



# KINGS AND QUEEN

**A film by  
Arnaud Desplechin**

**A Wellspring Release**

150 minutes  
In French, with English subtitles  
Dolby SRD

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## KINGS AND QUEEN

KINGS AND QUEEN is the exhilarating new film from Arnaud Desplechin (*My Sex Life... or How I Got Into an Argument, Esther Kahn*). Starring two of France's greatest young actors, Emmanuelle Devos (*Read My Lips*) and Mathieu Amalric (*My Sex Life*), KINGS AND QUEEN expertly mixes comedy, tragedy and melodrama to tell the emotionally gripping story of the intersecting lives of two former lovers. The film was nominated for seven Cesars in France (including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Actress), where it continues to be a box office hit, and was an audience and critical favorite at the 2004 Venice, Toronto and New York film festivals.

Nora (Emmanuelle Devos) is a 35-year-old art gallery director and single mother struggling to rise above tragic circumstances—a late husband, a failed second marriage and a lover's suicide—through her successful career and marriage to a wealthy businessman. Ismaël (Mathieu Amalric), her ex-husband, is a disheveled, neurotic musician who descends into a comic nightmare when he is mistakenly committed to a mental hospital. He faces off against the steely clinic psychiatrist (Catherine Deneuve, in a scene-stealing cameo), but his eccentric antics—including an in-house pharmacy raid with his drug-addicted lawyer—earn a ten-day stay that may leave him worse off than when he entered. On discovering that her father is terminally ill and fearing for the future of her young son, Nora tracks down Ismaël at the institution to enlist his help. A series of intimate revelations and reversals further connects these disparate lives, offering several enigmas, as well as a rich examination of love, memory, mental health, and family responsibility.

Director Arnaud Desplechin draws inspiration from mythology, Shakespeare and the grand novels of the past to tell this very modern tale of human relationships. The bold sensibility on display in KINGS AND QUEEN—fearlessly traversing between heart-wrenching drama and burlesque hilarity—firmly establishes him as one of the most exciting young directors working in cinema today.

## Synopsis

“Life is full of surprises. I’ve loved four men and killed two.” — Nora, *Rois et Reine*.

Nora (Emmanuelle Devos) is a 35-year-old art gallery manager living in Paris while her elderly father in Grenoble watches her 10-year-old son, Elias, for the summer. Twice divorced, Nora will soon tie the knot with Jean-Jacques, an icy Parisian professional who doesn’t connect with Elias. But first she must contend with a series of obstacles that threaten to keep her from true happiness, not to mention marriage: first up is her father, a glum writer who is hospitalized with an ulcer and diagnosed with terminal bowel cancer; he has less than a week to live. Nora races to locate her younger sister Chloé, an itinerant drug addict who lives off of handouts from their long-suffering father.

Meanwhile, Nora’s second husband Ismael Vuillard (Mathieu Almaric) finds himself mired in similar melodrama. A neurotic viola player who keeps a noose in his living room and tries in vain to dodge the tax collector, Ismael is visited by orderlies who whisk him off to a sanitarium for the mentally ill, where he’s been admitted by a third-party request – his own sister, Elizabeth, has ratted him out for being mentally unstable. Supremely anguished and overburdened with a doctorate in philosophy, Ismael confides to his glamorous hospital-appointed shrink (Catherine Deneuve) that he believes women do not possess a soul. Men live to die, he tells the analyst, and women live to live. Ismael is denied release from the sanitarium.

Nora, increasingly tested by her father Louis’s rapidly declining health, is visited in reverie by the ghost of her first husband Pierre, who left Nora pregnant and alone before a sudden gunshot death that is later revealed to have possibly occurred at the hands of Nora herself. And so the drama continues: Nora has fought in vain to declare Elias at the local city hall but because Pierre is dead, the state will only recognize Elias as a fatherless child. Thus she sets out to convince Ismael to adopt Elias...

