

L'ATTACHEMENT

EEN FILM VAN
CARINE TARDIEU



cinéart

PERSMAP



Drama - 2024 - FR - 106 minuten
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Meer informatie: Cineart.nl/films/lattachement
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Distributie

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Synopsis

In deze hartverwarmende Franse film ontdekt iedereen op z'n eigen manier welke plek je kan innemen in je eigen gevormde familie. Door open te staan voor onverwachte connecties, kan de wereld om ons heen kleur krijgen.

Alex (Pio Marmaï) is een jonge, alleenstaande vader met groot verdriet na het overlijden van zijn vrouw. Zijn zoontje Elliot is zes jaar oud en moet leren omgaan met de nieuwe thuissituatie. De oudere buurvrouw Sandra (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi) runt een feministische boekhandel en is erg op zichzelf. Tegen alle verwachtingen in raken ze aan elkaar gehecht. Maar wie is zij voor hen? En wie zijn zij voor haar?

Regisseur Carine Tardieu (ÔTEZ-MOI D'UN DOUTE) laat opnieuw zien hoe we relaties en familie zelf kunnen invullen. L'ATTACHEMENT ging in wereldpremière op het filmfestival van Venetië (Orizzonti).





Director: Carine Tardieu

Biography

After studying audiovisual arts in Paris, where she grew up, Carine Tardieu worked as an assistant director and then directed two short films that won multiple awards at international festivals.

After a stint in television, where she worked as a screenwriter, she co-wrote and directed her first feature film, *LA TÊTE DE MAMAN*. This was followed by *THE DANDELIONS*, *JUST TO BE SURE* (selected for the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes 2017), and then *THE YOUNG LOVERS*.

L'ATTACHEMENT is her fifth film.

INTERVIEW WITH

Carine Tardieu

What inspired you to bring Alice Ferney's novel "L'intimité" to the screen?

I had read it the first time with a lot of emotion and a certain interest, particularly for the character of Sandra, but this faded away in the second part of the novel in favor of another character for whom I had much less attraction. But by chance, a few months later, Fanny Ardant, passing by the house and finding the book on my desk, told me she had read it and thought the story was perfect for me... Interested, I went back to it, concentrating on what had moved me: the encounter between this fiercely independent bookseller and her next-door neighbor who suddenly finds himself alone with a little boy and an infant... and I realized that by putting Sandra back at the center, a film was possible...

What themes particularly inspired you?

I liked the idea of portraying a modern woman who is not subject to the dictates of patriarchy, who asserts her independence, assumes a celibacy that she never seeks to justify - a relatively free woman, in short - but who, suddenly shaken by the affection of a little boy and his bereaved father-in-law, sees her foundations shattered... I liked the idea of a woman with no prior attraction to children becoming attached, in spite of herself, not only to a man, but also, and above all, to his offspring.

Like many women of my age - I'm 50 - as a young girl I was force-fed tales that ended in marriage and lots of children, then as a young adult I was pressured by society to start a "classic" family. But my path was quite different (forcing me to justify my unusual situation far too often). Becoming a mother had never been a major preoccupation for me, but at the age of 40, perhaps tired of having to worry only about myself, I showed a kind of curiosity about motherhood and, in the process, became the mother of a child I adopted - alone - in a foreign country. As I took my daughter in my arms for the first time, I realized that our encounter had only just begun. While my sense of responsibility was immediate, the love I feel for her today was not so obvious. I've discovered that attachment is an ongoing process, which grows as my daughter and I get to know each other: it's quite overwhelming!

Sandra is about to discover, against her will, that it's impossible to fight the bonds of attachment when they impose themselves on us. However, I really wanted to preserve some form of independence for her, to allow her to remain "free" to the very end, so that her attachment to this family would not feel like a solemn obligation.

Was punctuating the film by the baby's age a way of showing that they are the metronomes of our lives?

I've always been struck by the inescapable awareness of the passage of time that children, as they grow up, impose on us in spite of themselves. It's as if every little

advance, in addition to dazzling us if we're sensitive to it, means that everything acquired is irreversible, not only in terms of performance, but also, and perhaps above all, from an emotional point of view. For Sandra, among others, when love comes, its growing intensity means there's no turning back... While these boxes make it easier to manage ellipses and the passage of seasons, they also embody the irreversibility of the passage of time, and with it, the growing strength of attachment.

