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H-France Review Vol. 24 (April 2024), No. 41

Moraly, Yehuda. *Revolution in Paradise: Veiled Representations of Jewish Characters in the Cinema of Occupied France*. Translated by Gila Kessous. Edited by Rona May-Ron. Sussex Academic Press, 2020. xiii + 276 pp. Notes, references, filmography, index. \$60.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-84519-719-3.

Review by Abigail E. Lewis, University of Notre Dame.

Yehuda Moraly's book, *Revolution in Paradise*, rejects the narrative that French film during the Occupation skirted and even undermined the politics of the Vichy Regime and the German occupation authorities.[1] Film production during the Occupation was not, Moraly argues, an apolitical space that allowed for creativity and resistance. Rather, these films reflected and asserted the power and ideology of the Third Reich and the Vichy Regime, especially their antisemitism. Through his close reading of several French films written and shot during the Occupation, including the classic *Les Enfants du Paradis*, Moraly shows that French films presented veiled Jewish characters and antisemitic messaging. These images drew directly from both direct wartime propaganda as well as classic antisemitism, which Moraly draws back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for example, the Dreyfus Affair and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion). The book's point is to unearth these veiled messages to show how French film participated in the production and circulation of antisemitism during the war, and it does this through an analysis of the films' content and context. This book gives readers a history of film production under the Occupation and a better understanding of French antisemitism and its circulation in visual media, including film, exhibitions, plays, press, cartoons, and other forms.

A key strength of the book is the author's insistence on viewing a film's meaning within its particular historical context. Moraly analyzes the content of these films in close relationship to their context over time, including but not limited to the histories of the actors, the production companies and financiers, the editing, and the film's reception over time. Each of the films in the book, including the blockbuster *Les Enfants du Paradis*, was written, shot, edited, and shown as France's political situation vacillated drastically between 1940 and 1945. Critically, each of these films found continued popularity in France after the war. For many, the veiled antisemitic narratives and symbols that Moraly identifies were understood by a postwar French public as portraying French victimization by the Germans during the Occupation. These films' messages about the evil forces behind France's demise and her triumph over them could be celebrated in a newly liberated France. For *Les Enfants du Paradis*, Moraly argues that part of its popularity stemmed from its actual postwar editing and director Marcel Carné's framing of the film around his resistance. *Les Enfants du Paradis*, which was conceived in 1942 and shot during the Occupation, was only shown in 1945. The final version of the film was heavily edited from its original form, missing many of the more insidious antisemitic messages that the film was

originally intended to have. Moreover, Carné argued that he made the film under the nose of the Nazis and included Jewish artists, at risk to his own life.

Moraly fixates not only on revealing the subtle antisemitic messaging of these films, but also on searching for the *intended* meaning of the films. He does so by analyzing the films in context, including comparing scenes from the original screenplays and, in some lucky cases, unearthing cut scenes found in the archives. Moraly links what he portrays as a revisionist history of wartime film to what he refers to (in the title of chapter two, for instance) as a “war on memory,” which included the actual postwar revision of these films for a postwar audience and newly Gaullist France.

Moraly’s book is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes three films that were produced during the Occupation, *Le camion blanc* (Léo Joannon, 1943), *L’éternel retour* (Jean Cocteau, 1943), and *Les visiteurs du soir* (Marcel Carné, 1942), to trace the broader antisemitic tropes and narratives present in each film. Moraly notes that in 1941 Goebbels advocated for the need for veiled propaganda; direct propaganda, after all, only preached to the choir rather than converting a wider audience. Moraly then reads the veiled messages in these films alongside direct antisemitic propaganda going back to the nineteenth century. He identifies a shared trope across these films of the Jews as an evil, omnipresent force at the origin of France’s victimization and plight. This narrative takes different forms across the films that he analyzes, even including a Roma character in *Le camion blanc*, but Moraly argues that at heart, these references pulled from classic antisemitism. It is important to note that none of the films under consideration are propaganda films, and they do not necessarily mention the word Jew directly; however, they consistently portray the Jew as an “evil stranger” (p. 3), at the origin of world crises and France’s particular situation—its occupation—that had to be eliminated. [2] Moreover, in emphasizing the history of these references and their ubiquity in occupied France, Moraly hints that these veiled themes were recognizable to the French public as castigating Jews.

The book’s first section lays the contextual groundwork and introduces important figures for understanding Moraly’s close reading of *Les Enfants du Paradis*, directed by Carné. In section one, we learn about the role of the German production house, Continental, and its Italian counterpart, Discina, in financing and producing many of these films. Moraly also establishes the collaborationist history and at times overtly antisemitic sentiments of key individuals working on the films under consideration. This includes the actress Arletty, who was at the top of her career in 1943, a fact which alone suggests her embrace of collaboration. Moraly notes that Arletty defended collaborationist and antisemitic friends, who faced trial after 1944. Another important figure is Robert Le Vigan, who was set to play the Old Clothes Man in *Les Enfants du Paradis* and harbored open and virulent antisemitic beliefs. Le Vigan fled to Germany when the Vichy government went into exile in 1944. He was later charged with collaboration and received *dégradation nationale* (the loss of one’s civil rights) and ten years of forced labor. Moraly insinuates that films including the work of actors such as Le Vigan cannot be seen as anything but collaborationist and antisemitic. Part one concludes with an analysis of Carné’s earlier film, *Les visiteurs du soir* (1942). The film has been read as an “analogy” (p. 80) of France under occupation and as presenting a resistance to Nazi occupation and Vichy. But, as Moraly notes, the Vichy regime elected to send the film to French embassies as pro-French propaganda. The film, as Moraly argues, presents a message that the “war, therefore, is a Jewish war caused by Jews. The weakening of France, the brutal, shocking defeat was caused by these ‘visitors’ who have sapped

the country's forces" (p. 87). Moraly uses this film to establish that Carné's larger body of wartime work also presented similar veiled antisemitic narratives.