But Ismael’s troubles have become seemingly insurmountable. He summons his lawyer, an erratic character in his own right, who races to Ismael’s side in an effort to clear his name and facilitate his release from the sanitarium. When Nora learns of Ismael’s plight, she picks up Elias from Jean-Jacques’ country house and races to Paris from Grenoble in order to help Ismael secure a release – as Elias’s recognition at City Hall requires a sane adoptive father. But when she arrives, he’s slipped out of the hospital thanks to the lawyer’s efforts – only to find himself re-incarcerated shortly thereafter.

Nora visits Ismael at the sanitarium, where he’s hooked up with a suicidal woman named Arielle. Nora tries to persuade her former husband to adopt Elias, but Ismael is still emotionally distraught over the failure of their marriage. Nora is forced to return with Elias to Grenoble when her father’s health declines. She’s soon visited by her father’s publisher, who drops off the galley proofs of Louis’s soon-to-be-published memoir, which Louis sets about correcting on his deathbed.

Ismael, meanwhile, receives good news: He's free to leave the sanitarium, only he's lost his apartment to the courts because of his tax debt. More bad news surfaces when Ismael learns that it wasn't Elizabeth who arranged to have him incarcerated – it was his musical colleague Christian, who wanted Ismael replaced for a studio recording. After confronting Christian, Ismael learns he's been thrown out of the quartet and denied his beloved viola.

Louis, meanwhile, dies of respiratory failure after Nora has surreptitiously administered him an overdose of painkillers to ease his suffering. While packing up his possessions with Chloe, Nora reads the final draft of Louis's memoir, in which he refers to Nora as egotistical and declares his undying hatred for her. She burns the offensive pages before Chloe discovers them. Soon after the funeral, Nora marries Jean-Jacques in her father's home.

Ismael travels to the provinces to secure his childhood viola, discovering yet more drama including a robbery in his father's grocery store and the unsuspecting news that a cousin will be included in his siblings' inheritance monies. He receives news that Arielle has tried to commit suicide again. He returns to Paris, offering to share his life with the unstable woman. But Arielle has elected to move to Besancon, where she'll be incarcerated all over again.

Ismael decides to tell Elias that he will not be assuming the role of his adoptive father even though he took care of the child for nearly seven years – he loved Nora once, but he loves her less now, especially since they are apart. He offers Elias advice for the future, then bids farewell before returning the child to his mother and admitting that he's found peace at last.

## **The Filmmakers**

Director	ARNAUD DESPLECHIN
Screenplay	ARNAUD DESPLECHIN, ROGER BOHBOT
Director of Photography	ERIC GAUTIER
Production Designer	DAN BEVAN
Sound	JEAN-PIERRE LAFORCE, CHRISTIAN MONHEIM
Wardrobe	NATHALIE RAOUL
Make-up	THI LOAN N'GUYEN
Editor	LAURENCE BRIAUD

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PROCIREP

## **Filmography: Arnaud Desplechin**

2004 KINGS AND QUEEN (ROIS ET REINE)  
2003 IN THE COMPANY OF MEN (DANS LA COMPAGNIE DES  
HOMMES)  
2000 ESTHER KAHN  
1996 MY SEX LIFE... OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT  
(COMMENT JE ME SUIS DISPUTE... MA VIE SEXUELLE)  
1992 LA SENTINELLE  
1991 LA VIE DES MORTS

