Directed by Marcel Carné
Written by Jacques Prévert and Pierre Laroche
Produced by André Paulvé
Original Music by Joseph Kosma, Maurice Thiriet
Cinematography by Roger Hubert
Film Editing by Henri Rust
Production Design by Georges Wakhévitch
Art Direction by Alexandre Trauner
Set Decoration by Léon Barsacq
Costume Design by Georges Wakhévitch
Assistant director….Michelangelo Antonioni

Arletty…Dominique
Marie Déa…Anne - la fille du baron qui se fiance avec Renaud
Fernand Ledoux…Le baron Hugues - le châtelain, père d’Anne
Alain Cuny…Gilles - un ménestrel
Pierre Labry…Le seigneur
Jean d’Yd…Le baladin
Roger Blin…Le montreur de monstres
Gabriel Gabrio…Le bourreau
Marcel Herrand…Le baron Renaud - le fiancé d’Anne
Jules Berry…Le diable
Alain Resnais…Extra (uncredited)
Simone Signoret…Extra (uncredited)


JULES BERRY... Le diable

Carné, Marcel (Albert), French director and critic, was born in 1900 in Montmartre, where he grew up. He was the son of Paul Carné, a cabinetmaker and Marie Racouët. His father got him a job in an insurance company, but Carné was intent on a career in the cinema and went to evening classes in cinematography given by the Association Philomatique, an institution sponsored by the Paris city council. In 1928, without telling his father, he left the insurance company to work as assistant cameraman on Jacques Feyder’s Le Nouveau Messieurs (1928) and Richard Owen’s Cagliostro (1929). Carné made his own first film in collaboration with a well-known amateur named Michael Sanvoisin, This was Nogent, Eldorado du Dimanche (Nogent, the Sunday Eldorado, 1929), a lyrical little silent documentary about Parisian working people enjoying their Sunday afternoon in the country. The following year Carné worked as one of René Clair’s two assistant directors on Sous les toits de Paris.

Meanwhile Carné had entered a competition organized by Cinémagazine for the best film criticism written by an amateur. He won the competition and from 1929 to 1933 was a regular contributor to Cinémagazine, also writing for Cinémonde (edited by his friend and roommate Maurice Bessy) and other journals, sometimes under the pseudonym “Albert Cranche.” During this period Carné made a number of short advertising films in collaboration with Jean Aurencche and the animator Paul Grimault. He also served briefly as editor of the weekly Hebdo-film but resigned when the proprietor made him publish a negative article about Chaplin’s City Lights.

In any case, Carné was more interested in making films than reviewing them, and in 1933 he became permanent assistant director to Jacques Feyder (Carné says “I owe him everything”). He worked with Feyder on three of the director’s best films—Le Grand Jeu (1934), Pensions Mimosas (1935), and La Kermesse héroïque (1935). When Feyder went to England to make Knight Without Armor for Korda, he arranged for Carné to direct a film he was to have made, Jenny (1936). It stars Feyder’s wife Françoise Rosay as the manager of a shady nightclub whose lover, the reluctant gangster Lucien (Albert Préjean), falls in love with her daughter (Lisette Lanvin).

In spite of its melodramatic plot, Carné’s first feature is of great interest, showing that he already possessed an exceptional talent for visual narrative and characterization, and a predilection for misty and tenebrous backgrounds. His great ability as a director of actors was apparent in his handling of a cast that also included Jean-Louis Barrault, Roger Blin, and Charles Vanel. Jenny began Carné’s fertile partnership with Jacques Prévert, coauthor of the script (from a novel by Pierre Rocher) and author of the skillful dialogue.

It was followed by Drôle de drame (Bizarre, Bizarre, 1937), a fantastic farce set in London and played by another brilliant cast. The hectic plot involves an impoverished bourgeois couple (Michel Simon and Françoise Rosay), a lunatic who murders butchers (Jean-Louis Barrault), and a young milkman (Jean-Pierre Aumont) falsely accused of murder. Some critics have detected a prophetically Absurdist note in Prévert’s insolently implausible script, and the film has been revived in recent years with great success. The witty sets, representing a shamelessly bogus London, were by Alexander Trauner, who became Carné’s regular designer, and the score was by Maurice Jaubert, who provided music for some of the director’s best films.

