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PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

(Il Fiore Delle Mille E Una Notte)

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"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

THE PLAYERS

NINETTO DAVOLI

FRANCO MERLI

INES PELLEGRINI

LUIGINA ROCCHI

FRANCESCO PAOLO GOVERNALE

ZEUDI BIASOLO

ELISABETTA VITO GENOVESI

ABADIT GHIDEI

SALVATORE VERDETTI

CRISTIAN ALIGNY

LUIGI ANTONIO GURRA C.S.C.

FRANCE LISE NOEL

MOHAMED FARA SCEBANI

HASSAN ALI HAMED

GHENET AIELEW

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AMANUEL MATHEWOS

ADILA IBRAHIM

ALI ABDULLA

RINO HAMMADE

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

Following "The Decameron" and "The Canterbury Tales," "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS" is the third part of Pasolini's trilogy based upon world-famous literary monuments.

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS," considered the most universal masterpiece produced by the Arab civilization, is an heterogeneous work of art. Though it was written by a single author, as is proved by the recurrence of words or phrases and by the uniformity of the narrative patterns, it has been established that the tales derive from three different cultural sources: Persia (Iran), Egypt and India. Moreover, the plot is developed through distinct historical periods: some of the stories date back to the IXth century, others to the Renaissance (there is even a mention of cannons). It was diffused throughout the Occident in the XVIIIth century when Antoine Galland made a brave and brilliant attempt at translating it into French.

When he adapted "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS" to the screen, Pasolini decided to retain the composite nature of the original stories by changing places, environments and costumes. The director was less attracted by the magic and exoticism of the legendary tales than by their realism, in other words, by the existential flavour of everyday life in the ancient Arab civilization and by an almost ethnological approach to the society of the time. "When you read 'The Arabian Nights' today," said Pasolini, "you realize they not only conjure up the complex environment of Arab

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civilization, but also recall the decisive and numerous marks they left on our western literatures, from the rationalists' pre-romanticism to the decadent school."

To find locations for "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS," Pasolini undertook a 6000 mile journey through Asia and Africa. He scouted North and South Yemen, Ethiopia, Iran, and Nepal, entering with his troupe in wild places where no tourist had ever set foot and exploring those ancient cities of the Orient which still swarm with architectural wonders. "I have been searching after antiquity," comments Pasolini, "not an archeological one, but the one that is still alive and abloom."

The players were chosen, one by one, when Pasolini and his team went location-hunting or even in the very course of the filming. All these "real faces" were selected with meticulous care: "I chose real actors," says Pasolini, "because their physical appearance must convey the feeling of genuine reality." Therefore, with the notable exception of Ninetto Davoli and Franco Citti, both loyal members of Pasolini's own repertory company, very few professional actors were cast in the picture.

Commenting on his twelfth feature, Pasolini stated: "This third part of the "trilogy of life" is my most ambitious and exacting experiment. None required so much care and skillfulness in the stylization. It is much easier to make a political or ideological film than to achieve a purely narrative classic motion picture. You have to avoid ideologies without giving way to the temptation of escapism. As a matter of fact, there

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are some ideological points concealed within these three films: the main one is that I yearn for the past. I have tried to re-create on the screen. As a director I look at the "trilogy of life" as a fascinating and wonderful challenge. Yet the critics failed to understand what this experiment meant to me, apart from its results. I wanted to enter into the most mysterious meshes of creation by dealing with the purest and plainest patterns of narration. I was searching for the kind of genuine motion pictures we used to see when we were adolescents, but without ever slipping into commercialism."

"I am determined to go my own way, in spite of those who keep asking: 'When will you be making again those films you did in the past?' They did not realize that if they expect me to scandalize, that is precisely the best way to do so."

The narrative structure of the film is provided by various tales interwoven into an intricate plot:

One of the stories tells how Caliph Haroun-al-Rachid and Queen Zobeida submit a young boy and a young girl to a strange beauty contest. The adolescents, having been put to sleep, wake up in turn and make love to each other, so that neither the Caliph nor the Queen can prove that one of the two is more attractive than the other.

