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DAL ROMANZO AL FILM:  
cinema, letteratura e musica

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"Lettera da una sconosciuta" di Max Ophuls, soggetto di Stefan Zweig

## **DISPENSA**

di M.Elena Roffi

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♣IN BIBLIOTECA/Sez.Didattica: Unità Didattica **IL VIZIO DI LEGGERE**. Proposta della Sezione didattica della biblioteca per biennio e triennio delle scuole superiori.

## IN BIBLIOTECA

### ➔ 1. LIBRI DI STEFAN ZWEIG

PL = Passerini-Landi (Sede centrale)

titolo	Edizione	Collocazione	Biblioteca
<i>Amok e altri racconti di lucida follia</i>	Frassinelli 1992	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>Angoscia</i>	SugarCo 1991	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>Clarissa</i>	Frassinelli 1991	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>Erasmus da Rotterdam</i>	Rusconi libri 1994	MAGAZZ. 18E.01.38.	PL
<i>Leggende</i>	Edizioni Studio Tesi 1991	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>La lotta col demone</i>	Frassinelli 1992	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>Il mondo di ieri</i>	A.Mondadori 1980	NT ZWE STE	PL
<i>Notte fantastica</i>	Frassinelli 1992	NT ZWE STE	PL
<b>Schachnovelle</b>	Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag 2000	L 833.912 ZWE	PL

### ➔ 2. NARRATIVA TEDESCA DEL NOVECENTO

PL = Passerini-Landi (Sede centrale)

titolo	autore	Edizione	Collocazione	Biblioteca
<i>Gli affari del signor Giulio Cesare; Storie da calendario</i>	Bertold Brecht	Einaudi 1959	MAGAZZ. 19A.04.20 DONELLI	PL
<i>L'assistente</i>	Robert Walzer	Einaudi 1986	NT WAL ROB	PL
<i>Auto da fe</i>	Elias Canetti	Adelphi 1999	NT CAN ELI	PL
<i>Beate e suo figlio</i>	Arthur Schnitzler	Adelphi 1992	NT SCH ART	PL
<i>I Buddenbrook</i>	Thomas Mann	Einaudi 1992	NI MAN THO	PL
<i>Cane e padrone, e altri racconti</i>	Thomas Mann	Einaudi 1993	NI MAN THO	PL
<i>La casa dell'alchimista</i>	Gustav Meyrink	Studio Tesi 1992	NT MEY GUS	PL
<i>Il castello</i>	Franz Kafka	A.Mondadori 1972	MAGAZZ. 19B.06.11 DONELLI	PL
<i>Le città bianche</i>	Joseph Roth	Adelphi 1987	NT ROT JOS	PL
<i>La cripta dei cappuccini</i>	Joseph Roth	Adelphi 1974	NT ROT JOS	PL
<i>Il diario fiorentino</i>	Rainer Maria Rilke	Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1990	NT RIL RAI	PL
<b>Drei Kamaraden</b>	Erich Maria Remarque	Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001	L 833.912 REM	PL
<i>Il lupo della steppa</i>	Hermann Hesse	Mondadori 1994	NT HES HER	PL

titolo	autore	Edizione	Collocazione	Biblio- teca
<b>Klingsors letzter Sommer und andere Erzählungen</b>	Hermann Hesse	Rowohlt 1972	L 833.912 HES	PL
<b>Narziss und Goldmund</b>	Hermann Hesse	Suhrkamp 1975	L 833.912 HES	PL
Siddharta	Hermann Hesse	Adelphi 1994	NT HES HER	PL
<b>Gesammelte Werke in zwölf Banden</b>	Franz Kafka	Fischer Taschenbuch - In più voll.	L 833.912 KAF Pr	PL
Lettera al padre; Preparativi di nozze in campagna	Franz Kafka	Il saggiautore 1983	NT KAF FRA	PL
Diari	Franz Kafka	A. Mondadori 1996	NT KAF FRA	PL
<b>Der Process</b>	Franz Kafka	Fischer Taschenbuch 1994	L 833.912 KAF	PL
Racconti. (Contiene... La metamorfosi...)	Franz Kafka	A. Mondadori 1975	NT KAF FRA	PL
Romanzi	Franz Kafka	A. Mondadori 1975	NT KAF FRA	PL
<b>Fraulein Else und andere Erzählungen</b>	Arthur Schnitzler	Fischer 2000	L 833.912 SCH	PL
Gioco all'alba	Arthur Schnitzler	Adelphi 1983	NT SCH ART	PL
Il giovane Törless	Robert Musil	Garzanti 1992	NT MAN THO	PL
Giuseppe in Egitto	Thomas Mann	A. Mondadori 1996	NT MAN THO	PL
Il grafico della febbre	Friedrich Glauser	Sellerio 1985	NA GLA FRI	PL
Hotel Savoy	Joseph Roth	Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1999	L 833.912 ROT	PL
Jefte e sua figlia	Lion Feuchtwanger	Club degli editori 1965	NT FEU LIO	PL
L'uomo senza qualità	Robert Musil	Einaudi 1996	NT MUS ROB	PL
Romanzi Brevi, novelle e aforismi	Robert Musil	Einaudi 1986	NT MUS ROB	PL
Infanzia berlinese	Walter Benjamin	Einaudi 1973	NT BEN WAL	PL
Jans deve morire	Anna Seghers	E/O 2003	NT SEG ANN	PL
<b>In Stahlgewittern</b>	Ernst Junger	Klett-Cotta 2001	L 833.912 JUN	PL
<b>Die Kapuzinergruft</b>	Joseph Roth	Kiepenheuer & Witsch 1987	L 833.912 ROT	PL
La leggenda del santo bevitore	Joseph Roth	Adelphi 1994	NT ROT JOS	PL
La mela d'oro, e altri racconti	Hugo von Hofmannsthal	Adelphi 1982	NT HOF HUG	PL
Mine-Haha, ovvero Dell'educazione fisica delle fanciulle	Franz Wedekind	Adelphi 1993	NT WED FRA	PL
La montagna incantata	Thomas Mann	A. Mondadori 1965	NT MAN THO	PL
La morte a Venezia	Thomas Mann	Einaudi 1991	NT MAN THO	PL
Niente di nuovo sul fronte occidentale	Erich Maria Remarque	A. Mondadori 1989	NT REM ERI	PL

3. LETTERE PER RACCONTARE:

# GLI EPISTOLARI

PL = Passerini-Landi (Sede centrale)

La ricerca nell'OPAC del Polo Bibliotecario Piacentino, consultabile all'<http://opac.biblioteche.piacenza.it/>, è stata effettuata con parola chiave **letter?**: in tutto risultano 442 documenti, di cui quelli elencati sotto rappresentano una piccola parte, reperibili presso la Biblioteca Passerini Landi.

titolo	autore	Edizione	Collocazione	Bibli o- teca
<i>Alja, piccola ombra: lettere alla figlia</i>	Marina Cvetaeva	Oscar Mondadori	891.7142 CVE 2000	PL
<i>Amicizie perfide: lettere raccolte in un salotto e pubblicate per istruirne qualche altro</i>	Choderlos de Laclos	G. Carabba. - In più voll.	ANG A 229 2	PL
<i>L'amore è il cuore di tutte le cose: lettere 1915-1930</i>	V.V. Majakovskij, L. Ju. Brik	A. Mondadori 1985	MAGAZZ. 17S.06.65	PL
<i>Un anno di lettere</i>	Algernon Charles Swinburne	Einaudi 1983	MAGAZZ. 17T.06.43	PL
<i>Autoritratto: lettere 1945-1984</i>	Francois Truffaut	Einaudi 1993	DEWEY 846.914TRU Au	PL
<i>Cara Alice... : lettere di Charles Lutwidge Dodgson</i>	Lewis Carroll	Einaudi 1985	MAGAZZ. 16A.08.33	PL
<i>Cara Virginia: Le lettere di Vita Sackville-West a Virginia Woolf</i>	Vita Sackville- West	La Tartaruga 1985	NI SAC VIC	PL
<i>Deserti luoghi: lettere 1925-1941</i>	Marina Cvetaeva	Adelphi 1989	DEWEY 891.7642 CVE	PL
<i>E' questo il carcer tetro? Lettere dal carcere 1934-1935</i>	Carlo Levi	Il melangolo 1991	DEWEY 856.914	PL
<i>Gustav Mahler: ricordi e lettere</i>	Alma Mahler	Il saggiautore 1984	DEWEY 780.92 MAH	PL
<i>Lettera a mia madre</i>	Georges Simenon	Adelphi 1985	NF SIM GEO	PL
<i>Letteratura e lettere: indagini sull'epistolografia cinquecentesca</i>	Nicola Longo	Bulzoni 1999	MAGAZZ.16H.05. 45	PL
<i>Lettere 1845-1886</i>	Emily Dickinson	Einaudi 1991	NA DIC EMI	PL
<i>Lettere</i>	John Keats	Einaudi 1945	MAGAZZ. 19C.09.36 DONELLI	PL
<i>Lettere</i>	Pietro Aretino	Einaudi 1945	MAGAZZ. 19C.09	PL DONELLI
<i>Lettere</i>	Thomas Mann	Mondadori 1997	NT MAN THO	PL
<i>Lettere 1924-1944</i>	Cesare Pavese			PL
<i>Lettere 1917-1961</i>	Ernest Hemingway	Mondadori 1984	NA HEM ERN	PL
<i>Lettere d'amore di Napoleone a Maria Luisa 1810-1814</i>	-----	Mondadori 1935	ANG B 01531	PL