However, it is as a master of the melancholy tradition of poetic realism that Carné is (or was) revered—poignant stories about decent people ill-used by fate (and its human instruments) who find a brief interlude of happiness through love before destiny sweeps them apart forever. The emergence of this despairing mode in France in the late 1930s has been attributed to the growing threat of war, coupled with the failure of the Popular Front. Certainly

there is a strong populist element in these films—Carné asserted his preference for stories about “the simple life of ordinary people” rather than “the overheated ambience of dance parties.”

The first of the Prévert-Carné films in this manner was *Quai des brumes* (Port of Shadows, 1938), which stars Jean Gabin as a deserter from a French colonial regiment who finds refuge in a squalid inn on the mist-shrouded harbor at LeHavre. There he meets a girl (Michele Morgan who has run away from her evil guardian Zabel (Michel Simon). They fall in love and spend a single night together. The next day the soldier kills Zabel in a fight. He is preparing to leave on a ship bound for Brazil when he is shot dead by the gangster Lucien (Pierre Brasseur). The ship sails without Gabin, just as it does in Duvivier’s *Pépé-le-Moko*: in the films of poetic realism, the dream of escape to a happier life in a better place is always a dream. Jean Quévéd wrote that “unity of action, space and time contrives to give this film a classical finish, found for the first time in Carné’s work. The images have as much narrative weight as the dialogue, the editing reveals a close, effective relationship (not at all first perceptible) between words and images. The atmosphere is strangely unreal and fascinating and the personalities of Jean Gabin and Michele Morgan convey a kind of supplementary fascination to their actual portrayals.”

The “strangely unreal and fascinating” atmosphere owes a great deal to Trauner’s sets—this film like almost all of Carné’s pictures apart from his first documentary, was shot entirely in the studio. And yet at the beginning of his career he had been one of the most vocal advocates of location shooting, writing in 1932 that he could not see “without irritation the current cinema shutting itself away, fleeing from life in order to delight in sets and artificiality.” It was evidently the desire for complete artistic control that won Carné over to filming in the studio, where he cold plan his camera movements and lighting effects with absolute confidence. Speaking perhaps of *Quai des Brumes* he said, “Before I shoot a film I prepare my palette. Then I see to it that everything is done in the same shade, always bearing in mind the main idea of the work….One must compose images as the old masters did their canvases, with the same preoccupation with effect and expression. Cinema images have the same needs.”

There is actually a happy ending for the young lovers Pierre and René in *Hôtel du Nord* (1938), though the film begins with their botched attempt at suicide in a cheap hotel by the Canal Saint-Martin. It is Edmond, a middle-aged man with a dubious past, who died when his hope of happiness with René evaporates. Once again Carné showed his gift for assembling a cast of extraordinary ability—Louis Jouvet, Arletty, Annabella, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Bernard Blier, François Perier. The picture was admired for its acting, for the naturalistic photography of the canal and its surroundings (reconstructed by Trauner), and for such notable set-pieces as the dancing in the street at the end, but most critics thought it seriously weakened by the shapeless plot and anecdotal structure. The script, based on a populist novel by Eugène Dabit, was written not by Prévert but by Henri Jeanson and Jean Aurencne.

*Le Jour se lève* (Daybreak) which followed in 1939, is the quintessential achievement of “poetic realism.” It begins with the fatal shooting of a man on the fourth floor of a workers’ tenement in an industrial suburb of Paris. His killer, François, barricades himself in his room, the police surround the house, and a siege begins. François (Jean Gabin), trapped in a room intermittently raked by police bullets, spends the long night remembering the circumstances that brought him there. A steelworker, he had fallen in love with a flower-seller (Jacqueline Laurent), and for a while they had been happy. Then the girl becomes infatuated with Valentin, a music-hall dog-trainer, and François himself has a casual affair with Valentin’s assistant Clara (Arletty). The half-mad sadomasochist Valentin, portrayed by Jules Berry as one of the most obscenely despicable villains in all cinema, visits François and taunts him with hints about the flower girl’s sexual dependence on him. François, goaded beyond endurance, shoots him. These recollections have brought us back to the hopeless present. François smokes his last cigarette and then shoots himself. The room fills with police teargas. Day breaks and light flood in through the fumes, over broken glass, a teddy bear, a brooch, a cigarette packet, some photographs—a few objects summarizing a life in which no sun will rise again. The dead man’s cheap alarm clock begins insistently to ring.

