

Document Citation

Title	Film notes : films selected from the Jean-Luc Godard Montreal lectures
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Source	<i>Pacific Film Archive Calendar</i>
Date	1981 Feb 21
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	Monsters in motion pictures
Film Subjects	Dracula, Browning, Tod, 1931

Film Notes
Films Selected from the Jean-
Luc Godard Montreal Lectures

Pacific Film Archive
University Art Museum
Berkeley

"Where are the monsters? Who
are the monsters?.... To suck
the blood or take the money:
there's no great differ-
ence...."

Dracula (1931)

Directed by Tod Browning

Produced by Universal

Written by Garrett Fort, from
the novel by Bram Stoker and
the play by Hamilton Deane and
John L. Balderston

Dialogue by Dudley Murphy

Photographed by Karl Freund

Art Direction by Charles D.
Hall

With Bela Lugosi, Helen
Chandler, David Manners,
Dwight Frye, Edward Van Sloan,
Frances Dade, Herbert Bunston,
Charles Gerrard

75 mins.

The Birds (1963)

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Produced by Alfred Hitchcock

Written by Evan Hunter, based
on a tale by Daphne du Maurier

Photographed by Robert Burks

Edited by George Tomasini

Art Direction by Robert Boyle
and George Milo

Production Design by Norman
Deming

Sound by Bernard Herrmann

With Rod Taylor, Tippi Hedren,
Jessica Tandy, Suzanne
Pleshette, Veronica Cart-
wright, Ethel Griffies,
Charles McGraw, Ruth McDevitt.

119 mins, color.

In a series of lectures presented at the Conservatoire d'Art Cinématographique de Montréal, Jean-Luc Godard attempted "an introduction to a true history of the cinema...true in the sense that it be made of images and sounds and not of texts, even illustrations...." Each lecture was based on a showing of one of Godard's own films along with several films by other filmmakers. What emerges from these juxtapositions is a text full of fresh insights into the interrelationships between apparently disparate films, and, as intended, into various aspects of the cinema itself.

We have excerpted and informally translated portions of the lectures, which were published in French.

In this lecture, on a program which included Dracula, Rossellini's Germany, Year Zero, The Birds, and Godard's Weekend, the theme is monsters, seen from the historical angle.

"...All are movies in which there is a sort of fall or damnation.... When I entered the room the first thing I heard was Bela Lugosi saying that to live, one must consume blood, that blood is necessary for life, hence one must take blood in order to live.... [I]t goes perfectly with what Hitler did.... Rossellini began his film at the end of an epoch of a kind of Dracula, one with more means than ever before. And in Weekend, one

starts again.... Monsters are an eternal repetition.... [What we see in juxtaposing the films] is that there were birds, vultures of another kind that invaded [Germany]....

"Today I admire very much someone like Hitchcock, who...lost nothing in the transition from silent to sound.... The 7 or 8 shots [in The Birds] in which Tippi does nothing and the birds assemble.... The art of the cinema is also this: one needs no text to tell it, one uses a text when needed, but at other times uses just images or sound....

"People like Hitchcock or Eisenstein were people who were not liked in their time - Stalin, for one, Roosevelt, for the other, then Kennedy, then others, impeded them - and in spite of this they succeeded in doing things: The Odessa Steps, or this shot of Tippi. Well, as critics would put it, those are 'great moments of cinema'.... But it's simply the moments when you see [the effectiveness of the] cinema.... It's something so powerful. This morning there were 15 people here who must have already seen The Birds. And at certain moments...they still sat open-mouthed. It's an enormous power. The thing is to use it. Nobody knows how to use this power, in any case, not a government.

"The movie I'm preparing on Mozambique is called 'Birth of the Image of a Nation.' Not 'Birth of a Nation'.... It is to say birth of a nation through the image it gives of itself, or wants to give itself.... But all governments - and Lenin said it - knew that cinema was important from the start....

"There are two types of industry, and the image is part of the second kind. There is what I would call 'day industry'...the construction of objects - beds, cars, that which makes bodies function, and exploits them after a fashion.... It's what people normally call industry. I prefer to call it 'day industry'....

"Then there is night industry, that which comes from the interior: desire, psychology, nerves, sensations, sexuality - all these industries that are games: prostitution, drugs, tourism, sports - where the fact of wanting to escape is exploited.... And today, that which we call 'mafia,' in the larger sense, is effectively this industry. And the spectacle, show business - including films, TV, and music - is part of this industry.

"The cinema, from a financial point of view, is really used by the mafia, when night industry is allied with day industry. For example, there is someone in the States - Howard Hughes - who is the link. It is no accident that he made movies, this guy who worked for the Pentagon and for the mafia.... He had agreed to give the stamp of honorability that allowed 'dirty money' to become respectable money in industry. It's simply the kind of industry you're not shown - 'dirty money' would be converted into legal, or moral money - but

who controls morality?

"And the cinema is a place - like hotels and casinos - of privilege.... In the way one dispenses money on a film...[or] laundered money, reinvested.... There is not yet, in the universities, an economic history of the cinema, and he who would create it would be quickly ousted....

"...Dracula is somebody from another world in today's world. One says Dracula doesn't exist, but through 3/4 of the film you have only to see how the people are dressed.... Still today on all the boards of directors, in all of high society, people are dressed like this. So, where are the monsters? Who are the monsters? Dracula's house is absolutely the house of Dupont de Nemours.... Do you think they would have had the idea of shooting in another kind of house? Your ideas come from the world you come from...you get ideas only from seeing things. If I had seen only Dracula, I never would have had this idea. But as I see Germany, Year Zero just before or after, I find...cosmic links between these films.... Berlin is the tomb of Dracula. It's effectively Hitler's genius.... If you had put a little mustache on Dracula....

"The true monster film is Grease, or Saturday Night Fever...because one has absolutely no fear.... Because it comes from the imagination [of] industry...producing cars, planes, coffee pots, razors.... [T]he imagination is to produce, to produce is to imagine, it's all connected....

"I believe that there were few movies in the genre of Dracula, Nosferatu, Frankenstein, where [the monster] was not totally invented; frightening, but separate from reality. There was Jekyll and Hyde, [but] always the personal and psychological situations of the bourgeoisie. A movie was never made about a workers' strike using Dracula, which would be useful; or films about the mafia. Suck the blood or take the money - there's no real difference....

"One could imagine Germany, Year Zero being made in another manner: it would not be disorienting to see, all of a sudden, Bela Lugosi cross the screen....

"There are few films that attempt the two together. When Frankenstein was made, one could have put him into a monstrous social situation... the Depression.... It appears at moments, but the film doesn't treat it, it treats it separately.... I would rather try to treat the two together....

"For Weekend, it's more interesting to say 'monsters' than to say 'politics.' Save the word 'politics' for La Chinoise...." --Jean-Luc Godard, in "Introduction à une véritable histoire du Cinema." PFA translation by Yvette Chalom.

Bibliography

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Film Notes: J.B.
February 1981