress...

You can't compare the two. There is a creative dimension when you direct a film – from the writing of the script to the very final stages – that is totally absent from the job of acting, where you are not the subject of your desire. An actor doesn't desire. His only desire is to be desired.

If I had to draw a parallel between the two, I would say that this story, of the Banker and his mistress, without me being aware of it at the beginning, illustrates all the questions I've asked myself as an actress.

By becoming an actress I found a marvellously dangerous place where the issue of my desire was easily solved: to be desired. Where the value I gave myself over the years remained for a long time proportionate to the good will of others. I gave meaning to my life by existing in the eyes of others. I found pleasure in offering myself and responding to the desires of directors. I loved submitting to their will. I could recognize the signs of subservience but I never wanted to free myself from it since I found pleasure in it, as if it had a hold on me. An ambivalent pleasure. A masochistic pleasure. Because in which other profession is someone authorized to ask someone else to do the same thing over and over again so they can get the "perfect shot", and that someone gets down to it happily each time? It's more than likely that The Young Woman in my film could be a metaphor for the actress I am and when she kills her master at the end, it could be the moment when I decided to move to directing films....

Hélène Fillières inhabited my book. She forgot it in order to write the screenplay.

It's the greatest tribute she could have paid my novel.

She found within herself the very substance of the story; she found the emotion, the climax of this terrifying romance, in order to extract all its violence and love.

She pushed it all the way into its inmost depths, not hesitating to ask the actors to become, to embody, to leave themselves at the studio door, forgotten on the threshold, like pieces of luggage.

In order to be only this woman, this banker, this tormented and deceived husband.

Hélène Fillières has not made an adaptation; she has made a film. A creation, a work in which she immersed herself entirely.

I thank her.

Régis Jauffret
September 2012

CAST

The Banker – Benoît Poelvoorde

The Young Woman – Laetitia Casta

The Husband – Richard Bohringer

The Passenger – Reda Kateb

The Butler – Hervé Sogne

The Analyst – Jean-François Stévenin

The Minister – Philippe Nahon

The Angel – Vicky Krieps

CREW

Written and Directed by Hélène Fillières

Adapted from “Sévère” by Régis Jauffret, published in France by Editions du Seuil

Director of Photography – Christophe Beaucarne (A.F.C - S.B.C)

Original Music – Etienne Daho

Editor – Philippe Bourgueil

Sound – Pascal Jasmes

Production Manager – Brigitte Kerger-Santos

Location Manager – Patrick Blocman

First Assistant Director – Marc Baraduc

Sound Editor – Gert Janssen

Mix – Michel Schillings

Production Designer – Véronique Sacrez

Costume Designer – Laurence Struz

Hair and Make-up – Claudine Moureaud-Demoulling

Stills Photographer – Fabrizio Maltese

Producers – Matthieu Tarot and Jani Thiltges

Co-producer – Diana Elbaum

Production – Albertine Productions / Samsa Film / Entre Chien et Loup

Coproduced by – Arte France Cinéma

With the participation of Canal+, Ciné +, Arte France, the Film Fund Luxembourg Wallonie and the Région Bruxelles Capitale of

With the help of the Centre of Cinema and Audiovisual of the Fédération Wallonie

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In partnership with Palatine Etoile 9

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International Sales - Wild Bunch

ADORING HER

(Etienne Daho/Etienne Daho – Edith Fambuena – Jean-Louis Perot)

Before my unfaithful, my killing beauty
Bites from my hand, adorns me with a crown of thorns
I must un-adore the adored...

Before her kisses become knives
Before her bouquets do me in
I must un-adore the adored...

Displaying my sorrow with pride, like a ravishing flag
Like a much admired conqueror
Courageous, who knows how to love too strongly
For like the Gods we adore to adore, I adored to adore her

I have been so alive, each minute, each second,
But before I can hate her wandering ways
I must un-adore the adored...

Before my unfaithful strikes yet again,
Before fate inescapably comes true,
I must un-adore the adored

Displaying my sorrow with pride, like a ravishing flag,
Like a much admired conqueror
Courageous, who knows how to love too strongly
For like the Gods we adore to adore, I adored to adore her.
I must un-adore the adored

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