It has been said that Carné had the talents of a producer as well as a director, in that his best films owe much to his genius for selecting and harnessing exceptional talents. This is nowhere more true than in *Le Jour se lève*. The film’s unsurpassed use of flashback, brilliantly executed by Carné, was first structured by Prévert, who is also responsible for what Quévéd calls the “almost Jansenist division of the world into good people and bad people.” And the charged, poetic simplicity of Prévert’s dialogue would seem incongruous if Trauner’s splendid expressionistic sets had not already removed this ostensibly naturalistic film some way from realism. (Presumably Trauer was also partly responsible for the way the sets, and individual objects within the sets, are used again and again to reveal aspects of their owners’ characters and social background.) Jaubert’s inventive score, the perfectly calculated rhythms of the camera movements, the exacting balance of character against character—Carné welds all of the elements of the film into a seamlessly coherent and powerfully persuasive vision of a world in which human love is inevitably defeated by the blind forces of evil, though the sun also rises.

Arletty was as warmly praised for her “superbly casual” performance as Jules Berry was for the disgusting brilliance of his, but it was Gabin’s contribution that has been most widely discussed. André Bazin described him as “the tragic hero of the contemporary cinema. With every new Gabin film the cinema renews the infernal machinery of his destiny just as in *Le Jour se lève*, that night, as on every night, he winds up the alarm clock whose ironic and cruel ringing will sound at daybreak the hour of his death.”

*Le Jour se lève* was almost universally recognized as a great film, and it established Carné as a dominant figure—along with René Clair and Jean Renoir—in the French cinema. There
was an international outcry when RKO attempted to buy and destroy all the prints of the picture to make way for Anatole Litvak’s mediocre postwar remake, The Long Night. However, during the German occupation of France a school of thought emerged in Vichy circles that blamed Carné’s fatalistic films, together with the works of Gide, Cocteau, Proust and others, for encouraging “defeatism” and thus hastening or even causing the fall of France. Carné replied that the artist must be the barometer of his times, and it was not the barometer’s fault if it foretold the coming storm. Nevertheless, these criticisms no doubt contributed to the fact that Carné made only two films during the Occupation, both of them set in the past to avoid the need for any overt comment on ugly contemporary realities.

Les Visiteurs du soir (The Devil’s Envoys, 1942) deals with the basic Carné-Prévert theme—the struggle between good and evil—in terms of a medieval morality play. The devil’s envoys (Alain Cuny and Arletty) arrive at a baronial banquet intent on creating emotional anarchy. They succeed until one of them falls genuinely in love, but after that the devil himself (Jules Berry) is powerless to separate the two lovers; he changes them into statues, but their hearts continue to beat. Some critics have seen in this elegant, soberly designed, rather static film a covert attack on the Occupation itself, and a promise that France would survive.

It was followed by a picture that some place even above Le Jour se lève, in Carné’s oeuvre, Les Enfants du Paradis (The Children of Paradise). It was set in Paris in the 1840s, when melodrama and pantomime were the most popular forms of entertainment, and the Boulevard du Crime—the theatre district—lived up to its name. The plot centers on the beautiful Garance (Arletty), who in the course of the film is loved by the witty and dandified murderer Lacenaire (Marcel Herrand), the rising young mime Baptiste Duburau (Jean-Louis Barrault), and the great tragedian Frédéric Lemaître (Pierre Brassier)—all historical figures—as well as the wealthy Compte de Montray (Louis Salou). The action takes place mostly in the theatres of the Boulevard or in the crowded streets outside, among the tumblers and jugglers and vendors. The story is too complicated to describe in detail, but it emerges in the end that Garance, who loves only Baptiste, will not separate from his family or his métier, and they lose each other among the carnival crowds on the Boulevard du Crime.