## **Filmography: Emmanuelle Devos**

- 2005 THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED – Jacques Audiard  
2004 GILLES' WIFE – Frédéric Fontaine  
BIENVENUE EN SUISSE – Léa Fazer  
2003 THE RED KNIGHT – Helene Angel  
IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL... - Valeria Bruni Tedeschi  
SMALL CUTS – Pascal Bonitzer  
2002 NEAREST TO HEAVEN – Tonie Marshall  
THE ADVERSARY – Nicole Garcia  
READ MY LIPS – Jacques Audiard  
2000 OUCH! – Sophie Fillières  
ESTHER KAHN – Arnaud Desplechin  
LES CENDRES DU PARADIS – Dominique Crévecour  
VIVE NOUS! – Camille de Casabianca  
DAD ON THE RUN– Dante Desarthe  
1999 MAYBE – Cedric Klapish  
LIFE DOESN'T SCARE ME – Noémie Lvovsky  
1997 ARTEMISIA – Agnes Merlet  
LE DEMENAGEMENT – Olivier Doran  
1996 ANNA OZ – Eric Rochant  
MY SEX LIFE...OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT – Arnaud  
Desplechin  
1995 FORGET ME – Noemie Lvovsky  
1994 THE PATRIOTS – Eric Rochant  
1993 SAUVE-TOI – Jean-Marc Fabre  
1992 THE SENTINEL – Arnaud Desplechin  
1991 LA VIE DES MORTS – Arnaud Desplechin

## **Filmography: Mathieu Amalric**

- 2003 A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES - Gilles Bourdos  
MY CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT - Denis Dercourt
- 2002 SPECIAL DELIVERY - Jeanne Labrune  
LULU – Jean-Henri Roger  
SHIPWRECKED ON ROUTE D17 - Luc Moullet  
MONDAY MORNING – Otar Iosseliani
- 2001 BOYHOOD LOVES - Yves Caumon
- 2000 ROLAND’S PASS - Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu  
THE MARCORELLE AFFAIR - Serge Le Peron  
FALSE SERVANT - Benoît Jacquot
- 1999 FAREWELL, HOME SWEET HOME - Otar Iosseliani  
TROIS PONTS SUR LA RIVIERE - Jean-Claude Biette
- 1998 ALICE AND MARTIN - André Techine  
LATE AUGUST, EARLY SEPTEMBER - Olivier Assayas  
ONLY GOD SEES ME - Bruno Podalydes
- 1997 GENEALOGIES OF A CRIME - Raoul Ruiz
- 1996 MY SEX LIFE... OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT - Arnaud  
Desplechin  
DIARY OF A SEDUCER – Daniele Dubroux
- 1992 THE SENTINEL – Arnaud Desplechin

### **Director**

- 2002 PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
2000 WIMBLEDON STAGE  
1997 MANGE TA SOUPE

## **The Cast**

Mathieu Amalric	ISMAËL
Emmanuelle Devos	NORA
Valentin Lelong	ELIAS
Jean-Paul Roussillon	ABEL
Maurice Garrel	JENNSSENS
Nathalie Boutefeu	CHLOÉ
Magali Woch	ARIELLE
Catherine Deneuve	MME. VASSET
Hippolyte Girardot	MR MAMANNE, THE LAWYER
Noémie Lvovsky	ELIZABETH
Elsa Wolliaaston	DOCTOR DEVEREUX, THE PSYCHOANALYST

## Director's Statement

When I started to write *KINGS AND QUEEN*, I couldn't stop thinking about those women destined for tragedy I had discovered as a child in Hitchcock movies. I recalled *REBECCA* and *MARNIE* of course, and above all Ingrid Bergman in *NOTORIOUS* and *UNDER CAPRICORN*. Women tormented by problems who manage to overcome them on their own... like sinister fairy tales. How giddy it made me feel to discover those grand and mysterious heroines! Those were the first female movie characters I came to love.

A woman, alone, finds herself by chance in something resembling a Hawthorne story: a strange town, ghosts from the past, and then... misfortune... her name is Nora.

She needed a companion to accompany her on her solitary, tragic journey: a comic figure by the name of Ismael Vuillard. A Shakespearean comedy or a throwback to a Frank Tashlin flick? We gave him every fault known to man, and with each passing day he became more delightful.

During shooting we simply threw caution to the wind, both in terms of melancholy and humor. Enough of timid movies! We were to film fiery scenes every single day. Both ludicrously comical and violently tragic.

The face, the skin, of Emmanuelle Devos illuminated our plans. I stood in trepidation of her fragility, her softness, her inner need for peace, and of the nightmares she was to face. And then there's Mathieu Amalric's "Ismael" – everything we forbid ourselves from doing, being.