And with Lucille's birth corresponding to her mother's death, these dates also mark the time Alex needs to get through the ordeal of mourning and allow himself to reinvent the rest of his life.

In your previous film, death lurked. In this film, death has already passed. How does that change everything?

The Young Lovers was a melodrama: the illness of the character played by Fanny Ardant is announced right from the start, creating a dramatic tension that hangs over the whole story, making every moment she has left to live more intense.

Here, it's a priori the opposite: death occurs in the very first minutes of the film, but it coincides with a birth, which prevents the characters from totally collapsing. Alexandre, after a period of deep melancholy, has no choice but to embrace life - and I use this term advisedly, as it's no coincidence that he twice falls in love, even though his wife has recently died. Just as Shauna's predicted death in The Young Lovers amplifies Pierre's passion for her, this double whammy (death/life) acts as a gas pedal for Alex's feelings. In this emotional cyclone, he forces his way back to joy and life by committing himself too quickly and too strongly to Emillia, in a hypothetical future marked out by marriage.

This film could have been called "A la vie (To Life)" after all.

I borrowed this expression from Jewish tradition ("Lehaïm" in Hebrew), which originally meant, when we toast, that we thwart death to celebrate the living. In this story, it's no coincidence that the toast is made by the children's grandmother, who has lived through perhaps the worst tragedy of all, that of losing her daughter, buoyed no doubt by the vital presence of her grandchildren and touched by her son-in-law's determination not to let himself be overwhelmed by melancholy.

Did you immediately have in mind this title, "L'Attachement" (The ties that bind us)?

For a while, the film was called "Le bruit des enfants" (The sound of children), echoing the idea of the vitality they impose/oppose to death. But this title seemed reductive to me, because while children are at the origin of the bonds that unite all the protagonists in this story, the emotional commitment of each of the adults goes beyond the question of parenthood alone.

The final title came to me towards the end of the writing process, when I was reminded of John Bowlby's theory that attachment in newborns takes place in several stages, and solidifies according to the quality, frequency and stability of the care they receive: the child attaches first to the one who takes care of him, a kind of survival instinct that is not necessarily synonymous with love or affection. In short, "necessity is the law". Elliott and Alex first become attached to their neighbor, not because it's her, but

because she's there... The love/affection they feel for each other is only a consequence of the attachment: at first, it's a question of survival...

And where does Sandra's attachment to these children come from?

Sandra's impulsive movement is beyond her (embodied by the sequence in which she suddenly descends the stairs to offer Alex a ride to the hospital), but it's not just the situation that involves her emotionally. Elliott's relevance unsettles her, and allows the encounter to take place. It's also "because it was him, because it was her"...

Elliott, in turn, forms an attachment to the woman who, at first glance, seems the least likely to bond with him. Through this choice, he unconsciously ensures that he won't be unfaithful to his dead mother, because no mother - once you've had the time to know her, love her and be loved by her - can be replaced. In this respect, Sandra is an acceptable emotional substitute for him, helping him to get through this ordeal without feeling guilty about betraying the woman who raised him and, above all, loved him.

Through the character of Emilia, played by Vimala Pons, you also explore the theme of the blended family...

Unlike Sandra, who never wanted to be a mother, Emilia is determined to become part of the family unit.

Through her, I wanted to portray one of those women for whom the idea of starting a family has always been a given, but who is about to discover that it's not for her, or at least not at this point in her life. Her Romanian background underscores the additional weight of traditional family expectations she must contend with. Breaking free from such familial pressures is no easy task...

The film explores feminism and its various forms. Was it important for you to make these voices heard?

I'm a feminist by necessity, of course, but I'm not an activist. Politics inevitably play a part in my films, but it's not my primary aim to get messages across, although writing



is a form of commitment... so yes, it was important...