Work began on this ambitious and expensive film in August 1943 and continued, with interruptions, for nearly two years. There were armies of extras, and Trauner’s magnificent reconstruction of the Boulevard du Crime alone cost more than five million francs. (Trauner’s contribution to the film had to be clandestine, as did that of Joseph Kosma, who provided the brilliantly evocative score: both were of Jewish descent, and Kosma later paid tribute to Carné’s courage in employing him during this period.) Arletty’s performance as Garance—intelligent, passionate, but with a mysterious underlying melancholy—was the finest of her career; Richard Roud calls it “one of the greatest portraits of a woman in all cinema. . . a performance for the ages.” Few historical films so convincingly evoke a period and a milieu. It was immediately recognized as a masterpiece, but to many critics it seemed a flawed one. Jan Mitry said that it was “a very great film so much in its scope as in its ambitions, but it is a very great film that has misfired.” It had done so, he thought, because of radical change in the relationship between Carné and Prévert (who provided the witty and poetic dialogue, and also the rather sprawling and shapeless plot): “In the past... Carné had the upper hand in the breakdown into the shooting script and the cinematographic construction of the film....[Now] it is Prévert who conceives the subject of the film, who develops it, writes the continuity and often breaks it down into an extremely detailed form....They are no longer Carné’s films with dialogue by Prévert, but Prévert’s films directed by Carné” and “the visuals serve only to illustrate a story whose development is never indicated except in words.” There is truth in this, but, imperfect and uneven as it is, Les Enfants du Paradis has a vigor and humanity that continue to earn it a place on any list of the classics of the cinema.

None of Carné’s postwar films equaled the best of his earlier work, and the first of them was a disaster. Les Portes de la nuit (Gates of the Night, 1946) conceived as a vehicle for Gabin and Dietrich, had to make do with the inexperienced Yves Montand and Nathalie Nattier in a Prévert story (based on a ballet) about collaborators and black marketers in postwar Paris, with Destiny intervening in the shape of a battered vagabond (Jean Vilar). Impatient reactions to the picture made it clear that the public mood had changed. As Penelope Houston wrote, “fatalism began to look like affectation. We had been there once to often.” What is more, the movie had been made with a staggering and pointless extravagance that had damaged Carné’s reputation within the industry. His next film, La Fleur de l’âge, begun in 1946, had to be abandoned when it overran its budget. This abortive project was Carné’s last collaboration with Jacques Prévert.

After that, Carné made no more pictures for three years. His fortunes began to revive a little with La Marie du Port (1950), based on a Simenon story and adapted (like most of his later films) by Carné himself in collaboration with another scenarist. It starred Jean Gabin in a new kind of role, as a wealthy Cherbourg hotelier trapped by a calculating woman. A polished and atmospheric piece, financially very modest and with none of the fatalistic overtones of poetic realism, it is a good film but a minor one. Juliette ou La Clé des songes (1951) was closer to Carné’s old style—a fantasy in which a young convict dreams of escape to a magical world in search of his beloved. Released from prison, he loses his girl and elects to return as a suicide to the dream world.
The film has sets by Trauner and music by Kosma—both working for Carné for the last time—but neither these nor Gérard Philipe’s attractive performance in the lead could rescue it from banality.

One of the most admired of Carné’s postwar films was Thérèse Raquin (1953), adapted from Zola’s novel by Carné and Charles Spaak and set in present-day Lyons. In Carné’s version of the story it is not the social forces but a malevolent destiny that controls the lives of Thérèse (Simone Signoret) and her lover (Raf Vallone). Roy Armes writes that “Carné’s handling of composition and editing is assured as always and nowhere more strikingly displayed than in the death of the blackmailer which forms the film’s ironic climax.”

