

KINO LORBER

Presents

SCARLET

A Film By Pietro Marcello



France / Italy / Germany | 2022 | 103 min | Color | 1.43:1 | French with English subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

Pietro Marcello, one of contemporary cinema's most versatile talents, follows up his dramatic breakthrough *Martin Eden* with this enchanting period fable based on a beloved 1923 novella by Russian writer Alexander Grin. Shortly after World War I, veteran Raphaël (Raphaël Thiery) returns home from the frontlines to find himself a widower, with his infant daughter placed in his arms to raise. Living alone with her father in rural Normandy, Juliette (Juliette Jouan) grows into a lonely young woman who is passionate about singing and music. She seeks refuge in the nearby woods, where she meets a witch who promises scarlet sails will one day take her away from her village. Reckoning with her future and swept away by a rakish young pilot (Louis Garrel) who literally falls from the sky, Juliette never stops believing in the witch's prophecy. Tracing Juliette's journey throughout the 20 years of great invention between the world wars, *Scarlet* weaves together music and fantasy, history and folklore, to craft a magical realist fable of identity and emancipation. In his first film made in France, Marcello proves again he is as comfortable in the realm of folklore as he is in creative nonfiction, delicately interweaving realist drama, ethereal romance, and musical flights of fancy.



Interview with Pietro Marcello

by Eugenio Renzi

***Scarlet (L'Envol)* is a loose adaptation of *Scarlet Sails*, a novel by Soviet author Alexander Grin. What was it in this novel that convinced you there was a film to make?**

Initially, I hadn't planned to adapt *Scarlet Sails*. It was my producer, Charles Gillibert, and his colleague Romain Blondeau who suggested I read it. Alexander Grin was an adventure writer, born at the end of the nineteenth century. A revolutionary socialist who began his literary career after the 1905 revolution, he was arrested several times because of his political activities. His most successful works were published after the October Revolution, but despite their success, the antimilitarist and romantic tone of his books didn't suit the new age and publishers stopped publishing him. He died an outcast, in poverty.

What first caught my interest in the novel is the relationship between the father and the daughter. The mother dies, so the father has to look after the child. The bond that forms between them is what fascinated me. And it was even more fascinating to imagine what would happen when the father dies, because in the book the girl goes from one man, her father, to another, her husband – who comes into her life like a prince charming. To my mind, Jean [Louis Garrel] is the prototype of the modern man, completely unlike Raphaël [Raphaël Thiéry] who is like a rock. Jean is fragile and unstable, a kind of daredevil who doesn't know where he fits into the world. Juliette isn't saved by him, she isn't a damsel in distress; rather she is the one who makes the first move, who kisses him, who looks after him and, in the end, lets him go.

A second aspect of the book that struck me is the strange extended family that looks after the father when his wife dies. It was very unexpected and I found it very modern. There was the potential to create a little matriarchal community of outcasts. In the film, the people in the village call this matriarchal family the "Cour des miracles", a historical French term for a poor slum area for beggars in central Paris. This family is made up of a little group of people living on the edge: the woman farmer who people think is a witch [Noémie Lvovsky], the blacksmith, his wife and daughter, and Raphaël and Juliette. They are all outcasts, each despised for one reason or another.

Is this a feminist film?

I prefer to think of it as a feminine film. In the same way that most of my previous films were masculine. The references in *Martin Eden* were the Swedish syndicalist Stig Dagerman and the Neapolitan anarchist Enrico Malatesta. So, although *Scarlet* ends with a poem by the Communist Louise Michel and we are in anarchist territory, there is a shift between these films from a masculine to a feminine point of view. Now that *Scarlet* is finished and I watch it as a spectator, I am the first to be surprised by this evolution in my journey. It is indeed the reason we make films: to evolve, change, follow new paths. On the one hand, *Scarlet* takes us back in time yet, on the other hand, can be seen as a very modern, anti-patriarchal film. It is a film that takes the side of women.

The character of Jean, the aviator, is not the only difference in the film compared to the plot of the book. In Grin's work, the mother dies of pneumonia, whereas in *Scarlet* Maria freezes to death following a rape.

