



TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

SUNDAY

MARCH 25, 2018

2:00PM • WHITNEY

HUMANITIES CENTER

Antonia's Line

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



"I am a feminist, both by temperament and intellect, and my films are shaped by my outlook on life."

– Marleen Gorris

"Nothing dies forever. Something always remains. A little something from which new things grow. So life begins, without knowing where it came from, or why it exists."

– Antonia



In Dutch writer-director Marleen Gorris's first feature, *A QUESTION OF SILENCE* (1982), three women who have never met before murder the owner of a women's boutique after he catches one of them shoplifting, and their convincing defense is that the act is an appropriate response to centuries of brutal patriarchy. Gorris's second feature, *BROKEN MIRRORS* (1984), interweaves the story of exploited prostitutes with that of an outwardly respectable man who commits unspeakably gruesome acts of violence against women. With these bold films, Gorris firmly established herself in the forefront of feminist cinema.

As Sue Gillett has observed in *Senses of Cinema*, "ANTONIA'S LINE returns to these feminist themes of female justice, judgement and retribution in a very different style. There are moments of great drama and tragedy here but one remembers most of all its lyrical, pastoral beauty, compassionate humor, and tenderness. The ugly side of conventional heterosexual and familial relationships...is balanced against a range of idyllic alternatives which positively redefine sexual 'deviances' in the film's vision of a truly human community based on the values of love, acceptance, diversity, and equality." Gorris herself referred to the film as a "feminist fairy tale."

The film's humor comes mainly from what Janet Maslin, Roger Ebert, and other critics have called its "magical realism," defined by *Encyclopædia Britannica* as "a narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction." To reveal much more would spoil the surprises; let's just say that Gorris's magic gives delightfully new meanings to the song "My Blue Heaven" and Botticelli's painting "The Birth of Venus."

Gorris provides two introductions to Antonia. In the opening shot, we gaze into a mirror, in which the aged Antonia, comfortably resigned to her imminent death, examines herself, just as the filmmaker invites us to concentrate on her. Following the opening credits, Gorris flashes back half a century to Antonia and her daughter returning to their native Dutch village after World War II. A sign on the café wall, "Welcome to Our Liberators," suggests that now that the war (a cataclysmic example of male-engendered violence) is over, women emerge as society's potential saviors.

The original title, *ANTONIA*, is an appropriate recognition of the strong, idealized matriarch (and avenging angel) at the film's center, but the U.S. release title, *ANTONIA'S LINE*, may be even better. Most obviously it refers to Antonia's direct lineage: her daughter Danielle (an artist), her granddaughter Thérèse (a mathematics genius and music composer), and her great-granddaughter Sarah (a writer)—all women, and all, like Antonia and Gorris, visionaries. But Antonia's line goes out further, to the extended family of villagers whose lives she has affected: the endlessly pregnant Letta, the gentle farmer Bas, the nihilistic recluse Crooked Finger, Russian Olga, Deedee, Loony Lips, The Curate, Mad Madonna, and others. All quickly transcend what could have been stereotypes and ultimately become so endearing that, as with our cherished family members, we don't want them to leave us.

ANTONIA'S LINE was a labor of love. Gorris wrote the script in 1988, and then spent six years obtaining financing and searching for an appropriate village, eventually finding one in Belgium. Her efforts were well-rewarded: *ANTONIA'S LINE* was a critical and financial success, and it won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film—the first ever for a film directed by a woman. Above all, it is inspirational: the movie ends, but "something always remains. A little something from which new things grow."

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **MARLEEN GORRIS**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **WILLY STRASSEN**

MUSIC BY **ILONA SEKACZ**

(1995) 102 MINS.

STARRING **WILLEKE VAN AMMELROOY**

DID YOU KNOW: SINCE *ANTONIA'S LINE*, ONLY TWO FILMS DIRECTED BY WOMEN HAVE WON THE ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM: CAROLINE LINK'S *NOWHERE IN AFRICA* (2002) AND SUSANNE BIER'S *IN A BETTER WORLD* (2010).

NEXT UP: MARTIN SCORSESE'S 2004 EPIC *THE AVIATOR* TELLS THE STORY OF THE LEGENDARY BUSINESSMAN, MOVIE MOGUL, AVIATION PIONEER, AND RECLUSE HOWARD HUGHES. LEONARDO DICAPRIO STARS AS HUGHES AND CATE BLANCHETT APPEARS AS KATHARINE HEPBURN. IN 2005, BLANCHETT BECAME THE ONLY ACTOR TO BE AWARDED AN OSCAR FOR PORTRAYING ANOTHER OSCAR WINNER. SCREENING ON 35MM ON **SUNDAY, APRIL 8 AT 2:00 PM.**