*Un amore incompreso. Il frutto della passione.  
L'avverso destino...*

**LETTERA DA UNA SCONOSCIUTA**  
**(Letter from an Unknown Woman)**

Drammatico (Usa 1948)  
b/n 89'

**Regia** Max Ophuls  
**Soggetto** Stefan Zweig  
**Sceneggiatura** Howard Koch  
**Prodotto da** John Houseman  
**Fotografia** Franz Planer  
**Musica** Daniele Amfitheatrof

**Personaggi e interpreti**

(Lisa Berndle) Joan Fontaine, (Stefan Brand) Louis Jourdan, (Frau Berndle) Mady Christians,  
(Johann Stauffer) Marcel Journet, (John) Art Smith, (Marie) Carol Yorke

Lisa lo ama in silenzio. Lui, affascinante pianista, le abita accanto sullo stesso pianerottolo. Ma vive nell'intima segretezza del cuore della donna. Stefan, invece, non sospetta neanche il sentimento di lei: non la guarda né la considera. Passano gli anni e per caso si incontrano. Ma se Lisa riconosce subito il volto dell'uomo che non ha mai dimenticato, per Stefan non è così. Ma scoppia ugualmente l'amore. E' passione travolgente, incontenibile desiderio, coronato dalla nascita di una creatura. Ma Stefan non può saperlo. Perché è fuggito di nuovo, ignaro del frutto di quella sola notte. E' stata per lui solo la follia di qualche ora...

La vita riserva a Lisa altri dolori e altro distacco. Tanto che all'altare ci finisce, ragazza madre, al braccio di un altro uomo.

Nel frattempo, la notte prima di un duello, Stefan legge la lettera di Lisa, la sconosciuta che lo ha amato da una vita. Ma forse, per recuperare i suoi torti, non c'è più tempo. Deve infatti sfidare a morte, il marito di lei...

È un film passionale ed emotivo, che si snoda sui flash-back e sul connubio amore-morte, come le grandi pellicole americane Anni Cinquanta, magistralmente, fanno spesso. Nonostante sia girato ad Hollywood, questa Vienna ricostruita in studio traspira aria e romanticismo mitteleuropeo. Aiutata da una suggestiva fotografia in bianco e nero. Ne risulta un melodramma ben definito, onirico e struggente, interpretato da Jean Fontaine e Louis Jourdan. Per la bella attrice, nata il 22 ottobre 1917 a Tokyo, si tratta della venticinquesima interpretazione. Debutta nel 1935, con il nome di Joan Burfield, in **No More Ladies**.

Per il suo partner francese, invece, è il tredicesimo ciak. Il suo esordio risale al 1939, nella pellicola intitolata **Le Corsaire**.

<http://www.vivoscuola.it/Insegnareimparare>

**Titolo** LETTERA DA UNA SCONOSCIUTA (LING. ORIG.)

**Titolo Originale** LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN

**Contenuto** Versione originale in inglese. La notte prima di un duello, il pianista Stefan Brand (Louis Jourdan) legge la lettera postuma della donna che lo ha adorato in silenzio per tutta la vita, Lisa Berndle (Joan Fontaine), da lui invece amata solo nello spazio di una serata, e poi dimenticata: comprende perché è stato sfidato, e all'alba accetta di andare incontro alla morte per espiare il male commesso. Tratto da un racconto di Stefan Zweig sceneggiato da Howard Koch.

**Nazione** USA

**Durata** 84

**Genere** Melodramma

**Anno Produzione** 1948

Autore/i

OPHULS MAX

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<http://www.ciao.it>

**LETTERA DA UNA SCONOSCIUTA**

sinfonia in bianco e nero.

Vienna, anno 1900.

Stefan Brand (l'attore Louis Jourdan), uomo di mezza età affascinante, elegante, e dai modi aristocratici, in gioventù è stato un pianista promettente, tanto da essere paragonato al giovane Mozart.

Ma le promesse non sono state mantenute: Stefan stesso, conscio di non essere un genio, ma solo un pianista talentuoso, uno dei tanti, ha preferito dedicarsi ad altri piaceri: la vita notturna, le donne...

In una notte di pioggia, egli apprende di essere stato sfidato a duello, da uno sconosciuto, per ragioni che ignora. Il duello, che sarà quasi sicuramente mortale, è fissato per il mattino seguente, all'alba. Con nonchalance Stefan accetta la sfida, sottolineando che non è l'eventualità di essere ucciso che lo affligge, ma il pensiero di doversi alzare così presto.

Rincasato, egli informa John, il suo anziano e fedele maggiordomo, muto, di non aver alcuna intenzione di presentarsi al duello, commentando sarcastico: "l'onore è un lusso che solo i gentiluomini possono permettersi". Mentre si accinge a prepararsi per la fuga, il maggiordomo gli consegna una missiva, che gli è appena stata recapitata. Stefan la guarda con disinteresse, la apre distrattamente, ma la sua attenzione viene subito catturata, prima dall'intestazione, St Catherine's Hospital, e poi dalle prime parole, scritte con mano incerta: "Quando leggerai questa lettera io sarò forse già morta. Ho tante cose da dirti, e mi resta poco tempo..." Comincia così una sorta di confessione epistolare: le parole di Lisa, la sconosciuta, the "unknown woman", prendono vita, e si saldano alle immagini, dipanandosi per tutto l'arco del film, che altro non è che il racconto, in flashback, di un amore profondo e totale, nato quando la donna era poco più di una bambina, e proseguito in età adulta, fino alla morte. "Io credo che ognuno di noi nasca due volte, il giorno in cui viene al mondo, e quando prende coscienza della vita."

Rivediamo allora Lisa (l'attrice Joan Fontaine) adolescente, dapprima incuriosita dall'arrivo del nuovo vicino di casa, poi affascinata dalla sua musica, e infine completamente soggiogata da un amore devastante, poetico e romantico, che si alimenterà di qualche sguardo, di una visita furtiva nell'appartamento di lui, dell'ascolto trasognato della sua musica.

Soltanto quando Lisa vedrà l'uomo rincasare, di notte, in compagnia di una donna (una delle tante amanti), si rassegnerà a lasciare Vienna, seguendo la sua famiglia a Linz. Ma sarà solo per un breve periodo, durante il quale Lisa crescerà, e con lei anche la sua passione amorosa, nutrendosi dell'assenza. Ormai donna, ella tornerà a Vienna, e si impiegherà presso una sartoria. La sua sarà una non-vita, finché una sera, Stefan, passandole accanto come tutte le altre sere, si accorgerà di lei.

Sarà una notte magica, per le vie di una Vienna invernale, malinconica e romantica: una corsa in carrozza, una cena intima in un locale elegante, un giro al Prater, semi-deserto e avvolto in un'atmosfera quasi irrealistica, e infine un ballo in un locale ormai vuoto, dove una singolare orchestra di sole donne, ormai stanche di suonare, lascia i due amanti soli a godere di qualche attimo di intimità. La notte si concluderà a casa di Stefan: i due si prometteranno amore eterno, ma Stefan, partito il giorno seguente per una tournée in Italia, con la promessa di restare lontano solo due settimane, non tornerà da Lisa. La donna, in conseguenza di quell'unico incontro, diverrà madre, ma non dirà niente a Stefan. "Volevo essere, scrive, la sola donna a non averti mai chiesto nulla." Dopo alcuni anni difficili Lisa sposerà, non per amore, ma per necessità, un anziano aristocratico, che offrirà a lei e a suo figlio una vita agiata e serena.

