



Trilogy

101 minutes, 1984, UK Director: Terence Davies

Synopsis

Trilogy is a set of three short films, *Children*, which he wrote at Drama School in the early 1970s; *Madonna and Child* which was his graduation film from the National Film School in 1980, and three years later, completed with *Death and Transfiguration*. In the course of these three films we see the emergence of Davies's talent and style, his technique refined and his confidence growing (BFI)

They introduce themes which have continued to dominate Davies's work, sexuality, drudgery, memory, misery and the redemptive power of music and song. The joy is in the execution. Music is used to send the action into sharp relief. His visual sense is also in evidence using unflinching hypnotic close-up. (Rick Burin)

Terence Davies

There are many who believe Terence Davies to be the greatest living English film-maker, his craftsmanship and poetic sensibility without equal. The Trilogy is not so much a catalogue of hardships but a stirring account of human dignity triumphing over emotional and spiritual confusion. To encounter such work is always an unsettling, if exhilarating, experience: it tends to polarise opinion between those who are profoundly moved and those who hate every minute of the experience. The work of Terence Davies, quipped one critic, makes Ingmar Bergman look like Jerry Lewis.

Davies was born in 1945 in Liverpool. His was a deeply unhappy childhood; his family was poor, his father abusive and violent. He was educated in the pernicious traditions of Roman Catholicism and in his youth struggled to come to terms with his sexual feelings at a time when homosexuality was an offence against God, the family, society and the law. All but two of the films Davies has made are set in the Liverpool of his youth, working through the themes which shaped his progress into adulthood. He is greatly influenced by T S Eliot's "Four Quartets" – a meditation on time and memory – and in the medium of film Davies has found a way to evoke his own memories of the past and his fears for the future.

He recalls his amazement when he was given the £3,000 it cost to place a recording of Doris Day singing "It all depends on you" over the opening sequence of the third film in the trilogy; the first two films have barely any soundtrack at all. And it is by that third film, "Death and Transfiguration", that the fully fledged filmmaker is born who would go on to make the two feature length masterpieces that followed: *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*. For unlike others mining the experiences of their hard-bitten youths and with wider polemics in mind, like Ken Loach, Davies works best when he is free to juxtapose contrasting images and to counterpoise these images with music. His films are not descriptions of a life, nor do they rail against its injustices. They are meditations on childhood, middle age and death. (Dave Boyer)