I wanted to develop the theme of femicide, which is not actually in the novel, so with screenwriters Maurizio Braucci and Maud Ameline we made quite a lot of changes. Renaud [Ernst Umhauer] repeats his father Fernand's [François Négret] crime when he tries, unsuccessfully, to rape Juliette. But it is less a question of heritage than of education. Fernand was not convicted for his offenses and not even shamed. Quite the opposite, it is paradoxically the widower Raphaël who is distrusted when he returns from the war, because he is a foreigner. It is in this culture that rape becomes a form of fate that strikes one generation after another.

The film's great discovery is Juliette Jouan, who plays the adult Juliette character.

Indeed, meeting Juliette Jouan was an unexpected dream. I did hundreds of tests, all over France, before I found her. I had been offered both well-known and unknown actresses. Juliette struck me and, cinematographically speaking, I fell in love with her. She is an extraordinary young woman. She sings, she writes, she carries a real inner strength and contributed enormously to building her character in the film. She was the one who set the Louise Michel poem "L'Hirondelle" ("The Swallow") to music which was not originally in the script. By chance we came across a book of poetry in the farmhouse which was the set for the 'cour des miracles' scenes. And it seemed to us that "The Swallow" would be the perfect ending for *Scarlet*. So it's thanks to Juliette that this poem became the song that accompanies the film credits.

Several motifs in *Scarlet* echo *Martin Eden*, as if there was a dialogue between the two films.

If there is a dialogue between the two, it's around betrayal. Martin Eden betrays his family. He abandons his father and mother to get an education and to change his life. It is less a betrayal of class than of affect. And this betrayal is much deeper, so much so that it destroys him in the end. Juliette is the anti-Eden. As a child she has the opportunity to study in the town and so change her life, yet she decides to stay with her father. It is only when he dies that she is released from the pact which was a happy choice, rather than a sacrifice. And moreover, Juliette continues to be a part of the matriarchal community, so whereas *Martin Eden* was a film about a tortured man, *Scarlet* is light and airy.

How did you end up making a film in France and in French?

I followed my family who had moved to Paris; that was two years ago. I had just finished making *Martin Eden* and I had two projects that I had to finish which were very important to me: a film about the great singer Lucio Dalla [*Lucio*] and a collective film [*Futura*], with Francesco Munzi and Alice Rohrwacher. Six months after my arrival in Paris, I'd started shooting *Scarlet* in Picardy. It was a real adventure and not without problems. In Italy I have a network of contacts in the film world and I know who to go to for what I need, but in France I was on my own. I didn't speak French. But I hung on and trusted my producer and I threw myself into it. And, in fact, *Scarlet*, in the deepest aspects of what it is about, could have been shot in Calabria or Campania.

Is it not paradoxical, for a film that is deeply rooted in the local culture of a peasant community, to think that it could have been shot elsewhere?

Of course, every film ends up with the appearance of the natural, linguistic and cultural context in which the story takes place, but the essence of *Scarlet* belongs to the peasantry in general. The relationship between the father and his daughter and all the outcasts of the village and the matriarchy has a universal aspect. It is a story that belongs to the Global South and I always look to the South, because it is more familiar to me.

Another feature in common with *Martin Eden* is that *Scarlet* is also a historical film.

I have come to the conclusion that it's no longer possible to make historical films. We can no longer build period sets, which are a financial aberration. Moreover, the

know-how and the skilled craftsmen are disappearing. In the film, the character of Raphaël is an emblematic example of this disappearance. There is no template so each time we have to find new solutions and adapt. It's true that *Martin Eden* also takes place in the past, but there isn't really a common template with *Scarlet*, only perhaps a certain methodology. Rossellini and Bresson have left methods that you can read and rather than learn to quickly master everything you need to make films. But they are not templates to be used. No template, that's the method!

With Marco Graziaplena, the director of photography, we took the film in hand and we shot it like a documentary, very quickly and with the freshness that Fassbinder always had, capturing and recording everything that happened during the shoot.

What matters is not the original intention. Some people think that a film is successful if it faithfully transposes a good script, but that's not my way. Let's imagine that I wanted to make a film about women's emancipation. Who am I to decide how Juliette becomes emancipated? Claiming to know that would produce a false film. However, a film can show something honest when it incorporates elements of truth in the fiction. For example, the poem found in the farmhouse, which Juliette set to music.

It would not be the same film without Raphaël Thiéry.