Passano gli anni, all'Opera di Vienna è di scena il Flauto Magico di Mozart. Stefan è ormai un musicista fallito e rassegnato, la cui salute è compromessa da una vita sregolata, alla continua ricerca di qualcosa che non riesce a trovare. Una donna, un amore? All'uscita del teatro, nel buio della notte, l'uomo ferma Lisa, la scruta con quel suo sguardo seducente, sembra ricordare qualcosa, le parla, la illude, ancora una volta: "Sento che puoi aiutarmi. Stanotte, nell'oscurità, quando ho visto il tuo volto, è stato come se avessi trovato quell'unico volto che cercavo, da sempre, in mezzo a tanti altri... Chi sei? Promettimi che ti rivedrò ancora, devo rivederti!"

Stefan, la testa fra le mani, continua a leggere, avidamente. E a mano a mano che la lettura prosegue, il passato si salda con il presente, i ricordi, sfuocati, diventano nitidi, la voce, senza corpo, della donna misteriosa, assume finalmente una fisicità.

"Sappi che ti amo ora, come ti ho amato sempre. La mia vita ha avuto un senso solo nei momenti passati con te e con nostro figlio. Se solo..." L'ultimo flashback di una Lisa sofferente ed esausta, intenta a scrivere, si dissolve con l'inquadratura della lettera, incompleta, e macchiata di inchiostro. Sul fondo, una postilla, a caratteri stampati: "Questa lettera fu scritta da una paziente qui. Noi riteniamo che fosse diretta a Voi, poiché ella pronunciò il Vostro nome, prima di morire. Possa Dio essere misericordioso con entrambi."

Una musica di violini fa da sottofondo alle lacrime che scorrono sul bel viso di Stefan. Ora i ricordi si susseguono rapidi nella sua mente, rivede i momenti più belli passati con quella che avrebbe potuto essere la donna della sua vita, l'amore a lungo cercato e vagheggiato, rimasto senza un nome e senza un volto, a causa della sua cecità, di una mente annebbiata dalla pigrizia, dal vizio, dalle donne. Il maggiordomo gli si avvicina e gli mostra l'ora: è tempo di fuggire, o di andare incontro al destino. La lettera non è firmata, a Stefan manca ancora un nome. Alza lo sguardo verso il maggiordomo: "Tu te la ricordavi?" E il maggiordomo, muto, scrive sul foglio un nome... Lisa Berndle. Ho omesso diverse parti del racconto, per non privare di un pò di sorpresa chi fosse intenzionato a vederlo.

**Diretto nel 1948 da Max Ophüls, regista franco-tedesco, che lo trasse dalla novella "Briefe einer Unbekannten" di Stefan Zweig**, questo film, girato in bianco e nero, e avvolto in un'atmosfera onirica e decadente, ha per sfondo una Vienna romantica e mitteleuropea di inizio XX secolo, interamente ricostruita negli studi hollywoodiani, grazie all'abilità e alla maestria di scenografi come Russel Gausman, e Ruby Levitt.

**Un film sull'ossessione amorosa, che prelude a quella, altrettanto disperata, di Adele H. di Truffaut, o di Senso, di Visconti.** Una pellicola atipica, dove manca il colpo di scena finale, in quanto si parte dall'epilogo, la morte della protagonista, per ricostruire, a ritroso, tutta la vicenda, che assume così le caratteristiche di un film sulla memoria e sulla morte.

Uno Stefan attonito, che nella penombra del suo studio legge la lettera, in un crescendo di dolore, di angoscia, e di rimorso per quello che avrebbe potuto essere, e non è stato, funge da anello di congiunzione tra il racconto e lo spettatore, tra il presente, e una vicenda ormai morta.

**Joan Fontaine, che interpreta Lisa**, dall'adolescenza all'età adulta, aveva, all'epoca del film, 31 anni. Perfetta nei panni della fanciulla timida, romantica, sognatrice, ma al tempo stesso già determinata; incantevole nello splendore della giovinezza, soprattutto durante l'incontro con Stefan, quando il suo sguardo, dapprima un po' timido e imbarazzato, diventa, col passare dei minuti, sempre più adorante, e il suo volto, raggiante, è come trasfigurato dalla gioia. Un po' meno convincente, ma è solo una mia opinione, nei panni di Lisa adulta. Nelle scene in cui è con Stefan, il suo sguardo trasognato, senza più la luminosità della giovinezza, risulta, a mio avviso, un po' statico, poco naturale. Ma la sua è, comunque, una performance eccellente. Louis Jordan, che interpreta l'affascinante Stefan, è bello e impossibile quanto basta. Il giovane e promettente musicista dal sorriso seducente, e dallo sguardo vivo e penetrante, lascia il posto, col passare degli anni, al maturo viveur, l'incedere lento, l'espressione stanca, lo sguardo disilluso e velato di tristezza.

**TITOLO ORIGINALE: LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN**

Regia Max Ophuls

Soggetto Stefan Zweig

Sceneggiatura Howard Koch

Personaggi e interpreti :

Lisa Berndle : Joan Fontaine

Stefan Brand : Louis Jourdan

John il maggiordomo : Art Smith

Johann Stauffer : Marcel Journet

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<http://www.movieconnection.it>

**Lettera da una sconosciuta** (Letter from an Unknown Woman)  
di **Max Ophuls** - USA 1948

Ophuls (di origine tedesca - 1902 - ma naturalizzato francese) fu un regista raffinato e malinconico, con una vena romantico-nostalgica di grande efficacia: il suo film più famoso è forse *La ronde* del 1950, ma **Lettera da una sconosciuta** non è certo un'opera minore, anzi rende bene idea della grande sensibilità di questo autore e della sua precisione di stile, con una struttura narrativa puntigliosa e una grande sapienza nei movimenti di macchina (non per niente Stanley Kubrick lo apprezzò sempre moltissimo). La storia, ambientata a Vienna nel 1900, è quella di una donna che ama un uomo, non ricambiata. Ha un figlio da lui, cerca occasioni per ricostruire la loro fugace storia d'amore, ma l'uomo, un pianista fallito, riincontrandola neanche la riconosce. Sarà un lettera postuma che gli aprirà gli occhi sulla strana trama sentimentale che lo ha legato alla donna. **Lettera da una sconosciuta** è un melodramma esemplare, semplice, ma con un meccanismo narrativo molto elaborato. La voce fuori campo che 'esce' dalla lettera ci riporta ai ricordi che l'hanno generata. E proprio La protagonista (la dolce Joan Fontaine) in un passaggio dice "Io credo che ognuno di noi nasca due volte, il giorno in cui viene al mondo e quando prende coscienza della vita". Il suo triste destino la rende cosciente di una felicità non realizzabile, il suo appassionato inseguire sembra essere nient'altro che un cieco ripetersi proprio di un destino crudele. Un critico americano, parlando del cinema di Ophuls ha detto: "L'amore, tema principale che percorre tutta la sua opera, è visto quasi sempre nel contesto della sua perdita".

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## Max Ophuls

### The Exile

*The Exile* (1947) is Ophuls' first American film. It is a remarkably graceful and beautiful movie.

*The Exile* seems to be little known today. It never seems to show up in retrospectives or nostalgia celebrations. When its star Douglas Fairbanks Jr. died, it was not mentioned in any of the obituaries I saw, even though it is one of his best movies. His gem with Alfred Green, *Union Depot* (1931) wasn't mentioned either. Members of the news media seem to be ill-informed about the history of film.

### Letter From an Unknown Woman

*Letter From an Unknown Woman* (1948) is one of Ophuls' most beautiful romances. This film is constructed of three long episodes, each from a different era in the heroine's life. This gives it a structure similar to those of Ophuls' later French films. Ophuls uses many panning shots. These are rarely simple pans, turning from left to right or back. Instead, they are very flexible. Ophuls' characters often go up or down staircases. The pans can gently tilt upward or downward, keeping the character in the center of the shot while traversing the staircase. The staircases here are often just a series of short steps, leading from one level to another. The transitions and the pans are correspondingly small and graceful. Characters also frequently move around within a location, such as the businessman endlessly fussing around the train station. Ophuls' camera pans back and forth with this man, as he moves restlessly through the crowd.