Another story concerns Aziz and Aziza. Young Aziz tells Prince Tagi how he betrayed his sweet cousin Aziza who loved him so much that she helped him conquer "the mysterious lady." In turn, Prince Tagi confesses his desire for Princess Dunya who is said to hate both men and marriage. As the young men

search for the Princess, they meet three monks or rather three princes driven to despair by love and its treacheries: Prince Shahryar saw his family destroyed by the incestuous love of his two cousins; Prince Shahzaman, turned into a monkey by a demon, was exorcized but by the sacrifice of a young princess; Prince Yunan killed his best friend unwillingly while fighting a giant horseman on an enchanted magnetic mountain in the midst of the ocean.

When the three monks have finished telling their stories, Tagi succeeds in approaching Dunya but is imprisoned by her royal father. On the same night, he is released by a horseman clad in an iron armour. After having killed the king in the desert, the mysterious horseman strips off the armour and reveals its feminine figure.

Another of the tales deals with that of Nur-el-Din, the son of a rich merchant who ends up marrying his beautiful slave Zumurrud.

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"PIER PAOLO PASOLINI - Director

Director, screenwriter, poet and novelist, Pier Paolo Pasolini was born in Bologna on March 5th, 1922. As the son of an army official, young Pasolini spent his childhood in various parts of Italy, a factor that no doubt has contributed to his keen understanding of different types of people and different levels of society.

After taking his degree in literature, Pasolini moved to Rome in 1949 - in the immediate post-war period that was so artistically fecund and exciting. After a brief period as a teacher, Pasolini plunged into an intensely active career as a screenwriter. At the same time, he began to publish poetry (GRAMSCI'S ASHES, THE RELIGION OF MY TIME), and novels (STREET BOYS, A VIOLENT LIFE) that marked him as a highly original talent. As a screenwriter, he did scripts for such noted directors as Mario Soldati, Franco Rossi, Federico Fellini (NIGHTS OF CABIRIA) and Mauro Bolognini (IL BELL'ANTONIO).

In 1961, Pasolini made his debut as a director with ACCATONE. The film revealed a new director completely developed, with a strong style of his own and a marked gift for cinematic narrative and unforgettable visual compositions. He followed that up the following year with MAMA ROMA (starring Anna Magnani), which proved to be a remarkable portrait of a Roman prostitute.

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"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"PASOLINI - Continued

With THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW (1964), Pasolini attained his greatest commercial success and perhaps the fullest expression of his personal art. The most complicated and at the same time the most illuminating of his films, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW presents a modern, often controversial interpretation of the scriptures, united the director's twin preoccupation with epic myth (Christianity) and social problems (his avowed Communism).

Since that time, Pasolini has made UCCELLACCI, UCCELLINI (1966), OEDIPUS REX (1967), TEOREMA (1968), PIGSTY (1969), and MEDEA (with Maria Callas, (1970)). The cinema of Pasolini, charged with literary and artistic references, is both "Classical" in form and occasionally deliberately "archaic" in its linguistic expression. Pasolini's films, original and controversial as they are, figure as among the most stimulating works of the sixties and seventies. In 1971 he filmed Boccaccio's collection of short stories "THE DECAMERON" followed it with "THE CANTERBURY TALES" (1972), "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS" (1974) and "SALO - 120 DAYS OF SODOM" (1975).

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI'S FILMOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

1) Screenplays and Original Stories

- 1955 - LA DONNA DEL FIUME, directed by Mario Soldati
- 1957 - MARISA LA CIVETTA, directed by Mauro Bolognini
- LE NOTTI DI CABIRIA (Nights of Cabiria) directed by Federico Fellini
- IL PRIGIONIERO DE LA MONTAGNA, directed by Luis Trenker
- 1958 - GIOVANI MARITI, directed by Mauro Bolognini
- 1959 - MORTE DE UN AMICO, directed by Franco Rossi
- LA NOTTE BRAVA (On Any Street/Bad Guys Don't Cry), directed by Mauro Bolognini
- 1960 - IL BELL'ANTONIO (Bell'Antonio), directed by Mauro Bolognini
- IL CARRO ARMATO DELL'8 SETTEMBRE, directed by Gianni Pucci
- LA GIORNATA BALORDA (From a Roman Balcony), directed by Bolognini
- LA LUNGA NOTTE DEL '43, directed by Florestano Vancini
- LA CANTA DELLE MARANE (Short), directed by Cecilia Mangini
- 1961 - LA VIACCIA (The Love Makers), directed by Mauro Bolognini
- LA RAGAZZA IN VETRINA, directed by Luciano Emmer
- 1962 - LA COMMARE SECCA, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci
- UNA VITA VIOLENTA, directed by Paolo Heusch & Brunello Rondi
- 1973 - STORIE SCELLERATE, directed by Sergio Citti