As with the character of Juliette, it took a long time to cast Raphaël. I had a precise idea of what I wanted, but I couldn't find it in the faces that I was offered for this role. I wanted someone whose extraordinary corpulence contrasted with the delicacy of his little girl. Similarly, it was imperative that his hands be thick and rough, so that it would be amazing to see the finesse of the gestures they are capable of. Nobody was right for the role, but when my producer suggested Raphaël Thiéry, I said straightaway that he was the one. I was convinced by his incredible talent and by the ancient expressiveness of his face.

Well-known faces in French cinema – Noémie Lvovsky, Louis Garrel, Yolande Moreau – play alongside Juliette Jouan and Raphaël Thiéry.

I have to say that with all of the actors we've had both a professional encounter and have become friends. Noémie Lvovsky took the film in hand in the way her character takes in hand the 'cour des miracles' with a passion that was absolutely unbelievable. I found in her the charisma of the actresses in Edouardo de Filippo's theatre. Louis Garrel is a solid actor who knows and loves the cinema and a valuable exchange was immediately established with him. Having Yolande Moreau in the film was also a precious gift and we all became real friends.

We follow Juliette's childhood through four little actresses, whereas usually only two or three are used.

When you watch a film, you're looking at a whole, but what remains in your memory, that is, if anything remains, is not so much the whole work but fragments. In my work, my aim is less about creating a whole, but rather about making it possible for people to be caught by a particular moment. These moments are mine, but not only mine.

As in your previous films, in *Scarlet* you use archive, which is embedded gracefully in the narrative.

The images right at the beginning of the film, shown in parallel with Joseph's return to the village, are very special images of Armistice Day in the Bay of the Somme. Later in the film, there are also shots from Julien Duvivier's film *The Ladies' Paradise* [*Au Bonheur des dames*, 1930]. It's the scene when Raphaël and Juliette go into town to sell toys. But it is not a film with a lot of archive. These images, particular from the Duvivier film, were necessary, because it would be out of the question now to reconstruct a set of a town in the interwar years for reasons of cost and complexity. Would it be worth spending millions on two or three shots? And even if we'd had the money, would it have been ethically responsible? Especially since I can create the same emotional intensity, perhaps even more, with existing images. And this gives you food for thought.

The second part of the film seems to literally fly away. From peasant realism we move to a lighter tone, at times close to a musical. The directing follows this, beginning with mainly handheld camera, whereas some shots in the second part are reminiscent of Jacques Demy's films.

My actresses wanted to sing, so I said why not? My passion for Jacques Demy's films is inspired by a personal interpretation of them. *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* [1964] and *A Room in Town* [1982] are apparently sophisticated films, but for me they have a popular soul. Demy transposed Italian operetta into a cinema format. His films are always about the people. I don't really have role models in cinema. I like Jacques Demy and other filmmakers, but what really interests me is the method.

The original score was composed by Oscar-winning musician Gabriel Yared. This was the first time you worked with a composer.

Working with Gabriel Yared was indeed a completely new experience and one which turned out to be very important for the film. He was involved from the outset and is an

extraordinary man, a great contemporary composer. We talked a great deal and I learned a lot from him. It's very important for me to work with people with whom I can establish a personal relationship based on esteem and friendship. This was often the case on this film. For instance, working with Marco Graziaplena, the director of photography, who I have admired for many years, was invaluable. And the film would not have been the same without my editor, Carole Le Page. Her Cartesian spirit was truly fundamental in enabling us to complete the editing of *Scarlet*.

I have a passion for the craft of cinema and film-making and I collect all kinds of equipment. I can develop film by myself and I can produce my own chemicals. I could achieve a kind of productive autarchy and do everything on my own, but I get even more pleasure from working in a community, on a film where everyone contributes something. As Renoir used to say, you make films with your friends. Is this still possible? Maybe yes, maybe no. The world around us is changing and we adapt to the world. We have to learn to say no and distance ourselves from a system that is becoming increasingly dehumanized.