An Influence from Lubitsch

Some elements here echo in a minor way Ernst Lubitsch's *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931), a film version of an operetta by Oscar Strauss, who would go on to write the music for *La Ronde*. *The Smiling Lieutenant* takes place in old Vienna, the setting of many later Ophuls works. Its heroine is the leader of an all woman band of musicians in a beer garden; such a female band will reappear in *Letter From an Unknown Woman*. The hero plays the piano in both films. The heroine of *The Smiling Lieutenant* must leave the hero. She watches him for one last time by moving to the upper landing of the staircase in his apartment building, and looking down on him at the door of his apartment. This anticipates the famous scenes of the heroine on the upper landing in *Letter From an Unknown Woman*. *The Smiling Lieutenant* perhaps influenced other Ophuls films, too. The King here is a distinguished looking, gorgeously uniformed, but dumb and easily manipulated middle-aged man. He anticipates Anton Walbrook's character in *Lola Montès*. There is a scene early in *The Smiling Lieutenant* where a succession of functionaries take turns in delivering a telegram to the King. Such comic chains of functionaries return in the thread scene of *Lola Montès*.

Other Lubitsch films sometimes contain the persistent objects that run through Ophuls movies. These include the purse in *Trouble in Paradise*, Horton's remark about "three square meals a day" in *Design for Living*, and the jewels in *Ninotchka*.

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### Caught

Although at first glance a typical Hollywood movie with a unified plot and characters, *Caught* has structural similarities to such episodic Ophuls works as *La Ronde*. Characters appear and disappear here, just as in the later anthology film. Often times some of the most interesting characters in *Caught* appear in just a single scene, such as the psychiatrist. The heroine's girl friend and confidant disappears completely less than half way through the movie, never to be seen again. In *La Ronde*, characters disappear when their episodes end. These vanishings leave an odd emotional effect there, but they seem even funnier in a narrative work like *Caught*. Locations too show up, play a major role, then completely vanish again. Often times we only get tantalizing glimpses of them, such as the yacht or Ryan's L.A. mansion. They hold out temporary interest to the heroine and to us in the audience, but they are never seen again. Just as in *La Ronde*, the characters are always late and life is always slipping by them, so too does every thing rush by and vanish in *Caught*.

Many of the encounters in *Caught* are between two people, just as in *La Ronde*. The characters often discuss their intimate feelings about romantic encounters in such sessions, in both films. Group life tends to be largely absent here. There are no sustaining communal traditions, of the sort one might find in John Ford.

The heroine of *Caught* oscillates between two men. This gives it similarities with *La Ronde*, whose characters are often changing partners. Despite her denials, the heroine's motivations in *Caught* are often less than idealistic; this too links her with the characters in the later film.

#### Objects

If people often disappear in Ophuls' films, objects often stay, even after we wish they would disappear. The fur coat desired by the heroine in the opening scene of *Caught* keeps returning in the film, as a symbol of the folly of the heroine's desires. Its return suggests the inescapability of a reckoning for the heroine and the bad choices she has made. It manages to persist right to the final shot of the film, even after the heroine herself has vanished from the movie. In this, it anticipates the earrings of *Madame de ...* (1953), which also endlessly turn up in the film, in an ever more tragic context. Both objects are expensive presents given to women by men in return for their sexual favors, including marriage. Ophuls suggests that there is something wrong with both prostitution and rich people's marriage in these works, as both depend on economic transactions, in which women are bought by the men.

Young people today probably have little understanding of the now mercifully vanished mythology of the mink coat. When I was a kid in the 1950's, American TV sit-coms endlessly promoted the idea that what women wanted more than anything else was a mink coat. This very expensive object was given by well to do men as a present to their wives or girl-friends, always as some sort of financial reward to the woman in return for being their sex partner. Crime films always showed mobsters giving their molls mink coats. Wealthy husbands gave them to their wives, often after much scheming and wheedling by the wife. Even in the sexist 1950's, there was always something sleazy and ominous about the whole concept. Such films as *Caught* and [Fritz Lang's](#) *The Big Heat* (1953) managed to exploit this ready-made bit of American folk culture to express the most terrifying critiques of people's behavior. [Alfred Hitchcock](#) gave a more comic look at this subject in his TV show "*Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat*" (1960). These works by prestige directors are only the tip of the iceberg, on the subject of the mink coat. I have no statistics on the subject, but suspect that a complete inventory of the era's TV and radio programs would turn up over a hundred examples. Thankfully today, the women's movement has alerted everybody to richer possibilities in women's lives than getting presents from men.

#### *Caught* and Other Films

*Caught* (1949) resembles [Orson Welles'](#) *Citizen Kane* (1941), especially that film's second half, which deals with the marriage of Kane and Susan. Both films show a domineering rich man married to a poor woman. Both show him tyrannizing her, being a control freak and organizing every aspect of her life. In both films, the woman becomes a virtual prisoner in a huge mansion, a mansion built on a massive scale that dwarfs its human inhabitants. Both mansions express great wealth without joy. They are all formal magnificence without any sense of pleasure. In both homes, there is a major domo with a foreign accent and a sardonic, cynical sense of humor, a man with much more actual independence than the wife. In both films, the husband suffers a serious health crisis. Both films offer a thinly disguised portraits of real media moguls of the day: Kane of newspaper man William Randolph Hearst, *Caught* of film producer Howard Hughes. Both films have a left wing point of view; both contain a critique of capitalism and capitalists in their negative portrayal of the rich. Both of these men started out by inheriting great fortunes; both went on to even bigger financial adventures. Both films use newspapers to tell part of their story.

There are some differences between the two films. *Caught* is set entirely in the present, unlike *Kane*, and it lacks the intricate flashback structure of *Kane*, being told in a linear, straightforward way. The film is as episodic as *Kane*, however. The relationship is also a bit different in the two films, with the millionaire in *Caught* being actually abusive of his wife in a direct way, whereas *Kane* is more purely obsessively domineering. While the man in *Kane* is emotionally disturbed, the man in *Caught* is a full fledged crackpot, consistent with what we all know about Howard Hughes. The couple in *Kane* married out of love, while the couple in *Caught* married for money and spite.

The noble doctor sequences of *Caught* also resemble a previous film, Irving Pichel's *And Now Tomorrow* (1944), an under rated work whose screenplay is partly by [Raymond Chandler](#). In that film, rich society woman Loretta Young finds meaning in life by working as assistant to noble doctor Alan Ladd, who specializes in treatment of the poor. This is similar to the relationship between the wife and the doctor in the second half of *Caught*. Both films contain a similar sequence of going to the house of a poor kid, and offering emergency medical treatment. Somehow, while I found *And Now Tomorrow* touching, I have never been able to respond to the similar material in *Caught*.

While Ladd plays a man from a poor background and who is definitely of working class origin, James Mason's doctor is obviously a member of the British upper crust.

#### Caught and Film Noir

Caught is frequently referred to as a film noir. I find that that is really stretching the term. Unlike most noir films, Caught is not a crime story; it is instead a romantic drama. There are no crime elements whatsoever to Caught. There is no crime, mystery, criminal characters, violence or suspense passages. There are a few moments towards the end where it looks as if Ryan's millionaire is going to erupt in violence, but nothing of the kind ever actually occurs. The film is entirely in the tradition of romantic drama. It has considerable social commentary, like many such romantic films: see the works of Douglas Sirk, for instance. The visual style of Caught is also distinct from film noir. It lacks the high contrast photography, night for night sequences, and elaborate shadow effects of much noir.

The similarity of Caught to Citizen Kane suggests a distant relationship of the movie to film noir. Kane is often justly cited as one of the ancestors of film noir. It is a non-crime movie whose visual stylistic and flashback storytelling features are ancestral to those of film noir. Since Caught is a film directly in the tradition of Kane, it can be considered a sort of first cousin to film noir.

Caught does show the obsession that Alain Silver has defined as one of the key elements of noir. This is especially true of Robert Ryan's millionaire. Since Ryan is one of the icons of film noir, his episodes in the film do tend to have a bit of a noir like quality. The duel between honest working man Mason and powerful rich sinister guy played by Ryan anticipates the similar Mitchum-Ryan contest in John Cromwell's The Racket (1951). This also gives the film a noir-like feel.

Caught is one of several films, mainly film noir, which take its heroes to a nightclub with black people. One thinks immediately of William Castle's When Strangers Marry (1944) and Jacques Tourneur's Out of the Past (1947). All of these films are made by liberals who wanted to help integrate the screen, and give more dignified roles to black people. Caught is less forceful than these films, which gave speaking roles to black characters, and whose night club scenes served as virtually little mini-documentaries, showing the real, non-stereotyped world of black New Yorkers for almost the first time on any movie screen. However, if Caught is less innovative, its dance sequence comes from the same spirit of pro-Civil Rights activism. Here, the black musicians play as hero James Mason proposes to the heroine. They suggest that he is part of the great democratic masses of the people, not a member of the elite.