The meal sequence between Marie-Christine Barrault and her daughters (largely written by Raphaële Moussafir) is one of the film's rare scenes of comedy. If we can get this character - who takes pleasure in provoking her daughters - to say that "I'm fed up with these women who complain when someone grabs their ass", it's also because Odette is far more modern than she thinks: when her husband left her, she raised her two daughters on her own and, freed from the marital yoke, gave herself over to it. Her daughters, in turn, took very different paths: one had five children and thrived in her family life, while the other decided to remain entirely "free". But what emerges from their exchanges is that, depending on the era, freedom doesn't always lie in the same place. Our idea was to show, through different points of view, how each person is confronted with feminism and seizes this revolution. The exchange between Sandra and Emilia, who questions the *raison d'être* of her feminist bookshop, goes in the same direction.

What's so special about Alex, Elliot and Sandra's status as neighbors?

In this increasingly fractured, wall-building society, it seemed essential to me to tell a story that breaks down the walls, in the literal sense of breaking down the partition between two apartments.

When Sandra talks to her lover about her neighbors, she tells him that hearing their noises is a way of gaining access to their intimacy while feeling excluded. But from the moment their doors open, it's as if Alex and Sandra are living under the same roof... The book's title, "*L'intimité*", captures this idea. But there's still an airlock for them to cross, a landing that's also a place of confidences, like a no-man's-land in which we allow ourselves to say the essential via a door that opens, an exchange of glances, a missed act (Sandra's shopping spilled by Alex)...

Christel Dewynter, the film's editor, orchestrated the rhythmic interplay of doors with a finesse reminiscent of a ballet, where the doors gracefully open rather than slam shut. Meanwhile, Thomas Gauder, the film's sound mixer, subtly conveyed the depth and texture of the partitions through sound.

Did you have the actors in mind when you wrote the script?

When I'm writing, I often draw inspiration from actors who have passed away, ensuring that the actors who eventually bring the characters to life will add their own unique dimension. This was all the more obvious with Valeria Bruni Tedeschi, as the character of Sandra was a kind of counterpoint for her. From the beginning, we crafted a distinctive look for her with a satchel, sneakers, jeans, glasses, and a short haircut, which she embraced wholeheartedly. However, the costume alone wasn't enough; fully embodying the character of 'Sandra' as I envisioned it proved to be a greater challenge. Valeria is naturally expansive and warm-hearted, and we know her for her extroverted roles. However, when I wrote the script, Sandra was, on the contrary, a composed woman, restrained, even distant, a woman who weighs up her words. On set, I had to curb her naturalness to keep the character in line. It wasn't always easy, either for her or for me, especially as I'm a very directive director who's very attached to the text, and Valeria

needs to have a lot of freedom, to reappropriate dialogue if necessary... But her embodiment, so organic, goes far beyond my expectations.

In his role as Alex, Pio Marmaï reveals a new side of himself...

When Pio agreed to take on the film, he knew it would be a trying journey. In fact, he was quick to express his apprehension, and together we worked out how he could find the resources within himself to achieve such emotion, while at the same time not falling apart with his character... For example, to play the scene where we understand that his wife has died, he had to express, without dialogue, an indescribable upheaval. I suggested, without any certainty, that he set his alarm clock every hour the night before, to achieve a degree of exhaustion close to that of the character... And I think that's more or less what he did: that morning he arrived on the set extremely concentrated, looking haggard and defeated... as if filled with tears... The entire crew worked diligently to minimize the waiting time between shots, all while maintaining a respectful silence around him...Valeria was also very attentive and generous. Afterwards, I think he was both exhausted and happy to have managed to let himself go like that...

How did you come to choose the young César Botti who plays Elliott?

From the height of his 5 ½ years (the age at which he passed the tryouts), César had one essential quality: listening: an attention to others, an insatiable eye and curiosity for his partners... When I was casting, I saw a whole host of children capable of handling the text, but César stood out from the rest because he was pretty much the only one capable of handling silence in particular. And he had the desire and the joy! César was overflowing with enthusiasm, and every morning he looked forward to meeting up with the crew, the actors... Throughout the entire shoot, César was consistently reliable, thanks not only to the guidance of his coach Karin Katala but also to the support of his wonderful parents, who encouraged his passion without pushing him too hard.

Raphaël Quenard and Vimala Pons are also very instinctive actors, so how did you work with them?