A two-part film. Or rather, two films glued together. A woman who lives in her memories, and a man who goes from one absurd adventure to another. Nora, so bright and free, becomes entrapped by what happens to her. Ismael, who feels he's imprisoned, marches unwittingly towards freedom.

During filming I dreamed that these two films of opposing genre would be able to join to help a fatherless son, Elias. And that's what happened, like the sun between the clouds. A minor miracle.

A woman's destiny in an hour and five minutes. Another hour for the labors of Hercules. And ten minutes to save a child. We charge as fast as possible along all the fairy tales from which our lives are woven.

## Interviews

### Excerpted from LIBÉRATION

**What is it that's made you two seek each other out and to work together over the last fifteen years?**

Emmanuelle Devos: We don't see each other often, but we write each other letters when I'm working on a film, if there's a new baby or an unhappy event. He sends me books, poems. Yeats, recently.

Arnaud Deplechin: She tells me what books I should read, she makes me lists.

ED: Since *Kings and Queen* I'm less afraid to call Arnaud; he always intimidated me. He had a certain distance, a sort of modesty.

AD: It's because I'm often behind. I work a long time on my screenplays, on editing; there are whole months when I'm immersed. So I isolate myself and then I don't dare emerge any more. I don't call much, I hardly see anyone. But I've always been loyal and Emmanuelle has been there.

ED: Sometimes at the last minute, like on *Esther Kahn* and the part of the proud Italian woman. He called me four days before.

AD: "I can't find anyone to play Silvia. I've tried Italian women, dancers... I'm sure you'll be great: do you want to do it?"

ED: I said "Yes," immediately. It was a way of thanking him while helping him out. That's what we do; we regularly help each other out.

**Is he the filmmaker that *made* you?**

ED: Not made, that's not the right word. He's not Pygmalion. But he taught me my craft.

AD: She did too. It was a worthwhile exercise.

ED: When I work with Arnaud, it's as if he were protecting me. When I'm on other sets, sometimes if I'm uncomfortable, I think about what he has said to me, about what he would say: I feel stronger.

### **You were “Desplechin’s Actress...”**

AD: Not so much. It’s really Noémie Lvovsky who launched Emmanuelle.

ED: But I’m proud of this lineage. Does it suit me?

AD: Emmanuelle taught me a lot about my filmmaker’s craft. If I have become an “actor’s director” it’s thanks to her -- her gestures, her intonations, her way of moving -- she transmitted all that to me. She also passed along technical things: the way Jacques Audiard does fades to black in front of the lens with his hand with a black glove. She observes things. On a soccer team, they’d say she’s a really technical player.

ED: On a shoot, I often look in the frame, I know how to load film in the magazine, check the gate. But I have no desire to direct. The camera as an object interests me. I find the journey of the film beautiful. It’s my script girl side.

AD: That too is where we meet. I love everything technical on a shoot. I find it relaxing.

### **Do you follow Emmanuelle Devos’ career?**

AD: I’ve seen all her films. I get very jealous, especially when she does really good things. I like the short on the train in *Bienvenue en Suisse*: at that precise moment, in the course of those seconds, I loved the kind of woman she was. In *Rencontre avec le dragon [The Red Knight]*, it’s when she walks off into the fern. I get depressed. I could never do that. I say to myself that I need to work harder still. I don’t think I’d be able to hate a film that Emmanuelle acted in... I might feel distant from it, but not liking it? No. I see so much of the person she is, when she’s on the screen. I immediately think: I’m interested in this girl.

### **How did you offer the part of Nora in *Kings & Queen* to her?**

AD: In a letter, as usual. A very awkward letter this time, because the part was supposed to be played by Juliette Binoche and I was not comfortable with this. I wasn’t sure that the part was right for her with relation to what had come before. *Sur mes lèvres [Read My Lips]* especially, that had shown her to the public. I think a great deal about her career and I was afraid of being rude or of dragging her into a film that was madness. That might end up being one film too many for us together.

