

When Eurydice is Not a Woman: Adaptation of the Orpheus myth in Resnais' *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet* (2012)

Alain Resnais builds the last contribution to his remarkable career in filmmaking around the myth of Eurydice and Orpheus. His cinematic masterstroke takes from Anouilh's *Eurydice* proactive heroine and metamorphoses her into a metapoetic figment. The film *Vous n'avez encore rien vu* explores a writer's love affair with his own written work. The playwright is in love with *Eurydice* who once possessed the writer's heart. He gave it life. But in the film's narrative, *Eurydice* has since died. The writer contrives through the film's narrative to rescue then join his beloved in death, a productive reunion that occurs figuratively, as in Anouilh's play, in the film's final frames.

The film yields in a very satisfying way to Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation, especially for its offering a "creative and interpretive engagement" with its acknowledged mythological source. Resnais (1922-2014) died at the age of 91 a little over one year after *Vous n'avez encore rien vu* premiered at the 65th Cannes Film Festival, garnering his fifth nomination for the Palme d'Or. Directing his swansong in his 89th year, Resnais looks back upon a lifetime of exceptional creativity. The film's marketing clearly foregrounded the director's name. So those who enter the theatre are supposed to bring over five decades of cinematic expectation. In this, a nonogenarian's overt farewell to cinema, the director experiments as he might have in mid-career with the questions of cinema's predominance over the stage. Resnais's films often address matters of memory and distort one's conception of time as a linear concept. He once said, "The present and the past coexist, but the past shouldn't be in flashback." *Vous n'avez encore rien vu* leads the viewer also to ask whether reality exists between individuals or on a stage, or how that might hold up to the nuances of edited cinema. But now in his own twilight Resnais summons us

to watch the artist consider matters of artistic permanence even beyond the grave. Even though he coopts Anouilh's playwrighting craft, the narrative of the film becomes Resnais' beloved creation. The lover he dies for is recognizable as the mythic beloved of the consummate artist, a Eurydice. By this bridging Resnais coopts for himself the role of cinema's true Orpheus, the filmmaker whose work will transcend human mortality.

Arguably, Resnais' *Eurydice* is an Orphic artist's most meta-poetic beloved of all to date, the written woman of the playwright's own creation. *Eurydice* — like Papanghelis' view of Quintia in Catullus or Wyke's view of Cynthia in Propertius — is acted and rendered into existence within the film's narrative. This produced heroine, the play herself, is animated ultimately after the playwright's death in the film's later stages. Resnais enfolds layers of time and thereby implicates *Eurydice*'s multiplied effect in the life of peers, suggesting that every generation shall and must relive the experience of Orpheus and *Eurydice*. The artist's love affair with his craft, similarly, is to be relived again and again.

Framing the myth of Orpheus and *Eurydice* in this way opens new interpretive insights that can and should lead back into the Ovidian — if not also the Vergilian — creation of *Eurydice*. The paper will conclude with an evaluation of how Resnais' adaptation of the *Eurydice* myth can affect a reading of the classical myth as well.

Bibliography

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