

The Museum of Modern Art

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SEVEN-HOUR AND EIGHT-HOUR LONG SILENT FILMS IN MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE TRACE CAREER OF ALAIN RESNAIS

A retrospective of the works of Alain Resnais will open at The Museum of Modern Art with an illustrated lecture by Richard Roud on the film-maker and his predecessors and contemporaries, Wednesday, April 2, 8:00 p.m. in the Museum Auditorium. The retrospective to be screened from April 3 through 21, will include 27 films, 12 by Resnais and 15 that have influenced his work, Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film, announced today.

Mr. Roud, a film critic and author, also Program Director of the London Film Festival and the New York Film Festival, will trace the sources that inspired Resnais. He will discuss both early and recent influences on the director, who is best known for "Hiroshima, mon amour" (1959), "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961), and "La Guerre est finie" (1965), winner of a prize from the New York Film Critics Circle.

Among the works that most affected Resnais in his formative years are two silent films by the French director, Louis Feuillade. The contribution of Feuillade has been overshadowed by the fame of his countrymen, Méliès and Lumière. He was a forerunner of surrealism and science fiction on the screen, and his unbridled fantasy and sense of terror influenced Cocteau, Buñuel and Franju, who were followed by Resnais.

The two Feuillade films to be shown at the Museum are "Tih Minh" on April 3rd and "Barrabas" on April 17th; they run seven and eight hours respectively and neither has been exhibited in this country. Screenings will begin at 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. with an intermission from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. The films will continue in a marathon cinema session until approximately 10:00 p.m.

"Tih Minh" is an Oriental girl, endangered by a criminal gang. The story is on the Riviera, where the bright Mediterranean Sea "seems to efface the difference between good and evil." "Barrabas" also dwells on crime and was filmed in Paris and on the Riviera,

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with a luxury hotel and rest home as its locales.

"Tih Minh" and "Barrabas" are among the best works of this forgotten director, according to Alain Resnais, who says, "Feuillade was my God. His kind of cinema was very close to dreams and is therefore perhaps the most realistic kind of all."

Resnais made "Last Year at Marienbad" in and around three real rococo German castles. From Feuillade the director claims to have learned that the fantastic could be more easily and effectively created in a natural exterior than in a studio.

Two literary influences in Resnais' career were Robbe-Grillet, who wrote "Last Year at Marienbad," and Marguerite Duras, author of "Hiroshima, mon amour," later brought to the screen by Resnais. Penelope Gilliatt, the critic and novelist, has noted "the back stitch rhythm" of Duras' dialogue, "in which each speech tends to pick up the closing phrase of the last, and says something piercing and strange about the re-plays of memory itself. Like Duras and Robbe-Grillet, Resnais, too, manipulates time, memory, and association as they occur in the human mind."

Other influences on Resnais are Agnes Varda, the director of "La Pointe Courte," edited by Resnais, and Chris Marker who is responsible for "Letter from Siberia" and "Le Joli Mai." These films will be part of the Resnais retrospective along with a selection of shorts made by what is called "The Left Bank Group" of directors.

These artists share a common concern with the social and political scene, Mr. Roud indicates. They also have a solid base in literature and the arts. While dedicated to the film medium, they are determined to express humanistic values and advance their own artistic point of view.

Among the older directors cited by Roud, in addition to Feuillade, are Marcel L'Herbier, Sacha Guitry, and Jean Renoir, all of whom affected the young Resnais. L'Herbier, whose unimportant stories were delved into the subconscious; Guitry in "Story of a Cheat" utilized the process of memory association; and Renoir taught Resnais how to experiment with sound and image. Resnais declares that the Renoir film "La Règle du Jeu," first shown in the United States in a truncated version, was "the most overwhelming single experience" of his film life. He has seen this film

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fifteen times.

Roud points out that Resnais belongs to the first generation of film-makers brought up in the shadow of the Cinémathèque Française, the first generation for whom film history has meaning and has been important in the development of their own work. "By situating him in time and place, by determining the tangential convergence of Resnais' line -- his cinematic heritage -- and his circle -- his artistic milieu -- one can perhaps arrive at a fuller understanding of one of the great artists of our time," Roud says.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.