There was an excellent performance as the blackmailer from Roland Lesaffrem who had become a regular member of Carné’s team. He appeared again as a young boxer in L’Air de Paris (1954), which starred Gabin and Arletty in an undistinguished piece about a retired fighter and the young hopeful he trains for the championship. Les Tricheurs (1958), an old-fashioned “exposé” of the sins of modern youth, also had a notable cast (including Jean-Paul Belmondo, Laurent Terzieff, and Jacques charier) and enjoyed a considerable financial success. Carné’s later films have been routine, perhaps the best of them being Trois Chambres à Manhattan (1965), another modest and convincing Simenon adaptation.

It was fashionable for a time to attribute the abrupt decline in Carné’s immense reputation to the end of his collaboration with Prévert, but this seems implausible. As Richard Roud points out, it was Prévert who wrote Les Portes de la nuit, the first and most spectacular of Carné’s failures, while there were only a few successes among the film Prévert wrote for other directors. A more obvious explanation is that in the age of neorealism, improvisation, and political engagement, there was simply no place on the screen for Carné’s sad vision of the world at the mercy of fate. He turned to other films, but his heart wasn’t in them.”

Michael Atkinson, “Les visiteurs du soir: Love in the Ruins” (Criterion Notes)

Think of it as a one-of-a-kind cultural hothouse experiment: French cinema between 1940 and 1944, during the German occupation. No thriving cinema culture had ever before been subjected to such horrifying and bizarre sociopolitical pressures—suddenly, the substance of your film’s narrative could get you shot by the Nazis or condemned as a collaborator, or both, depending on its figurative nature. Up to 1940, the French film industry had been dominated by the studios Pathé and Gaumont, and, thanks largely to films directed by Marcel Carné, Jean Renoir, Jean Grémillon, Jacques Feyder, and Julien Duvivier and starring Jean Gabin, it was an international giant, happily disseminating uniquely cool French fatalism and uniquely sexy French satire to the world’s implicitly more provincial audiences. Many of these films—thunderclouds of pessimistic romanticism, penniless rue, and tough-guy melancholy—came to be labeled “poetic realism,” and that was Carné’s terrain, with the love heaped upon Port of Shadows (1938), Hôtel du Nord (1938), and Le jour se lève (1939) making him for a time the most respected filmmaker on the European continent.

Of course, things changed, and after the Germans marched in, Carné and every other French film artiste who didn’t emigrate had to struggle to survive and keep making movies, which meant charting a blind course through the no-man’s-land between collaborationism, active resistance, compromise, integrity, and laissez-faire neutrality. Filmmakers were under enormous pressure to work for the Nazi-controlled, Goebbels-conceived Continental Films, which competed with the existing studios and sent films to theaters confiscated from Jewish owners—but was taking such work, as André Cayatte, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Maurice Tourneur, and Richard Pottier would do, abetting the occupiers or using their facilities and funding against them? The moral calculus was never simple. Some, like screenwriter Jean Devaivre (as described in both his memoirs and Bertrand Tavernier’s 2002 epic Safe Conduct), accepted Continental employment only to use it as a cover for wild Resistance derring-do.

Clearly, covert heroics aside, what each film “meant,” whether it was made for Continental or not, was the crucial question, and it was answered by the Nazis, the Resistance, and the beleaguered populace all at once. (Famously, Clouzot’s 1943 Rorschach drama Le Corbeau pissed off everyone from the Vatican to the Vichy government to the Communist Party, and it can still be easily read as either an act of spectacular subversion or an artifact of prosecutable cooperation.) It was into this ethical and interpretive minefield that Carné’s magical Les visiteurs du soir (1942), produced by André Paulvé’s independent company, Discina, gingerly stepped, a medieval fairy tale that seemed intentionally devoid of political allegory. Or was it? No longer able to breach the class-minded contemporary milieu that had made him a star in the thirty, Carné, aided by Paulvé and screenwriters Jacques Prévert and Pierre Laroche, bet the bank on an outrageously expensive, Perrault-esque romantic fantasy, something that could be all things to all people: homegrown French and yet nonconfrontational, emotionally substantive and yet metaphor-free, conspicuously goyish yet embracing of difference and disruption.