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#### La Ronde

La Ronde (1950) is one of cinema's most avant-garde works. Few films are so playful with the boundary between illusion and artifice. The narrator of the film talks directly to the camera, alters the events of the story, and does things that symbolically, not literally, depict the action. All of this is delightful. However, such actions are huge no-no's in terms of today's Hollywood films, which always seem to take a painfully literal approach to everything. The freedom of La Ronde seems wonderful compared to the commercial control that is exercised over today's product.

The structure of La Ronde will recur in the circus scenes of Lola Montès. There, however, the structure is less explicitly avant-garde. Instead of a master of ceremonies, associated with the film, talking directly to the camera, we will have the circus' ringmaster, talking to the circus' audience. This commentary often gives new perspectives on the action, both emotional and intellectual. The separate episodes of the film, which in La Ronde are explicitly set forth as chapters of the film, in Lola Montès are disguised as flashbacks, memories of the heroine. While the structure of the two films is virtually identical, everything in the latter is made to conform, however loosely, with the realistic conventions of commercial cinema.

The way the master of ceremonies in *La Ronde* talks to the audience and arranges the action, recalls the stage manager in Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town* (1938). The contemporary Australian made film, *The Sum of Us* (Kevin Dowling, Geoff Burton, 1995), has characters who take time out from the action to directly address the audience, and comment on the film's events.

#### The Influence of Josef von Sternberg

Much of the visual style of *La Ronde* resembles Josef von Sternberg. The carousel recalls the roulette wheel of Sternberg's *The Shanghai Gesture*. Both are circular machines. The revolution of both suggests awesome forces at work in the world, stirring up the lives and emotions of the characters. The revolving circus show of Ophuls' *Lola Montès* (1955) is also in this tradition.

Other features of Ophuls' films recall those of Sternberg. Both were deeply oriented towards romance, and the relations between men and women. Both filmmakers' works fall into the genre of romantic dramas. Both have plenty of irony, wit, and sophisticated comedy relief. Both often made costume dramas. Both filmmakers featured exotic backgrounds, sumptuously presented, that aided their creation of a rich visual style. Both often featured rich costumes. The men in both often have a military connection, and wear a very fancy uniform; the women are often either entertainers, or "fallen women". All of these male and female roles have a strong association with romance and sexuality, something both filmmakers develop to the max. After all, these are romantic dramas, and any suggestion of romantic potential is to be highlighted. Both filmmakers include plenty of songs and musical interludes in their films, even though both only on rare occasions made actual musicals.

Above all, there is a similarity in the visual style of the two directors. Ophuls' tracking shots recall those of Sternberg. Both tend to be lateral, following the characters along walls or paths; both often follow their characters along stairways. Both are designed to show much beautiful imagery along the way. The shots contain elaborate compositions, compositions that unroll along the screen like an unreeling scroll. Both use elaborate material in both the background - the wall behind the characters - and foreground - material placed in front of the characters' path - to help create these compositions. Both will use netting, scrolls, doors and other semi-transparent materials through which they shoot the characters. Such material is also integrated into the complex, beautiful compositions of the shots.

Camera movement is used almost continually in this film. Few of the shots even make sense unless one is conscious of the beautiful camera movements that create them. One sense Ophuls breaking free here, and creating a film exactly as he wishes. *La Ronde* is a film about the beauty and possibilities of camera movement. It is the center and heart of the film.

#### Camera Movement and Ideas

Some of the camera movements in *La Ronde* are linked to discussions in the dialogue. These discussions are often logical arguments, in which a character sets forth an idea, point by point. Each stage of the discussion is linked to a new area revealed by the moving camera. The ideas in the dialogue and the images revealed by the camera counterpoint each other, illuminating each other's concepts. This same approach will often be used in the circus scenes in *Lola Montès*.

Not only ideas are expressed by the stages of the camera movements, but also the characters' feelings. The different stages of the scene through which the characters walk, often correspond to the emotional progression of the characters, especially their romantic feelings.

When characters vacillate in these arguments, the camera can move back and forth over the same path, reversing and then re-reversing its path of movement, along with the characters. In the first episode, Signoret's attempt to have the soldier come with her involves much such back and forth movement, all tied to different stages in her persuasion of the soldier, who waxes hot and cold in his desire to come with her. Similarly, some of Walbrook's indecisiveness in the opening monologue is reflected in back and forth movements of his character, accompanied by the camera.

The movement of the camera reflects a witty commentary on this indecisiveness. Its huge movement, with the entire film moving back and forth to reflect tiny indecisions on the part of Walbrook's musings, seems delightfully disproportionate to the significance of what is going on. Yet, there is also something profound about the way the camera captures thought. It is as if the tiniest sensations in the thoughts and feelings of the characters are registered by Ophuls' camera and film frame, ever ready to move with them over the subtlest changes in their minds.

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### Madame de...

*Madame de...* (1953) has long been known as *The Earrings of Madame de...* in English. *Madame de...* resembles *Caught* (1949) in terms of plot, structure and characters. Both are films that tell one long, unified story, rather than being broken up into a series of largely separate sections. Both feature a heroine who is trapped, or traps herself, in a loveless marriage with a rich, powerful man. In both films, the husband is a domineering control freak who winds up tormenting the wife mercilessly. In both films, the wife falls deeply in love with another man, a man who is kind, gentle and good, but who is also strikingly masculine. In both films, the other man has a noble profession that the film admiringly explores, and in both, he is a foreigner from another society (England or Italy), one that is often viewed as glamorous and romantic. In both films, the husband and wife are members of the country in which the film is made and set, the United States and France, respectively. In both films, a key scene in the falling in love between the wife and the other man involves their dancing together in public. In both films, the husband's home is a major locale, and has a huge staircase in an open lobby, while the other man's home is not shown. In both films, the wife's involvement with the husband is symbolized by an expensive object, the fur coat in *Caught*, the earrings in *Madame de...*, that plays a key role in the plot, repeatedly showing up and representing an obstacle and stumbling block for the heroine.

Charles Boyer, who plays the cruel husband here, had earlier tormented his cinematic wife in *George Cukor's Gaslight* (1944). One suspects that the audience is not surprised by anything horrible he does here, because we have already seen him in *Gaslight*. Both films have a strong feminist component. Boyer also appeared in Frank Borzage's *History is Made at Night* (1937), in which he played the nice guy other man, who helped a wife deal with her abusive, controlling husband. So he played in both main male roles in such dramas. Boyer is suave and sophisticated in *Madame de...*, unlike Robert Ryan's foaming at the mouth nut case in *Caught*. But he is at least as menacing. He looks far more competent at his sinister control activities, and indeed is more successful here at destroying the lovers than Ryan was in *Caught*.

There are echoes of other Ophuls films here, as well. The mistress here seems like a preliminary sketch for the heroine of *Lola Montès*. Both are kept women of wealthy men, both are independent during periods when they are not being kept, both travel from country to country, both are seen aboard ship, both are bold but sometimes self-destructive women, both smoke thin cigars, somewhat symbolic of a masculine side of their character. The international perspective offered by having the other man here be Italian, also anticipates the international construction of *Lola Montès*.

The recurring refrain in the dialogue, where the heroine's last name is cut off, and all we hear of her name is "Madame de", recalls the constant questions of "What time is it?" in *La Ronde*.

The ballroom sequence here, where the characters fall in love, is one of the great set pieces in Ophuls. It shows Ophuls' avant-garde narrative techniques, in which several different scenes are all linked together, and made part of one continuous sequence. It further shows Ophuls' creativity with camera movement.

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### Lola Montès

*Lola Montès* (1955) is Ophuls' final film. The work allowed Ophuls a chance to work with a big budget and color. Its circus scenes are among the most dazzling in Ophuls' work. This film shares the high quality and artistic originality of *La Ronde*. Many of the circus scenes here show events in Lola's life symbolically, in terms of almost abstract spectacle. These are often highly ingenious. Very few films use this sort of abstract narration to tell their stories. These sequences are counterpoised with flashbacks, which give a fairly realistic look at events in the heroine's life. The abstract circus scenes and the flashbacks often cover similar material, each giving their own perspective on the events.

