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# The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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## REDISCOVERING FRENCH FILM Part II

Sunday, April 24 (2:30)  
Friday, May 20 (6:00)

LE CRIME DE MONSIEUR LANGE. (THE CRIME OF MONSIEUR LANGE). 1936. Director: Jean Renoir. Production: Films Obéron. Executive Producer: Geneviève Blondeau. Script: Jacques Prévert, from an idea by Jean Renoir and Jean Castanier. Dialogue: Jacques Prévert, Jean Renoir. Photography: Jean Bachelet. Editor: Marguerite Houllé-Renoir. Music: Jean Wiener, Joseph Kosma. Set Designer: Jean Castanier, Robert Gys. Sound: Guy Moreau, Louis Bogé. In French, English titles. 83 mins.

With: Florelle (Valentine), Nadia Sibirskaja (Estelle), Sylvia Bataille (Edith), Odette Talazac (Concierge), Claire Gérard (Prostitute), Janine Loris □ René Lefèvre (M. Lange), Jules Berry (Batala), Marcel Levesque (Concierge), Marcel Duhamel (Foreman), Henri Guisol (Meunier), Maurice Baquet (Charles), Jacques Brunius (Man with the Dog), Jean Dasté (Worker), Paul Grimault (Printer), Sylvain Itkine (Batal's Cousin), Edmond Beauchamp (Priest), René Génin (Patron of the Inn), Guy Decombe (Worker), Paul Demange (Creditor), Henri Saint-Isles, Charbonnier, Max Morise, Fabien Loris, Yves Dencaud, Pierre Huchet, Marcel Lupovici, Jean Brémand.

A little hotel right on the border. In the café, there is talk of a headline in the evening papers: "Monsieur Lange commits murder". Young Meunier drives up to the hotel and deposits two passengers, Monsieur Lange and Valentine. "Once across the border, you're safe," he tells them, and leaves. They go up to a room in the hotel.

But one of the men in the bar had recognized Lange from the picture in the paper. Shall he turn him over to the gendrames? One can't have a murderer in the place! But suppose he killed a rat? Valentine puts an end to the argument. She will tell M. Lange's story. Afterward, they can decide whether to turn him in.

In the same dusty old building in Paris (begins Valentine), she runs her own laundry, and a certain Batala has a printing office. Batala publishes "Popular literature" ("The Love Life of Fifi Cracra") and detective stories. Business is very bad. Batala is running out of ways to put off his more pressing creditors. He is a smooth operator with women, ingenious about swindles, and unscrupulous in his relationship with his employees. He exploits them, and they hate the trash he publishes as much as they despise him.

One of Batala's employees is a dreamer. Young Monsieur Lange devotes his leisure to writing adventure stories. Most of the night he concentrates passionately on the exploits of "Arizona Jim", hero of hair-raising episodes in Le Far-West. Arizona Jim has not yet found a publisher, but Monsieur Lange is still looking. Perhaps that is why he does not see what's under his nose: the charming blonde blanchisseuse, Valentine, is in love with him. He is not the only man she has loved, but he is the one she loves now. Monsieur Lange attempts a romantic idyll with Estelle, who is in love with Charles, son of the concierge. This does not come off, of course; M. Lange allows himself to be picked up by a lady somewhat older and less reluctant. To Charles, unfortunately, he pretends that he has been successful with Estelle. Before matters can be straightened out, they get worse: while Charles is laid up as the result of

"acrobatics" with a bicycle, Estelle falls by accident into the arms of the lecherous Batala.

Batala is very busy indeed. Menaced by ruin, he decides to publish "Arizona Jim", making a deal with one of his more persistent creditors to plug Ranimax Pills in every episode. M. Lange, overjoyed by the prospect of publication, does not know that at the big moment in his choice scenes Arizona Jim will pull out a little pink box and cry, "Ranimax Pills make you feel like a hero". He signs away his rights.

Despite his ingenuity - at one point he sends his mistress, Edith to be "nice" to a creditor - Batala cannot stave off disaster. Just before he is to be arrested, he gets out while the going is good. Although he does not succeed in borrowing money from Valentine, who once loved him and now despises him, Batala is in good form in his farewell scene at the station with Edith: he leaves her with the check for their dinner. We last see him on the train talking with a priest. "You must be able to go anywhere with those clothes", Batala says thoughtfully.

Then everybody is electrified by a news flash: the Verneuil express has been wrecked near Versigny. Among the dead is Batala, the publisher. Some of the victims were so mutilated that they were identified only by their papers. A priest is among the missing.

Batala's publishing company is reorganized: the writers, the chief creditors, and the employees form a cooperative. "Arizona Jim" becomes a great success. M. Lange finally returns to the tender affection of Valentine. Estelle is reunited with Charles. Joy reigns in the printing office as well as the laundry.

One night, when everyone is at a dinner in celebration of the success of "Arizona Jim" (soon to be a movie) and of the cooperative, Batala shows up. He has, of course, been quite alive and kicking; he had changed clothes with the priest who had been killed at his side in the train wreck.

Batala, more offensive than ever - now that he is wearing the vestments of a priest, he can swindle small sums from kind old ladies - tells M. Lange that he intends to resume his place in the publishing house. Furious that the whole work of the cooperative will be in vain, and beside himself at the vileness of Batala's character, Monsieur Lange shoots and kills his former employer.

Then, as we have seen, young Meunier drives him and Valentine to the frontier...

Valentine has finished her story. Her listeners have understood: they help the couple to cross the border. Monsieur Lange and Valentine still have some days of happiness before them.

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