ED: I was very happy with the letter ... it should have gone down like this. But I was very afraid of the very violent -- the too violent -- part. Almost a year passed between the letter and when shooting began. This gave me time to tame the character, to channel the violence and to get used to the idea of playing her.

AD: We saw each other at a café. I explained precise points. We talked about philosophy, about morals. The character of Nora became a measure of our understanding:... it showed where we were in our story. It was period of strength and of good work.

ED: At the beginning I was very jealous of the other principal role, played by Mathieu Armalric. He's such a funny character. Mathieu and I met. He said "But your part is so noble, sublime..." I ended up believing him. Usually I was the kooky, funny one and suddenly I was a lady. I was afraid of being constrained: the daughter of a dying father, the mother of a fatherless child, the fiancée of a bourgeois. These were not sentiments I wanted to show at this particular time in my life. When I arrived on the set, I definitely wanted to take a revenge on Arnaud, on Mathieu... and then it became very delightful.

### **How did you prepare for the shoot?**

ED: It was reassuring that Arnaud knows me and that he works a lot. I knew that he wrote my part well, I just had to let things come. I work too. I came with some ideas. Even if sometimes I was wrong. The experience of *Sur mes lèvres* was useful to me because Audiard takes everything apart and asks lots of questions, as if I'd been a co-screenwriter. I'm more willing, more confident. I feel less like a cork floating in the current.

AD: Emmanuelle likes to act, which is important on a shoot. She displays the opposite of what I call "a refusal to act" which annoys everyone on a set. Like on a playing field when a player plays personally. Emmanuelle's porous nature has changed so that on set she can pour her own ideas into a character, her references and the director's remarks. This synthesis is her gift. She can simultaneously accept and propose. I give very few indications because I like it when things crystallize on the fly.

### **Were there things that inspired you? Role-models?**

AD: Right before the shoot I gave Emmanuelle the DVD of *Bringing out the Dead* by Martin Scorsese for the Patricia Arquette character in it. How she positions herself to speak, to say "No father, this bastard" for example. There was also Jennifer Jason Leigh, or Gena Rowlands in *Gloria*. Nora is a little bull.

ED: Arnaud also gave me a CD of Henry Mancini musicians for the "light gravity." But very quickly it was replaced by a Madonna CD. I have one or two CD's for each film, like a music that accompanies me. Sometimes, I'll hum, even during takes. Each film is linked to a music.

AD: On the set of *Kings and Queen*, we had a ghetto-blaster and about twenty CD's with the music often blaring. A lot of jazz.

**Nora is terribly humiliated in the film. How did you manage this?**

ED: I really take a beating, but I'm Arnaud's *thing*, he can do what he wants with me (*laughter*)...

AD: The letter from the dying father to his daughter, who tells her she has betrayed him, that she has socially abased herself, that he wishes she would die in his place, is also a love-letter.

ED: At the time, it didn't come through. I had a hard time admitting it. It was only when I saw the finished film that I was able to admit it. But Nora remains a character that I have a hard time identifying with. It's hard to take.

AD: There is a form of moral incest between the father and the daughter. It is terrible. Like Erland Josephson and his daughter in Bergman's *Saraband*. This letter could not have been justified were it not for the way Maurice Garrel found of uttering its words.

ED: I was there when we recorded the scene. I wanted to see it. It tore me up. The camera would come close to him in an immense and black space, as if he was speaking to me from closer and closer by. That is when I understood the film. I had suddenly become the tragic heroine. Nora, is Berenice, Medea. Monstrous and grandiose like Antigone.

AD: Emmanuelle was able to do this with a light touch... nobility is to live through tragedy with lightness, almost with futility. Antigone through the eyes of Audrey Hepburn.