I'd say Raphaël's strengths can also be his weaknesses: his assertive and commanding presence sometimes requires extensive effort to shift from his own personality to fully embody the character. I wanted to take him towards a more restrained role than in his previous films, less expansive. David's character walks on eggshells - at least in the first part of the film... it was a question of inviting him to find a different rhythm of diction, to hold back a little of his elation, to get him back to the text, by helping him erase all the language dross (eh, you see, now, actually...). I think he was happy to do it.

Vimala is a very generous, serious and hard-working actress, at once earthy and lunar. Always intense, unpredictable, but a good listener, she can be everything and its opposite: from one take to the next, controlling her feelings or abandoning herself completely to emotion, even if it means sometimes losing control a little. But her outbursts are extremely moving and not so difficult to channel.

Added to that was the difficulty of shooting with babies!

That's right! But my good fortune was that all these actors got on wonderfully and had a lot of fun playing together. The set was studious, but generally cheerful.

However, we were dependent on the moods, naps and bottle-feeding schedules of the multitude of babies cast to play Lucille from birth to age two.... As their time on set was very limited, as soon as one of them arrived, we had to be ready to seize the moment. The cinematographer, Elin Kirschfink, sometimes sat on a cube with wheels, which enabled her to reposition herself immediately to adapt to their movements. For someone like me, who tends to want to control everything, the excitement of having a baby on set is paradoxically quite enjoyable.

On the set, did the direction of the actors take up all the space?

Pretty much, yes... In preparation, I pre-cut all the sequences in situ with my DP, first assistant Mathieu Vaillant and script supervisor Anaïs Sergeant: we act out the scenes, taking turns embodying the characters, looking for what feels right from an emotional point of view, and how to transcend it all through the image.... then I give the team a very complete document containing all my influences (films, music, costumes, etc.), as well as a sort of storyboard made up of photos taken during this pre-cutting process. With everyone knowing exactly what they have to do when they arrive on set, I can concentrate primarily on my actors. Not only does this save time and energy, it also allows my closest collaborators to become fully involved in the production, and it's an understatement to say that the film owes them a great deal...

What requirements did you have in terms of staging?

To tell the truth, I never really know what a film is going to be like when I've finished writing it. My intentions take shape as the film is being made, with everyone involved. But the more time goes by, the more I aspire to a form of discretion in directing. Also, the presence of the children on the set reinforced the idea of a necessary lightness from a technical point of view. The film is essentially made up of fields/counter-fields, with a fairly stable hand-held camera that's flexible enough to accommodate the unexpected. For *The Young Lovers*, we favored long focal lengths to give the couple a sense of intimacy by filming them "from afar". On this project, I wanted the camera to become part of the family, to act as a link, not to be detached from the characters, in reference to the title, and of course not to constrain the actors in any way.

And then I discovered later, when editing, that the film was much more musical than I'd imagined...

What were your musical goals for the film?

To complement the songs included in the script, I always put together a playlist beforehand, which I share with the cast and crew. It's not unusual for some of the tracks to end up in the film... In this case, Voce Abusou, Don't get me wrong, but also a number of tracks from the Balkan music group (Les yeux noirs) by the composer of the soundtrack, Eric Slabiak. It was the character of Emillia (of Romanian origin), who initially inspired these Eastern European atmospheres, but as the film was edited, they took over throughout... When the music appears light, it carries a hint of melancholy; conversely, even when it seems deeply dramatic or plaintive, it often transitions into a touch of cheerfulness. This duality was crucial in preventing the film, which is burdened from the outset by the announcement of the mother's death, from sinking into despair and instead ensuring it remains anchored in the celebration of life.

Cast

PIO MARMAÏ
VALERIA BRUNI TEDESCHI
VIMALA PONS
RAPHAËL QUENARD
CÉSAR BOTTI

Crew

directed by	CARINE TARDIEU
from the novel	L'INTIMITÉ BY ALICE FERNEY
screenplay	CARINE TARDIEU, RAPHAËLE MOUSSAFIR AGNÈS FEUVRE
cinematographer	ELIN KIRSCHFINK
editor	CHRISTEL DEWYNTER
production designer	PASCALE CONSIGNY
costume designer	NATHALIE RAOUL
sound	IVAN DUMAS THOMAS GAUDER THOMAS DESJONQUÈRE
music	ERIC SLABIAK
VFX	VINCENT VACARISAS



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