

ANDRÉ DUSSOLLIER CAROLE BOUQUET MÉLANIE THIERRY
ADRIANA ASTI MAURO CONTE



QUINZAINÉ
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2011

IMPARDONNABLES

UNFORGIVABLE

A FILM BY ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ



UGC PRESENTS

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SCREENPLAY, ADAPTATION & DIALOGUE
BY ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ AND MEHDI BEN ATTIA

BASED ON THE WORK BY PHILIPPE DJIAN
© EDITIONS GALLIMARD, 2009

RUNNING TIME: 111'

FRENCH RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 24th, 2011

TF1

INTERNATIONAL

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SYNOPSIS

Francis comes to Venice to write his next novel. He looks for a place to rent where he can write. He meets Judith, a real estate agent, who insists that he visit a secluded house on the island of Sant'Erasmus. Francis spontaneously proposes: "I'll sign right now... if you'll live here with me." They embark upon a new life as a couple. Problem is, when Francis is in love, he gets writer's block.

The following summer, his daughter Alice shows up at the house for a vacation, then suddenly disappears.

From that point on, Francis is in danger...

CONVERSATION WITH ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ

JACQUES BONTEMPS - How did you get the idea for a film based on the novel by Philippe Dijan?

ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ - I was asked to do it. Initially, I wasn't familiar with Dijan's work. A producer asked me if I wanted to bring IMPARDONNABLES (UNFORGIVABLE) to the big screen. So I read it from that perspective, with the afterthought that since he himself was convinced, we would do the film together. Which is a lucky break. I prefer that to working alone and then having to impose my work on the production. It's better to have a partner who is committed to the project, which in that case corresponds to a joint effort from the very beginning.

J.B. - You must have been sensitive to the multiple characters in the novel. They allowed you to treat them the way you like: almost equally, and with special attention to the way their respective stories are interwoven.

A.T. - I do in fact like telling several stories at once, on the condition that they are related. From the moment that Francis (André Dussollier) meets Judith (Carole Bouquet), Anna Maria (Adriana Asti) and Jérémie (Mauro Conte), he discovers the stories of each of these characters. So all that adds up and constitutes the living matter of the present. There were actually two stages of writing the script. In the first version we stuck to Francis' point of view, like the novel, which was written in first person. We couldn't make it work. Entire passages from the novel were read in voice over. Then I decided to give the other characters more autonomy. From then on, the story was made up of interactions between the characters, while leaving center stage to Francis, the writer, at that moment when everything turns upside down, where, as he puts it, nothing is where it should be.

J.B. - Francis is a writer, but also a father and a husband. His life gets complicated in three respects: the writer has writer's block, the father is confronted with the disappearance of his daughter and the husband is afraid he will lose his wife. So he fights on three fronts, but with one fixation, like Antoine in LES TEMPS QUI CHANGENT (CHANGING TIMES) or Saïd in LOIN (FAR): finishing his novel in progress.

A.T. - Yes, but they all have roundabout ways of reaching their goal. In Francis' case, once the job is done, the book finished and transformed into an object he receives, feels, smells and leaves through, his satisfaction remains limited. That is when he realizes how important Judith is in his life and runs out as fast as he can to find her and get her back.

J.B. - The novel takes place on the Basque coast. We understand that after making HÔTEL DES AMÉRIQUES (HOTEL AMERICA), you have made a different choice. But why Venice? We get the feeling that this city fulfilled for you the role it is supposed to fulfill for Francis: that of being a stimulant.

A.T. - The power of that city is a drug. I had actually tried several times to come up with a screenplay with a plot set in Venice. But it didn't work. Venice was always too much of a backdrop, a location rich in mythology, as we all know. This time, when I read the book, it was very simple: since Judith was a real estate agent and Francis a writer, she would have her agency in Venice (I noticed the city is swarming with them) and Francis would come there to write. So the city belonged to the characters. It was linked to their work. It became a living environment, not just the backdrop against which I had previously tried to construct a story.

J.B. - A big part of the film happens on the island of Sant'Erasmus, i.e., the countryside, and you have avoided the most famous views of the city.

A.T. - We do see San Marco Square, but only from a distance, and it is progressively masked by a gigantic cruise ship going by. Actually, buildings in Venice are often hidden by walls and billboards - probably, as Venetian writer Tiziano Scarpa humorously says, so that tourists won't be overwhelmed by too much beauty!

J.B. - What the spectator does see, however, is a statue of Poseidon that you didn't find in Venice but instead took from the movie LE MÉPRIS (CONTEMPT)!