Pietro Marcello



Pietro Marcello was born in Caserta, Italy. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples. *Il Passaggio della linea*, presented at the Venice Film Festival in 2007 - Orizzonti section, won numerous awards. In 2009, he made the feature film *La bocca del lupo*, winner of the 27th Turin Film Festival, the Caligari Prize and the Teddy Bear at the Berlinale. In 2011 he shot *The Silence of Pelesjan*, presented as a special event at the 68th Venice Film Festival. In 2015 he made the film *Bella e perduta*, presented at the Locarno Film Festival. In 2019, he made his first fiction feature, *Martin Eden*, from the eponymous Jack London novel, which won numerous awards, including the Coppa Volpi at the Venice Film Festival to Luca Marinelli and the Platform Prize Toronto International Film Festival in 2019. In 2021, he made the documentary *Per Lucio*, presented in the Berlinale Special section of the 71st Berlin International Film Festival. Also in 2021, his film *Futura*, a collective investigation made by Pietro Marcello, Francesco Munzi and Alice Rohrwacher, was presented at the Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

Cast Bios

JULIETTE JOUAN

Juliette Jouan holds a dual degree in film studies and English. At the age of twenty, she was chosen for the leading role in Pietro Marcello's *Scarlet*. She originally trained as a musician and is a singer, songwriter, and pianist.

RAPHAËL THIÉRY

Raphaël Thiéry was born in 1962 in Sainte-Colombe-sur-Seine, the son and grandson of metalworkers. He was soon immersed in the popular education movement by his older brothers, fifteen years older than him, who taught him about living and making things together. He started playing traditional folk music and regularly accompanied his brothers, who performed on stage in venues across Burgundy and who gave him a set of bagpipes, an instrument he had always wanted. After passing his baccalaureate, Raphaël studied briefly at the university in Dijon. He likes to joke that, instead of a baccalaureate plus five years of studies for a master's degree, he only managed a baccalaureate plus five days. He then set up a forestry business in the Morvan, near the village where he was born. A while later, he decided to swap his chainsaw for a 'cornemuse du centre', the traditional bagpipes of Central France, his favourite instrument, and set up the *Faubourg de Boignard* group with whom he has played hundreds of gigs, combining traditional and contemporary music.

His love for text and the stage led him to the theatre as a new creative space, and he produced his play *Ecoute donc voir... (Listen to this)* with Patrick Grégoire, his associate and mentor.

People often said to him, "given the way you look, you should make films" and in 2005 he met Alain Guiraudie who gave him a supporting role in *Staying Vertical*. Since then, Raphaël has had a succession of roles in the films of Mikhaël Hers (*Amanda, The Passengers of the Night*), Hélier Cisterne (*De nos frères blessés – From Our Wounded Brothers*), Claus Drexel (*Sous les étoiles de Paris – Under the Stars of Paris*), Philippe Claudel (*Le bruit des trousseaux – The Sound of the Keychains*); and in TV series including *La Révolution, Gone for Good* (Netflix), *Paris Police 1900* (Canal plus) and *Germinal* (France 2), an adaptation of the novel by Emile Zola.

He will be starring in *Poor Things*, a forthcoming film by Yorgos Lanthimos, *La Dégustation (The Tasting)* by Ivan Calbérac, alongside Isabelle Carré and Bernard Campan, and in *Scarlet*, a film by Pietro Marcello, presented at the opening of the Cannes 2022 Directors' Fortnight.

Credits

A film by Pietro Marcello

Cast Juliette Jouan (Juliette)
Raphaël Thiéry (Raphaël)
Noémie Lvovsky (Adeline)

Special appearance by Louis Garrel (Jean) and
Yolande Moreau

Screenplay Pietro Marcello
Maurizio Braucci
Maud Ameline
with the collaboration of Geneviève Brisac
*Freely inspired by Aleksandr Grin's novel
"Scarlet Sails"*

Director of Photography Marco Graziaplena

Sound Erwan Kerzanet
Bruno Reiland
Olivier Guillaume

Post-production coordinator Luc-Antoine Robert – ADPP

Assistant Director Olivier Bouffard

Editors Carole Le Page
Andrea Maguolo

Set Design Christian Marti

Composer Gabriel Yared

Casting Annette Trumel ARDA – csa

Children Casting Karen Hottols – ARDA

Costume Designer Pascaline Chavanne

Make-up Sylvia Carisolli

Hairstyle Milou Sanner

Produced by CG Cinéma

Avventurosa with Rai Cinema

Co-produced by Match Factory Production
Arte France Cinéma
ZDF with the participation of ARTE
Les Films du Losange

In partnership with Hype Film
Wise Pictures
Cinémage 16
Cinéaxe 13

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original title: L'Envol

International title: Scarlet

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