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Cinema Ritrovato 2017: â??Mildred Pierceâ?• between literature, film and television

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Cineflilia Ritrovata



A shot, a man who falls to the ground and a car fleeing into the night. And then the dock where she enters the scene, the diva Joan Crawford. In his first plan *â??s novel Mildred Pierce* (1945) by Michael Curtiz, one of many, shines all the weight of the film, the pain and the guilt of an impossible love: that of Mildred for her daughter Veda. Based on the novel by James M. Cain, *Mildred Pierce* (1941), the film marked a Crawford career that earned her her first, and only, Academy Award for Best Actress.

â??From this moment on, Joan Crawford will play only roles of strong women, very successful, but with a weak heart and proves of how this talented actress had no weaknesses. There was absolutely vulnerability.â?• Made possible by the Criterion Collection in collaboration with Warner Bros. the restored version of the film was presented at the Cinema Ritrovato by Park Circus Words, Eddie Muller (founder and president of the Film Noir Foundation). Seemingly, a very lucky role as Kate Winslet won the Golden Globe for her performance in a modern adaptation, *Mildred Pierce* (2011), the miniseries produced by HBO and directed by Todd Haynes.

In the book, the character of Mildred represented unâ??atipicitÃ for her time: a housewife divorced with two daughters struggling to establish herself in the midst of the Great Depression. A strong, confident woman who is able to build an empire from nothing, from a waitress in a diner to a businesswoman with a chain of restaurants. Alongside this professional success, we are intertwined in her personal relationships: first of all with the complicated Vedas, the favorite daughter.

These two trends, the social climbing of Mildred and the dramatic relationship between mother and daughter, were dealt with differently in the film and TV series. In the first, an added frame noir (the opening scene of the crime), to suppress the roughness of the book that did not fail to censor, the transposition of HBO is totally faithful to the paper counterpart. In the novel, as in the series, Mildred was obsessed with the social sphere: her first refusals to the menial jobs that are offered, and even when she gets the job as a waitress living in a deep inner conflict, culminating in keeping it hidden from her daughter.

In contrast, the Curtiz film does not dwell much on Mildred as a self-made woman: the sequences that speak to the social climb up the social ladder are put together with quick assembly (the succession of signs of its restaurants), all told with flashbacks from the voice-over narration of Crawford. The Hollywood diva never has a hair out of place, her clothes are always clean, even after cooking, and when we see her dressed in her waitress uniform it is only for a few minutes. Unlike Crawfordâ??s Mildred, Winslet gets dirty. It is her suffering and consequent cleansing that makes a radical change of look as her business grows.

The movements of the fluidity of Curtiz film takes up the writing style of Cain, linear and structured. As well as the full and conscious sensuality of the protagonist in the novel, the echoes of stealth are visualized on the big screen: the details of the lean and curvy legs (of which more times the literary Mildred welcomes proudly) peeking out from behind a ladder or a swimsuit. Joan Crawford filled the character with eros, by dosing balancing the erotic with the numerous close-ups that literally dazzle the screen. Curtiz delves, but does not say anything openly as did Cain in the book. During the first night of love between Mildred, spoiled heiress, and Monty, unscrupulous lover, the camera moves away, pauses for a few seconds on the loversâ?? reflection in the mirror, slipping into the minds of the spectators the carnal act that will be consumed shortly thereafter.

The key to the book, both in shooting films in the series, was not so much a history lesson, as the morbid and destructive relationship between Mildred and Veda. She lives for her daughter: her decision

to find a job, even medium-low level is not only dictated by the need to support the family, but especially by the uncontrollable desire to give to her daughter, capricious and insatiable. As Mildred efforts to please her daughter (who is given elegant clothes, piano lessons, evenings in high class dining rooms), Veda is closed inside this world of deception and treachery. Sheâ??s a girl-woman unable to see beyond herself that, unlike the mother, aspires to a higher social level without having to dirty her hands.

In the final moments, the emotional charge of the action is still committed to the diva: Crawfordâ??s face is bathed in light in a now infamous frame. The terrible nature of her daughter, a true femme fatale, comes out as well. A play of light and shadow that recants a broken American dream not because of the money, but for love â?? visceral and unobtainable.

â??- Emanuela Vignudelli



(Source: ilcinemaritrovato.it)

Category

1. Il Cinema Ritrovato

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