The use of circus action to depict the events of Lola's life in an abstract fashion is paralleled by the way the carousal seems to abstractly represent to events between the characters in *La Ronde*.

#### Camera Movement

Ophuls' camera movements in *Lola Montès* often proceed down an elaborate path at the start of a scene. Then at the scene's end, they reverse, following the same path, but in exact reverse order. Such an approach is found in *Sternberg's Blonde Venus* (1932), and in the *Osaka Elegy* (1936) of Sternberg's disciple, *Kenji Mizoguchi*. This device has a number of effects. It adds a sense of closure to a scene: the ending parallels the opening, making a dramatic rhyme. It also adds a sense of fatalism to things: the characters seem doomed to follow a channel they have already laid down. In fact, they undo what they did at the scene's opening, sometimes seeming to cancel it out. The device is also thrifty: it does not waste the elaborate path for the camera that has been laid out, but uses it twice in two different ways. Also, in the days before video and instant replay, it underlined the camera movement for the audience. The repetition helped them remember it later, underscoring each stage of the elaborate movement.

The reversing device has some added meanings in Ophuls, not found in his predecessors. Take the scene where the palace attendants go out for a needle and thread. These start out as an elaborate series of moves through a huge castle. Eventually, the whole tracking shot along the giant palace staircase is repeated in reverse. What starts out as a naturalistic series of moves through the castle turns into a huge "machine". The machine contains the movements of the characters, the movement of the camera, and the building's elaborate architecture. One has a sense of an elaborate, powerful but toy like machine being put into motion. This machine is symbolic of another powerful machine in human lives: sexuality. It recalls a literal machine in *La Ronde* that symbolized and embodied sexual activity, the carousal of the title. Both machines are large, powerful, but elegant, toy like and not forceful. Both move, but neither goes anywhere: the carousel spins, the attendants go down then up the stairs. While this scene is going on, the audience's thoughts are on what is not being shown: Lola is seducing the King, a most willing seductee. The whole scene is wittily conveying sexual passion, and offering a commentary on its mechanism. In this, the scene is close to the episodes of *La Ronde*, each of which is also about a passionate encounter. The staircase scene starts out with naturalistic sounds of the palace servants. These are gradually swallowed up in music: the film plays Lola's theme. This theme recalls the carousal music of *La Ronde*. The music too conveys the effect that the characters are caught up in a beautiful machine. It conveys that sense that something inevitable is happening.

The whole of *Lola Montès* has a playful quality. The endlessly elaborate camera movements show Ophuls' delight in the possibilities of the moving image. Play is undervalued in modern society. Everyone is supposed to be too serious for it. But the playful quality of this film is linked to its extraordinary creativity. The film is an outpouring of artistic riches. This is made possible by Ophuls' playful, creative spirit.

Some of Ophuls' scenes involve very steep heights. This gives a vertiginous effect not found in other directors. For example, the steep outdoor staircase along the water in the opening episode of *La Ronde*; the opera house upward tracking shot along the boxes in *Lola Montès*; the palace staircase scene in the latter movie, and the final circus acrobatic scenes and jump. Even the staircase in *Caught* offers severe dangers to the heroine, who falls down it at the end, like Lola's final plunge.

The term "camera movement", treated literally, tells only half the story of what Ophuls is up to in his films. Ophuls is equally interested in the compositions revealed by his camera, as it moves. Each time the camera assumes some new position on the film set, a different composition is created on the screen. These compositions are at the heart of Ophuls' art.

Many of the compositions in *Lola Montès* seem architectural. They are based on the architecture of the sets. The walls of the rooms, the lines formed by the ceilings, doorways, corners and floors, the banisters of the staircases, make up the principal lines of the compositions of Ophuls' frames. Ophuls is hardly the only director who thinks and composes architecturally. Such directors as *Fritz Lang* and *King Vidor* are also deeply architectural in their compositions, as *Andrew Sarris* has pointed out.

### Common Characteristics of Ophuls' Films

Here is a checklist of features that occur in many of Ophuls' films:

- *Elaborate camera movement, often lateral.*
- *Back and forth camera movements along a path.*
- *Staircases.*
- *Sets on multiple levels.*
- *Episodic and sectional construction of stories.*
- *Avant-garde narrative techniques.*
- *Love stories.*
- *Sophisticated subject matter.*
- *Fallen women.*
- *Men who buy women's sexual favors.*
- *Historical recreations of continental eras and societies.*
- *Entertainment spectacles: fairs, circuses, merry-go-rounds, the carriage ride with unrolling pictures in Letter From an Unknown Woman.*
- *Scenes at opera houses.*
- *Dance scenes.*
- *The presence of tradesmen and servants as supporting players in camera movements.*
- *A playful quality.*
- *Complex direction of actors, expressing nuances of character and romantic feeling.*
- *Irony.*
- *Persistent, symbolic objects.*

Naturally, these do not all occur in every Ophuls film.

### Bibliography

There are many books on Max Ophuls and his work. Lutz Bacher (1941 - ) wrote *The Mobile Mise-En-Scène: A Critical Analysis of the Theory and Practice of Long-Take Camera Movement in the Narrative Film* (a book I have never seen) and *Max Ophuls in the Hollywood Studios* (1996). The latter is a straightforward, enormously detailed biography covering Max Ophuls' stay in America in the 1940's. It is based on production records and a vast number of interviews with Ophuls' colleagues. It mainly covers Ophuls' work on his films and film projects, offering very detailed looks at the progress of all of Ophuls' Hollywood films.

Alan Larson Williams wrote *Max Ophuls and the Cinema of Desire: Style and Spectacle in Four Films, 1948-1955* (Dissertations on Film, 1980) and *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* (Harvard Film Studies) (1992). Susan M. White wrote *The Cinema of Max Ophuls: Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman* (Film and Culture) (1995). White's book looks at the content of Ophuls' work, especially as it relates to such political issues as the role of women in society.

There is a good short survey of Ophuls' films on-line, by [Chris Fujiwara](#). Ophuls was celebrated as one of the great directors in the article by François Truffaut that launched the auteur theory, "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" ("A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema") in Cahiers du Cinéma, No. 31, January 1954. His films were also loved by other early French auteurists, such as Jean-Luc Godard. The wonderful book that launched the auteur theory in the English-speaking world, Andrew Sarris' *The American Cinema* (1968), also did the most to make Ophuls' work visible in that world to a whole generation of film lovers. Sarris placed Ophuls in the top rank of filmmakers, and celebrated Ophuls' work, there and elsewhere, as one of the artistic high points of film history. Without the auteur theory, Ophuls would probably be just another little known, largely forgotten director today. Consequently, everyone who loves Ophuls' work owes a huge debt to auteurists.

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<http://www.stefanzweig.org>