A.T. - The statue does come from there, but first it came from Naples, Pompeii and Cinecittà (for epic films). It is an icon of VIAGGIO IN ITALIA (JOURNEY TO ITALY) and LE MÉPRIS (CONTEMPT). Of relating as a couple and relating to Italy. But I think the statue really looks at home in Venice, given the relationship to Greece and the city's nautical nature. That is the Venice I love. So I asked my set decorator Michèle Abbe to go get that statue from Cinecittà and I planted it there - where it fits in perfectly. Also, it's good to put statues to use!

J.B. - We get the feeling that if you wanted to shoot in Venice, it was also for the way you could use the characters' movement, both physical and emotional, each in his or her own boat. Like you have used other means of transportation, elsewhere: bicycles, scooters, roller skates. You are partial to "movement that shifts lines."

A.T. - True, especially in Venice. The whole film participates in that movement. The characters walk and navigate. And I use those motorboats, which are so popular in Venice, for comic effect at first (when a cruise ship comes dangerously close to Judith and Francis' boat), then lyrically (in the scenes between Jérémie and Judith), and finally, in an action scene (when Jérémie pursues Francis and tries to crash into his boat).

J.B. - Can we sum up the intentions that initially motivate Francis and Judith (which will be thwarted) with a formula borrowed from Dijan's writing: "To work in peace"?

A.T. - At first, the city of Venice is, in fact, seen as a refuge. A refuge from all the world's evil, and as Francis' daughter Alice (Mélanie Thierry) says, "That's a lot of work!" But as we will see, this retreat can't escape the world's violence. Of all the characters, Jeremy has the most extreme sense of rebellion. He will leave an indelible mark on the relationship between Francis and Judith, and he will also bring Francis to a revelation of the violence within himself.

J.B. - In the film, Alice and Roger have only one daughter, instead of twins, like in the book...

A.T. - In six months of casting, I couldn't find twins who were convincing. Zoé Duthion was, however. She was also the spitting image of Alexis Loret, her father in the film.

J.B. - No more double vision, then, excepting the binoculars Francis often uses. Along with other optical instruments, like a magnifying glass for seeing details in the reproductions of Bellini's paintings, and a camera. He observes, brings the object of his attention closer, spies on it, has it spied on, and finally, he uses his imagination.

A.T. - Yes. I don't have the key to my characters, but Francis, on his island, has the feeling that everything is escaping him. What he is close to on an emotional level (his daughter's and his wife's behavior) becomes distant. So he wants to see, to know. Too much, probably. For how well do we really need to know the people we love? That is where the double pursuit comes from. And Venice is the ideal place for that. So I questioned a private detective

who works in Venice and I included his testimony in the film. He is the one who teaches Jérémie how to go about tailing someone in such a particular environment. Sometimes on foot, sometimes by boat.

J.B. - But by putting Jérémie on Judith's trail, Francis provokes the very thing he fears.

A.T. - Exactly. He coyly says that he wanted to see what would happen.

J.B. - In so doing, he creates conditions that allow him to find the power to write again.

A.T. - That is one aspect of the novel that really intrigued me. From the time he meets Judith, Francis is full of conflicting passions. At one point, his passion for writing takes over, but only for a limited time. And then there is also the passion he feels for his daughter, and his curiosity about Jérémie and his obvious violence. That shakes up Francis quite a bit, and has both a destructive and constructive effect on him.

J.B. - Understandably so, since the flip side of his character is the fact he is a father. A father in the strict sense, as the father of Alice who disappears without giving him the slightest sign of life, and a father figure to Jérémie, who lost his father at age sixteen. Which creates two themes: on the paternal side, the theme of guilt (no way out, says Francis, but to ban procreation), and on the children's side, the theme of emancipation.

A.T. - I think that if Francis hadn't been profoundly troubled by his daughter running away, he wouldn't have been as interested in Jérémie as he was. I wonder if the fascination he has in that boy is provoked, at least in part, by his past experience with his daughter. Jérémie's aggressiveness, and the way

he resists when Francis wants to build a bridge, have an impact connected to his failure with his daughter. The two experiences are inseparable. His attempt to tame Jérémie is a displaced effort. That was a human situation I found fascinating: trying to know how he would act when faced with the boy's violence. But I have the feeling that in the end, it was maybe a lucky break for both characters. Their relationship contributed to broadening both of their horizons.