Lavish, expansively designed (by famous production designer Alexandre Trauner, a Hungarian-born Jew whose participation in the film was hidden by Carné and uncredited), and plaintively lovelorn, Les visiteurs du soir was a sensation, what critic André Bazin would call just a year later “a revolutionary event.” In retrospect, the galvanizing impact Carné’s movie had on France—it was easily the most popular film of the entire occupation period—is a little mysterious. It’s such a simple, languorous, brooding film, but in that dire moment, it satiated the French thirst for escape as no other work could. The tale is hardly a clean template for happy endings and easy solutions, however. When two of the devil’s emissaries, Gilles and Dominique (Alain Cuny and Arletty), appear on horseback, posing as minstrels, and enter an alabaster-white castle during a troubled wedding party, we
may well expect a tidy morality play in which vanity and greed are trounced by way of the visitors’ trickery. But life is not so simple, and we sense immediately that the film is too somber for that. The proceedings are eventually sorcerously halted in mid-dance; Gilles seduces Anne, the bride (Marie Déa), while Dominique, in transparent drag until now, alluringly distracts both the brutish groom (Marcel Herrand) and the bride’s widowed father, the mournful Baron Hugues (Fernand Ledoux). And then the devil’s plan collapses, as Gilles (the victim of a Faustian bargain, and a kind of pre-Bogart loner whose love for Dominique died bitterly ages ago) falls in love with the pure-hearted Anne, an unforeseen circumstance that brings about bloodshed and eventually summons the devil himself (Jules Berry).

Once the Midsummer Night’s Dream crisscrossing morphs into a true lovers’ tribulation for Gilles and Anne, the film becomes both a metaphysical farce (with Berry’s impish Mephisto popping in and out of rooms, encouraging disaster at every turn) and a tale of amour fou passionnel. It has been suggested that Berry’s urbane and destructive demon represented for French audiences the malignant presence of the occupation, or even of Hitler himself, but the movie’s crazed romanticism is a more persuasive explanation for its success. Consider the disarming moment, late in the film, when Gilles is chained and tortured for his transgressions while Anne is sequestered, and the spiritually connected and romantically empowered pair simply will themselves out of their confinement to meet in a sun-drenched meadow. This kind of daring, matter-of-fact magic, with its built-in potential for defiance of oppression and physical obstacles, may seem loaded for combat to us today, but both Nazi and Vichy censors apparently considered it merely paradigmatic Gallic escapism. For viewers, however, this return to the all-or-nothing medieval courtly love tradition was stone-cold liberation, courageous and indisputably native, all about resisting evil machinations with only the fierce devotion of an enraptured spirit.

One doesn’t quite need to label it allegory; it would be difficult to come up with any dramatically structured film that, had it been made under Nazi noses, could not be somehow construed as a protest or expression of resolve. Does that make any perceived subtext meaningless or, in this historical context, all the more poignant? According to a twenty-five-year-old Bazin, writing in *Revue jeux et poésie* in 1943, Carné’s movie initially had a contentious reception across France—arguments would break out in theaters, and “it even appears that several screens were bashed in.” But quickly it became the film du jour, the manifestation of the national spirit, and “the diabolical, the fantastic, and the marvelous soon became the conventions of our present production.”

Given all this, *Les visiteurs du soir* is a surprisingly sober film, far less entranced visually with a sense of storybook contrivance than with a medieval frieze aesthetic (when the lovers are transformed into a statue at the end, the change is hardly abrupt). Ironically, *Port of Shadows*, a poetic realist film with a contemporary setting, seems much more fantastic, with individual shots and stylistic flourishes compounding the story’s emotional thrust. Far colder, *Les visiteurs du soir* contains its fairy-tale elements in depth-composition tableaux, and there is little effort to muster a lighting-defined atmosphere. At times, as in the first visit to the wedding feast, the setting and compositions are almost sterile and still, as if the film were holding its breath, anxiously awaiting the inevitable collision between love and evil. We don’t know, but this may have given a censor a moment’s pause—nothing is frivolous in Carné’s movie, and little besides the devil is played as comedy. This small matter of emotional insurgency in the face of doom was deadly serious.