Stefan Zweig est né le 28 novembre 1881 à Vienne, en Autriche. Fils d'un riche industriel israélite, il put mener ses études en toute liberté, n'écoulant que son goût qui l'inclinait à la fois vers la littérature, la philosophie et l'histoire. L'atmosphère cosmopolite de la Vienne impériale favorisa chez le jeune Zweig la curiosité du vaste monde, curiosité qui se transforma vite en boulimie, le poussant vers toutes les premières théâtrales, toutes les nouvelles parutions non encore saluées par la critique, toutes les nouvelles formes de culture. Il y fit ses études, et, à 23 ans, fut reçu docteur en philosophie. Il fit ses débuts avec de jolis poèmes où dominait l'influence de Hofmannsthal et de Rilke, dont il parle longuement dans son autobiographie, "Le Monde d'Hier". Parmi ceux-ci, notons "Cordes d'argent" (1900) et "Les Guirlandes Précoces" (1907). Il obtint également le prix de poésie Bauernfeld, une des plus hautes distinctions littéraires de son pays. Zweig publiait alors une plaquette de vers, une traduction des meilleures poésies de Verlaine, et écrivait des nouvelles. Passionné de théâtre, il se mit bientôt à écrire des drames : "Thersite" (1907), "La Maison au bord de la mer" (1911). Mais Stefan Zweig jugeait que "la littérature n'est pas la vie", qu'elle n'est "qu'un moyen d'exaltation de la vie, un moyen d'en saisir le drame de façon plus claire et plus intelligible". Son ambition était alors "de donner à mon existence l'amplitude, la plénitude, la force et la connaissance, aussi de la lier à l'essentiel et à la profondeur des choses". En 1904, il alla à Paris, où il séjourna à plusieurs reprises et se lia d'amitié avec les écrivains de l'Abbaye, Jules Romains en particulier, avec qui, plus tard, il adapterait superbement le "Volpone", que des dizaines de milliers de Parisiens eurent la joie de voir jouer à l'Atelier, et dont le succès n'est pas encore épuisé aujourd'hui. Infatigable voyageur, toujours en quête de nouvelles cultures, il rendit ensuite visite, en Belgique, à Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), dont il deviendrait l'ami intime, le traducteur et le biographe. Il vécut à Rome, à Florence, où il rencontra Ellen Key (1849-1926), la célèbre authoress suédoise, en Provence, en Espagne, en Afrique. Zweig visita l'Angleterre, parcourut les Etats-Unis, le Canada, Cuba, le Mexique. Il passa un an aux Indes. Ce qui ne l'empêchait pas de poursuivre ses travaux littéraires, sans efforts, pourrait-on penser, puisqu'il dit : "Malgré la meilleure volonté, je ne me rappelle pas avoir travaillé durant cette période. Mais cela est contredit par les faits, car j'ai écrit plusieurs livres, des pièces de théâtre qui ont été jouées sur presque toutes les scènes d'Allemagne et aussi à l'étranger...". Les multiples voyages de Zweig devaient forcément développer en lui l'amour que dès son adolescence il ressentait pour les lettres étrangères, et surtout pour les lettres françaises. Cet amour, qui se transforma par la suite en un véritable culte, il le manifesta par des traductions remarquables de Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, de son ami Verhaeren, dont il fit connaître en Europe centrale les vers puissants et les pièces de théâtre, de Suarès, de Romain Rolland, sur qui il fut l'un des premiers, sinon le premier, à attirer l'attention des pays de langue allemande et qui eut sur lui une influence morale considérable. Lorsque éclata la lère Guerre Mondiale, Zweig, comme son ami Romain Rolland en France, ne put se résigner à sacrifier aux nationalismes déchaînés la réalité supérieure de la culture par-dessus les frontières.

Ardent pacifiste, il fut profondément marqué, ulcéré par cette guerre ; non seulement, sur le coup, elle lui inspira de violentes protestations ("Jérémie", 1916), et même plus tard, comme dans "Ivresse de la Métamorphose", qui ne fut écrit que bien après, vers 1930 (pour la première partie) et 1938 (pour la seconde, qui elle surtout incriminait la guerre), mais c'est cette guerre qui fut à l'origine de ce souci constant de n'être pas dupe des valeurs morales factices d'une société en décadence, qu'on retrouvera dans toutes ses nouvelles. Il explique d'ailleurs tout cela avec ferveur dans "Le Monde d'Hier". Zweig fut toute sa vie un personnage socialement assez bizarre, souvent tenté par le nihilisme. Vers 1915, il se maria avec Friederike von Winternitz. Il quitta Vienne en 1919 et vint s'installer à Salzbourg, d'où il écrivit beaucoup de ses nouvelles les plus célèbres, telles "Vingt-quatre heures de la vie d'une femme", "Amok", "La Confusion des Sentiments", "La Peur"... En moins de dix ans, Zweig, qui naguère n'avait considéré le travail "que comme un simple rayon de la vie, comme quelque chose de secondaire", publiait une dizaine de nouvelles - la nouvelle allemande a souvent l'importance d'un de nos romans - autant d'essais écrits en une langue puissante sur Dostoïevski, Tolstoï, Nietzsche, Freud - dont il était l'intime - Stendhal, etc... qui témoignent de la plus vaste des cultures. Puis suivit la série de ses écrits biographiques, où il acquit d'emblée une certaine autorité avec son "Fouché". Mais hélas ! Hitler et ses nazis s'étaient emparés du pouvoir en Allemagne, et les violences contre les réfractaires s'y multipliaient. Bientôt l'Autriche, déjà à demi nazifiée, serait envahie. Dès 1933, à Munich et dans d'autres villes, les livres du "juif" Zweig étaient brûlés en autodafé. Zweig voyait avec désespoir revenir les mêmes forces brutales et destructrices que lors de la 1ère Guerre Mondiale, sous la forme, pire encore, du nazisme. En 1934, il partit en Angleterre, à Bath. Ce départ suscite d'ailleurs bien des polémiques chez les biographes de Stefan Zweig ; certains soutiennent l'hypothèse très plausible qu'il partit en exil devant l'imminence de la guerre et la montée de l'antisémitisme, tandis que d'autres affirment qu'il est simplement parti approfondir sa recherche sur Marie Stuart, dont il écrivait la biographie. En 1938, il divorça de Friederike, avec qui il garda tout de même des liens d'amitié étroits. Il se remaria ensuite avec une jeune secrétaire anglaise, Charlotte Lotte Elizabeth Altmann, qui peu après tomba gravement malade. Mais depuis l'abandon de sa demeure salzbourgeoise son âme inquiète ne lui laissait plus de repos. Il parcourt de nouveau l'Amérique du Nord, se rend au Brésil, fait de courts séjours en France, en Autriche, où les nazis tourmentent sa mère qui se meurt... Et la guerre éclate. Déjà en 1940, lorsqu'il préparait une conférence sur sa Vienne tant aimée, il avoua à Alzir Hella - ami intime, qui plus tard traduisit nombre de ses oeuvres en français - "Vous serez battus". Zweig voit répandues sur l'Europe les ténèbres épaisses qu'il appréhendait tant. Il quitte définitivement l'Angleterre et gagne les Etats-Unis, où il pense se fixer. Las ! L'inquiétude morale qui le ronge a sapé en lui toute stabilité. Le 15 août 1941, il s'embarque pour le Brésil et s'établit à Pétropolis où il espère encore trouver la paix de l'esprit. En vain. Le 22 février 1942, Stefan Zweig rédige le message d'adieu suivant :

"Avant de quitter la vie de ma propre volonté et avec ma lucidité, j'éprouve le besoin de remplir un dernier devoir : adresser de profonds remerciements au Brésil, ce merveilleux pays qui m'a procuré, ainsi qu'à mon travail, un repos si amical et si hospitalier. De jour en jour, j'ai appris à l'aimer davantage et nulle part ailleurs je n'aurais préféré édifier une nouvelle existence, maintenant que le monde de mon langage a disparu pour moi et que ma patrie spirituelle, l'Europe, s'est détruite elle-même. Mais à soixante ans passés il faudrait avoir des forces particulières pour recommencer sa vie de fond en comble. Et les miennes sont épuisées par les longues années d'errance. Aussi, je pense qu'il vaut mieux mettre fin à temps, et la tête haute, à une existence où le travail intellectuel a toujours été la joie la plus pure et la liberté individuelle le bien suprême de ce monde. Je salue tous mes amis. Puissent-ils voir encore l'aurore après la longue nuit ! Moi je suis trop impatient, je pars avant eux."

Stefan Zweig, Pétropolis, 22-2-42

Le lendemain, Stefan Zweig n'était plus. Pour se soustraire à la vie, il avait ingéré des médicaments, suicide sans brutalité qui répondait parfaitement à sa nature. Sa femme l'avait suivi dans la mort.

Pour en savoir plus...

### **L'Association Stefan Zweig**

L'Association Stefan Zweig est une association loi 1901, qui édite bimestriellement un bulletin avec des actualités (pièces de théâtres, parutions) et des articles sur Zweig, et possède également un fond documentaire important. Pour en savoir plus, cliquez ici.

#### **Les liens Internet**

[www.stefanzweig.at](http://www.stefanzweig.at) (Deutsch) - Stefan Zweig, Ein Österreicher aus Europa - Eine Ausstellung des Kulturamtes der Stadt Salzburg

[www.stefanzweig.de](http://www.stefanzweig.de) (Deutsch)

[http://www.sbg.ac.at/ger/zelewitz/zw98\\_call.htm](http://www.sbg.ac.at/ger/zelewitz/zw98_call.htm) Deutsch, Conferenzium über Zweig in Salzburg (15/10/98)

<http://linz.info.at/students/jakob.auer/index.html> (Deutsch)

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/BRLSI/zweig/zweig.htm> (English - Deutsch)

<http://www.fredonia.edu/library/zweig.asp> Une bibliothèque américaine qui possède un fonds documentaire important sur Zweig. (English)

[http://www.ub.fuberlin.de/internetquellen/fachinformation/germanistik/autoren/multi\\_wxyz/szweig.html](http://www.ub.fuberlin.de/internetquellen/fachinformation/germanistik/autoren/multi_wxyz/szweig.html) Des liens, surtout allemands, autour de Zweig. (Deutsch)

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/3221/zweigbiografia.htm> Biografia u opere (Italiano)

#### **Les livres**

*Le Monde d'Hier - souvenirs d'un Européen*, de Stefan Zweig, aux éditions Belfond et Livre de Poche. Son autobiographie, davantage le récit des tourments de l'Europe que de sa vie.