J.B. - As for Judith, two of the three emotional shocks provoked by Francis (first when he proposes point blank that they live together, then when she learns he is having her tailed by Jérémie) are translated on screen by a nosebleed.

A.T. - Yes, that brutal, physical manifestation reveals the flesh-and-blood human being behind the cool appearance for which she is criticized.

J.B. - Which is what Anna Maria criticizes her for when she mentions Judith's power of seduction over both men and women, and her inability to love.

A.T. - Yes, but that has to do with her beauty. As a young model, she was confronted with many different propositions early on, and we can understand that she had a hard time figuring out what she wanted and making her own decisions.

J.B. - The major change to the book is that it was not Francis who had an affair with Anne-Marguerite (Anna Maria in the film) a few decades earlier. It was Judith who had a passionate relationship with her.

A.T. - That seemed logical to me, since in the book, Anne-Marguerite likes women. It seemed coherent to me that the character had loved Judith and in that respect, there were feminine bonds that eluded Francis and nourished

his fantasies. Which is at the root of the scene with the countess: he feels excluded from the cheerful intimacy of the three women.

J.B. - Once again, you made use of title cards. In this case, they correspond to time intervals and the four seasons.

A.T. - I wanted to achieve a feeling of passing time. The ages of life are at the heart of the film. And in Venice, time is infinitely more palpable than elsewhere. It is there in the succession of building facades, as powerful as the sound of bells ringing or the cry of seagulls. And as soon as you leave that city made of stone and water, as soon as you head to the islands, the seasons become surprising and visible. The relationship between nature (the lagoon) and culture (Venice) creates an especially intense short circuit.

J.B. - The believability of the past Judith and Anna Maria have shared is bolstered by the fact that the actresses who play them both had, thirty or forty years ago, quite memorable roles, for example in *CET OBSCUR OBJET DU DÉsir* (THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE) and *PRIMA DELLA RIVOLUZIONE* (Before the Revolution), which has a sequence we inserted into the film. So we can easily imagine them when they first met - like we did with Catherine Deneuve and Gérard Depardieu in *LES TEMPS CHANGENT* (CHANGING TIMES).

A.T. - That dimension of memory and character history is constantly questioned by the present. There are scenes (between Judith and Anna Maria, or when Judith meets Jérémie, who she doesn't recognize right away) when all of a sudden, we feel the weight of the past. We can also suppose what the characters have lived through without it being shown. Confronted with her own illness and her son's suicide attempt, Anna Maria shows hostility towards Judith that is as intense as her love for her. This calms down when the season has changed, when Judith takes care of her and brings her cherries. The past is constantly being constructed in the present. The idea of using even the

slightest flashback in the film never crossed my mind. Or the only flashback is that excerpt from *Prima della rivoluzione* (Before the Revolution), with Adriana Asti in Parma in 1963.

J.B. - The silent sequence of the Bertolucci film that you took that excerpt from (she walks in Garibaldi Square, surrounded by a crowd of men) is accompanied by a song by Gino Paoli which is actually called "Ricordati" ("Remember")! After inserting that, you follow with the marriage ceremony on the island. The party, which Francis and Judith attend, allows us to expand our perspective on their story.

A.T. - That sequence is very documentary. It is both a pause and a turning point. Francis is not in an ivory tower on his island. There is a collective dimension, which he seems to discover at the party. That joyous, popular atmosphere doesn't keep him from writing - quite the contrary. We see a young couple whom we know nothing about, except that they have their whole life in front of them, and an older couple, whose story we hear, undergoing a metamorphosis.



CAST

FRANCIS ANDRÉ DUSSOLLIER
JUDITH CAROLE BOUQUET
ALICE MÉLANIE THIERRY
ANNA MARIA ADRIANA ASTI
JÉRÉMIE MAURO CONTE
ROGER ALEXIS LORET
VICKY ZOE DUTHION
THE COUNTESS SANDRA TOFFOLATTI
ALVISE ANDREA PERGOLES

CREW

DIRECTOR ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ
PRODUCER SAÏD BEN SAÏD FOR UGC
SCREENPLAY, ADAPTATION, DIALOGUE ANDRÉ TÉCHINÉ AND MEHDI BEN ATTIA
BASED ON THE WORK BY PHILIPPE DJIAN
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1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR MICHEL NASRI
PRODUCTION DESIGNER MICHÈLE ABBE
EDITOR HERVÉ DE LUZE
SOUND LUCIEN BALIBAR, FRANCIS WARGNIER
PRODUCTION MANAGER BRUNO BERNARD
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