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

2) Films

- 1961 - ACCATONE (Accatone)
- 1962 - MAMMA ROMA (Mamma Roma)
- 1963 - ROGOPAG - Episode LA RICOTTA
 - LA RABBIA
- 1964 - COMIZI D'AMORE
 - IL VANGELO SECUNDO MATTEO (The Gospel According to St. Matthew)
 - SOPRALUOGHI IN PALESTINA - Documentary on the filming of the "Gospel"
- 1966 - UCCELACCI E UCCELLINI (The Hawks and the Sparrows)
 - LE STREGHE - Episode LA TERRA VISTA DALLA LUNA (The Witches)
- 1967 - CAPRICIO ALL'ITALIANA - Episode CHE COSA SONO LE NUVOLE
 - EDIPO RE (Oedipus Rex)
 - AMORE E RABBIA - Episode LA SEQUENZA DEL FIORE DI CARTA (Love & Anger)
- 1968 - TEOREMA (Theorem)
- 1969 - PORCILE (Pigsty)
- 1970 - MEDEA (Medea)
 - VANGELO 70
- 1971 - IL DECAMERONE (The Decameron)
- 1972 - I RACCONTI DI CANTERBURY (The Canterbury Tales)
- 1973 - IL FIORE DELLE MILLE E UNA NOTTE (The Arabian Nights)

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"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

3) Books, Essays and Poetry

- 1942 - POESIE A CASARSA
- 1947 - SULLA POESIA DIALETTALE
- 1951 - IL FERROBEDO
- 1954 - LA MEGLIO GIOVENTU
- 1955 - RAGAZZI DI VITA
- 1957 - LE CENERI DI GRAMSCI
- 1958 - L'USIGNOLO DELLA CHIESA CATHOLICA
- 1959 - UNA VITA VIOLENTA
- 1960 - DONNE DI ROMA
 - PASSIONE E IDEOLOGIA
 - ROMA 1950 - JOURNAL
 - LA POESIA POPOLARE ITALIANA
- 1961 - LA RELIGIONE DE MIO TEMPO
- 1962 - LA COMMARE SECA (with Bernardo Bertolucci)
 - IL SOGNO DI UNA COSA
 - L'ODORE DELL'INDIA
- 1964 - POESIA IN FORMA DI ROSA
- 1965 - ALI DAGLI OCCHI AZZURI
- 1968 - TEOREMA
- 1971 - TRASUMANAR E ORGANIZZAR

4) Essays on Cinema

- 1965 - THE CINEMA OF POETRY (Cahiers du Cinema No. 171)
- 1966 - THE SCREENPLAY AS A STRUCTURE LEADING TO ANOTHER STRUCTURE (Cahiers du Cinema No. 185)
- 1967 - AN ADDRESS ON THE LONG TAKE (Cahiers du Cinema No. 192)

"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

A COLLOQUY WITH PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

1) To tell you the truth, I never called myself a "marxist poet." I merely declared I was "a marxist" like millions of other workers and intellectuals. Besides, nowadays, culture is permeated by marxism. No one can deny anymore the reality of class struggle and you find very few intellectuals who, out of sheer stupidity or conceit, are still prejudiced against the working class. I am one of the many marxist intellectuals who do their best to keep an open mind, to retain their critical faculties alert and to assume without fear their own contradictions.

2) Years ago, I had made it my ambition to achieve what Gramsci called "a popular national work of art." Time has gone by. Achieving a popular national motion picture, nowadays, has proved to be a dream. Masses are inert and it has become difficult to differentiate social classes. Our "consumer" society has standardized nations and classes. What we call "the audience at large" amounts to a numerical concept. I wanted my cinematic "trilogy of life" (The Decameron, The Canterbury Tales and The Arabian Nights) to be seen and understood by all: that is why I chose to tackle the purest and plainest patterns of narration and to enter into those mysterious meshes of genuine tales which seem to me more fascinating and universal than any other moral ideological narrative form.

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"THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"

A COLLOQUY WITH PASOLINI (Continued)

3) Professional actors all come from the middle-class and I cast them accordingly (that is when I cannot find non-professionals of the middle-class to fill the part). Non-professionals are proletarians and I therefore cast them in the proletarian parts.

(quoted from an interview by Georges Moraux)