The beginnings of the path forward, for Bazin at least, had been laid by Marcel L’Herbier and his *Midnight in Paris*—like *Le nuit fantastique* (1942), which “gave the signal for a reversal of steam” leading to the achievement of *Les visiteurs du soir* later that year. After that, the mini wave of ostensibly neutral French earnest, with Jean Delannoy and Jean Cocteau’s *L’éternel retour*; Maurice Tourner’s Gérard de Nerval adaptation *La main du diable*; Serge de Poligny’s *Le baron fantôme*, featuring Cocteau as the titular ghost; and Grémillon’s *Lumière d’été* (all 1943). Together, these films stand as one of the great fermentative moments in cinema, when the medium dreamed the dreams of an entire nation under spectacular duress. Hollywood saw a similarly organic spurt of id-venting gothics in response to the Depression, and certainly the deprivations and dreads of Soviet life triggered the popularity of old-fashioned fantasy yarns in the 1960s and 1970s (Boris Rytsarev, Aleksandr Ptushko, and Aleksandr Rou forged entire thriving careers in the genre).

Because of the strictures they themselves imposed, the Nazis didn’t have a chance of controlling the discourse—the more fanciful and romantic and quintessentially French the films were, the more loudly they proclaimed an intuitively nationalist creed. Goebbels had wanted to use the film industry to neutralize popular patriotism, but the French people became more French after seeing *Les visiteurs du soir* and the other fantasies of the era, not less. Relatively unobjectionable to the Germans, the films were like messages tied to doves’ legs, missives of salvation and cosmic hope.

Since the war, and outside of its special circumstances, this film has been overshadowed by Carné’s subsequent masterpiece, *Children of Paradise* (1945), in terms of scale, profundity, and the amount of occupation intrigue that plagued its
production. But the latter film, for all its majesty, stands as a monument to a very real triumph over the Nazis, crafted, as it was, in semisecrecy and finished and released seven months after the liberation of Paris. Les visiteurs du soir meant something else: like its own doomed lovers, the movie embodied an unquashable will in a moment of cultural impossibility, when only what was in your heart could save you.

For more on Carné, see Ben McCann’s excellent, well-documented survey of his work and place in film history posted on the Senses of Cinema site 13 March 2011: http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/great-directors/marcel-carne/

COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2013 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXVI:

Feb 12 Orson Welles, Touch of Evil 1958
Feb 19 Kon Ichikawa, Revenge of a Kabuki Actor 1963
Feb 26 John Huston, Fat City 1972
Mar 5 Volker Schlöndorff, The Tin Drum 1979
Mar 19 Mike Leigh, Naked 1993
Mar 26 Michael Cimino, Heaven’s Gate 1980
Apr 2 Paul Thomas Anderson, Punch-Drunk Love 2002
Apr 9 Sidney Lumet, Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead 2007
Apr 16 Zack Snyder, Watchmen 2009
Apr 23 Marleen Gorris, Within the Whirlwind 2009

CONTACTS:…email Diane Christian: engdc@buffalo.edu…email Bruce Jackson bjackson@buffalo.edu…for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: http://buffalofilmseminars.com…to subscribe to the weekly email informational notes, send an email to addto list@buffalofilmseminars.com….for cast and crew info on any film: http://imdb.com/
The Buffalo Film Seminars are presented by the Market Arcade Film & Arts Center and State University of New York at Buffalo with support from the Robert and Patricia Colby Foundation and the Buffalo News.

Bruce’s exhibit, Being There: Bruce Jackson, Photographs 1962-2012, opens this Friday at the Burchfield Penney Art Center. There is an opening reception 5:30—7:30 p.m., free & open to the public. The exhibit will be up until June 16, 2013. For further information visit http://www.burchfieldpenney.org/exhibitions/exhibition:02-08-2013-06-16-2013-bruce-jackson-being-there/