In section one, Moraly teaches readers how to read these films beyond their overt content and to consider their history as a lens into their potential intended meanings. In part two, Moraly dissects *Les Enfants du Paradis* from myriad angles. Moraly scrupulously analyzes the content of the film, its writing and adaptation by Jacques Prévert, its funding as a Franco-Italian collaboration with Discina, its actors (including Arletty), its editing, and its postwar history, including the stories that Carné told about the production. Moraly well establishes that the wartime history of the film, especially its collaborationist ties and potentially antisemitic narratives, were whitewashed by the time of its premiere in 1945. Rather, *Les Enfants du Paradis* seemed to be created in "heroic times" (p. 1).

The film premiered on March 9, 1945, at a gala organized for the benefit of soldiers wounded in World War II. The film's credits include the names of two Jewish artists, set designer Alexandre Trauner and composer Joseph Kosma, and emphasize that they worked on the film surreptitiously through an explicit statement: "collaboration in clandestinity" (p. 1). Carné and Prévert valiantly refused to renounce their Jewish collaborators during the Occupation, and at risk of death, worked with them covertly.

Moraly argues that not only was Carné's insistence on the participation of the two Jewish artists drastically overblown, but the film was also significantly edited to remove an antisemitic storyline: the murder of the Old Clothes Man as the ending of the film. Moraly's reading of the film, which aims to unveil its meanings and its postwar revision, relies on reading the gaps in the final product against original versions of the screenplay and cut scenes in the archives.

The most important figure of contention in the book, and an example of a veiled Jewish character, is the Old Clothes Man. The Old Clothes Man, originally set to be played by the aforementioned Le Vigan, Moraly argues, "amalgamates the largest quantity of stereotypical Jewish connotations: his name, his job, his physique, his hypocritical saccharinity, his sham morality—a facade masking an abysmal wickedness" (p. 197). Moraly discovers twelve deleted scenes featuring the Old Clothes Man including, most significantly, his murder as the ending of the film. The Old Clothes Man goes from pivotal in the 1942 screenplay to marginal in the 1944/1945 production. The missing plotlines included the progression of his stereotypical vileness to an ending with his murder as the resolution of the film. Thus the central plot of the film, and its point, changed as German power began to fall across Europe. Moraly identifies these deletions by reading the film against Prévert's screenplay, a play by Sasha Guitry (another well-known collaborationist figure) that inspired the character and deleted scenes that he found in the archives. This point shows how film, in particular, is not a static cultural product. Scholars interested in cultural production and collective memory might look to the history of wartime film to analyze changing attitudes towards collaboration and political commitments between 1940 and 1945.

Moraly makes several important contributions to the history of film and cultural production during the Occupation. First, the book highlights the ubiquity of cultural antisemitism in France before, during, and after the Occupation. More so than outing these films as secretly antisemitic, he shows that these antisemitic references, characters, and larger narratives were so ubiquitous, so commonplace, that their connections to historic antisemitic narratives could be overlooked

and dispelled. Unlike *Les Enfants du Paradis*, most of the films under consideration did not have their antisemitic narratives removed, and yet, they could still be read as artifacts of resistance after the Liberation. Second, he highlights how Pétainist and collaborationist narratives that not only blamed Jews for France's fall and victimization but also called for the cultural regeneration of France sat well with postwar audiences in Gaullist France. In this way, there was a certain portability of propagandistic Vichy and Nazi narratives of victimization, triumph, and regeneration from wartime into the postwar period. While Moraly tracks the intentional revisionism of *Les Enfants du Paradis*, both in terms of the actual revision of the film and the whitewashing of its history, most of the films under consideration became postwar hits without such blatant intervention. This suggests that in the realm of film, and other forms of cultural production, Liberation was not necessarily the sudden break that it was purported to be. Not only did film productions carry well from wartime into postwar, but their narratives and plotlines found success among postwar audiences.

Finally, the book highlights the history of film production under the Nazi Occupation and demonstrates the importance of analyzing content and context over time. To understand these films today and what they have meant to viewers, we must consider their changing meanings over time as part of their story. While Moraly is interested in unveiling their intended meaning and he does so by dissecting their histories, the book also points to at least some ambiguity in their meanings as they've been interpreted in different ways over time. The book highlights how these films, alongside the arts and other cultural products, may not have singular meanings. Exploring their ambiguity and the stories behind them opens the possibility of telling much more complicated histories of daily life during the Occupation. In this way, film, and other cultural products such as photography or art, can provide a lens into the ambiguities of Occupation and the vagaries of postwar memory in particular ways.

## NOTES

[1] On this point, Moraly references work by Paul Léglise, Roger Régent, Raymond Chirat, Georges Sadoul, Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, Jacques Siclier, François Garçon, Evelyn Ehrlich, Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, Edward Baron Turk, and Pierre Darmon.

[2] Alcoloumbre, Thierry J. (2021) "Revolution in Paradise: Veiled Representations of Jewish Characters in the Cinema of Occupied France," *Journal of Religion & Film*: 25: Iss. 2, Article 11.

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ISSN 1553-9172