*Stefan Zweig, Correspondance 1897-1919* aux éditions Grasset.

*Stefan Zweig - l'ami blessé*, de Dominique Bona, aux éditions PLON ; 1996, 360 pages, 139F. Une biographie romancée, très agréable à lire.

*Stefan Zweig - le voyageur et ses mondes*, de Serge Niémetz, traducteur du 'Monde d'Hier', aux éditions Belfond ; 1996, 600 pages, 149F. Plus complète mais plus austère que la précédente.

*Stefan Zweig et la France*, de Robert Dumont, Didier 1967.

*Le théâtre de Stefan Zweig*, de Robert Dumont, PUF 1976.

*Stefan Zweig*, de Donald Prater, La Table Ronde 1988. Une référence. Je crois que la version anglaise, sous-titrée 'European of yesterday' (Oxford 1972) est plus complète.

*Stefan Zweig: eine Bild Biographie*, de Friderike Zweig, Kindler Verlag 1961. Une biographie agrémentée de photos, par la première femme de Zweig.

*L'Avenir de la nostalgie, une vie de Stefan Zweig, de Jean-Jacques Lafaye, Félin 1994.*

*Stefan Zweig, un aristocrate juif au coeur de l'Europe, de Jean-Jacques Lafaye, Félin 1999.*

*Vienne et les juifs 1867-1938, de Steven Beller, Essais et Recherche Nathan 1991.*

*The Jews of Vienna in the age of Franz-Joseph, de Robert S. Wistrich, Oxford University Press 1990.*

*The Jews of Vienna 1867-1914, assimilation and identity, de M. L. Rozenblit, Albany 1983.*

*L'Esprit viennois, William M. Johnston, PUF 1985.*

*Stefan Zweig, a bibliography, de Randolph Klawiter, Chapell Hill 1964.*

*Le magazine littéraire, n°351, février 1997. Un dossier très fourni.*

#### **Zweig in other languages**

*I have often been asked how to find books from Stefan Zweig in English, Spanish or even German ; surprisingly, the writer is better known in France than in these countries. Most of his works have been published though in these languages, but new issues are extremely rare. A good tool would be a work from Randolph Klawiter, Stefan Zweig : an international bibliography, that you might find on interlibrary loan. Here are a few links that might help:*

<http://www.fredonia.edu/library/zweig.asp> Find used books in English

<http://www.abebooks.com> Find used books in several languages, mainly English.

#### **FILMOGRAPHIE**

*De nombreuses œuvres de Zweig ont fait l'objet d'adaptation cinématographique. Cette page est une liste non exhaustive. Les adaptations télévisuelles, nombreuses, sont exclues pour l'instant. Les informations proviennent pour la plupart du site [allocine.fr](http://allocine.fr).*

##### **1933: Brennendes Geheimnis**

- Country: Germany
- Director: Robert Siodmak
- Featuring: Willi Forst, Hans Richter, Lucie Hoeflich, Lotte Steim...
- Note: French title is 'Fin de saison'

##### **1934: Amok**

- Country: France
- Director: Fedor Ozep
- Featuring: Marcelle Chantal, Jean Yonnel, Valery Inkijinoff, Jean Servais, Pierre Magnier...

**1936: *La Peur***

- *Country: France*
- *Director: Viktor Tourjansky*
- *Featuring: Gaby Morlay, Charles Vanel, Suzy Prim, Georges Rigaud...*

**1938: *Marie Antoinette***

- *Country: US*
- *Director: W.S. Van Dyke*
- *Featuring: Norma Shearer, Tyrone Power, John Barrymore, Robert Morley, Anita Louise...*

**1941: *Volpone***

- *Country: France*
- *Director: Maurice Tourneur, Jacques de Baroncelli*
- *Featuring: Harry Baur, Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin, Fernand Ledoux, Jacqueline Delubac.*

**1944: *Amok***

- *Country: Mexico*
- *Director: Antonio Momplet*
- *Featuring: Maria Felix, Julian Soler, Estela Inda...*

**1944: *24 Stunden aus dem Leben einer Frau***

- *Country: Germany*
- *Director: Robert Land*
- *Featuring: Henny Porten, Walter Rilla...*

**1946: *Beware of pity***

- *Country: UK*
- *Director: Maurice Elvey*
- *Featuring: Lilli Palmer, Albert Lieven, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Gladys Cooper, Linden Travers...*

**1948: Letter from an Unknown Woman**

- Country: *US*
- Director: *Max Ophüls*
- Featuring: *Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan, Mady Christians, Marcel Journet, Art Smith...*

**1952: 24 hours of a woman's life**

- Country: *UK*
- Director: *Victor Saville*
- Featuring: *Merle Oberon, Richard Todd, Leo Genn, Joan Dowling, JuneClyde.*

**1954: La Paura**

- Country: *Germany, Italy*
- Director: **Roberto Rossellini**, *Herman Millakowsky*
- Featuring: **Ingrid Bergman**, *Mathias Wieman, Renate Mannhardt, Kurt Kreuger...*
- Note: *French title is 'La Peur'*

**1960: Die Schachnovelle**

- Country: *Germany*
- Director: *Gerd Oswald*
- Featuring: *Curd Jurgens, Claire Bloom, Hansjörg Felmy, Mario Adorf, Albert Lieven...*

**1968: 24 heures de la vie d'une femme**

- Country: *France*
- Director: *Dominique Delouche*
- Featuring: *Danièle Darieux...*

**1988: Burning Secret**

- Country: *UK, Germany*
- Director: *Andrew Birkin*
- Featuring: *Klaus Maria Brandauer, Faye Dunaway, David Eberts, Ian Richardson...*

**1993: Amok**

- *Country: France, Portugal, Germany*
- *Director: Joël Farges*
- *Featuring: Fanny Ardant, Sonia Kirchberger, Bernard Le Coq, Henrique Viana, Andrzej Seweryn...*

**2003: 24 heures de la vie d'une femme**

- *Country: France*
  - *Director: Laurent Bouhnik*
  - *Featuring: Agnès Jaoui, Michel Serrault, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Bérénice Bejo, Clément Van Den Bergh.*
-



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### **IL SOGNO IN LETTERATURA**

Dalla letteratura sul sogno al sogno raccontato in letteratura: fra Eschilo ed Elsa Morante

durata: 2 lezioni di 1 h. e 1/2 netta ciascuna

sede: Aula Didattica della Biblioteca Passerini-Landi

destinatari: classi di **biennio e triennio** e docenti di Istituti superiori

**contenuti:** uno dei primi a teatralizzare il sogno è stato senza dubbio Eschilo, che nelle Erinni mette in scena il famoso sogno del doppio di Clitennestra, ma anche filosofi come Platone ed Aristotele hanno dedicato ai sogni una parte significativa delle loro riflessioni. Compiendo un salto di parecchi secoli citiamo, relativamente al periodo umanistico-rinascimentale, la comparsa di un genere letterario tipicamente di corte, i trattati sul sogno, per approdare infine all'analisi del sogno inteso come microtesto narrativo nel romanzo europeo fra Otto e Novecento, in un periodo in cui si assiste, accanto alla nascita di una diversa concezione del sogno nell'ambito della cultura europea, al contemporaneo e non casuale imporsi di radicali modifiche nelle modalità letterarie di rappresentare i personaggi, lo scorrere del tempo, i moti della coscienza.

Seguendo questo filo conduttore verranno proposti brani delle seguenti opere:

- Eschilo, Erinni
- Marina Beer, Sognare a corte
- Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre
- Elsa Morante, Lettere ad Antonio
- Alexandre Dumas, Il conte di Montecristo

### **Consegna di scrittura (una a scelta):**

1)raccontate in una cartella (=30 righe di 60 caratteri l'una circa) un vostro sogno;

2)inventate un sogno e fatelo raccontare ad un personaggio famoso, es. Lucia Mondella, Anita Garibaldi, Cristoforo Colombo, Socrate, etc.

3)inventate una lettera scritta da un personaggio famoso nella quale racconta ad un altro personaggio famoso un proprio sogno: es. Agnese scrive ad Alessandro Manzoni, Geppetto a Pinocchio, Harry Potter a voi, etc.