END

## Excerpted from TÉLÉRAMA

***Kings and Queen* is the most direct and accessible of your films, with almost a soap feeling...**

AD: That's what I like in cinema. Already, *Comment je me suis disputé [In the Company of Men]*, was a sort of sitcom, with friends, couples, break-ups. At the time, I could not pretend I had not seen and liked "Seinfeld" or the first few episodes of "Friends". I love long narratives full of ups and downs. In another register, *Fanny and Alexander* by Bergman or Comencini's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* are like the series that I dreamed of watching on television during Christmas vacations when I was twelve years old.

**Isn't this also a way of approaching the public at a time where *auteur* cinema is in a difficult position?**

AD: It's true that for films like mine the context is less supportive than it was ten years ago. But above all what is new is that absolutely everyone nowadays is obsessed by the box office. This wasn't talked about much with regard to Truffaut or Godard, who, nonetheless, are the ones who shaped our imagination. Inversely, no one in 1972 was wondering why people like *Angélique* or *Bernard Borderie*, sold so many tickets.

**Another characteristic of *Kings and Queen* is that it borrows from several genres...**

AD: I wanted to compare two trajectories that did not seem comparable, the separate stories of a man and of a woman, linked only by a child. Nora, played by Emmanuelle Devos, believes she is free and finds herself imprisoned in the family home, in Grenoble. Ismael, played by Mathieu Amalric, believes he is imprisoned in the psychiatric hospital, when, in fact, he is moving toward freedom. Moving back and forth between the two of them, I hoped for a film that was in turn a burlesque farce in the manner of Mel Brooks or Harold Lloyd and a Hitchcockian melodrama... but one in which someone could really imagine the heroine engaged in a dark fairy tale, such as a Hoffman or Hawthorne tale, and the man to be in a Shakespearean comedy. I wanted the film to constantly skip from one register to the other.

**At the moment of writing the characters did you have precise points of reference?**

For Ismael, we were thinking, with my co-screenwriter Roger Bohbot, of Chaplin or of the Woody Allen of the early films. For Nora, *Marnie* to Hitchcock's *Notorious*, as well as Woody Allen's *Another Woman*. Women who must undergo enormous trials in order to be free. Women's roles in French cinema tend to be reductive. Our actresses play far

too many sweet sisters. If a woman on screen is depressed it's for minor reasons. Why not show a woman in her glory, who conquers herself?

**There is in all your films a great deal of cruelty and moral violence, but in *Kings and Queen* even more than in the others...**

AD: We forget the tragic and upsetting side of our lives too often. This is why we go to movies: to relive those strong emotions that we know. The decision to move toward melodrama was intentional, through the character of Nora, who knows the price of lightness, because she has traversed horror. Ismael has known nothing. He is convinced he is a tragic figure; he is stuck in a desire to be tragic which never materializes. In exploring both the burlesque highs and lows of Ismael, and the destiny of Nora, we discover their life force. What to do when you are faced with the very worst? Well, they both remain valiant, Ismael in a derisory mode, which I find very sporting, and Nora, who takes up the course of her existence as if nothing had happened. Whoa... they survive!

**Did you face certain financial constraints making this film?**

The budget is never a problem. It helps you be lucid. It imposes constraints. But the decision-making centers, that is to say television, only does what it wants. It's producers that suffer first. My films don't end up being very expensive because I don't want to shoot on stages. It scares me too much. If a scene I've planned doesn't work, I want to be able to change everything. Outside, you can invent something else, whereas on a stage it's impossible. My temperament is my luck.

**Since your first film the landscape of French cinema has changed a lot. What is your analysis of this evolution?**

We are back in a situation that resembles the early 80's with a fissure between what is referred to as majority cinema, that still loses a lot of money, and independent cinema whose margins are ever more reduced. As a viewer, I've always refused this fissure. When I arrived in Paris, I went to see the films of Marguerite Duras without considering them to be art films. Duras' *Le Camion* which makes me think of Sofia Coppola or of Wong Kar-wai. I'm certain you could show it to a 16-year-old and he'd be moved. Today we're back at this damaging fracture for intelligent cinema as well as for the mass public movies. The system prevents thoughtful films from moving towards entertainment and also the inverse, it prevents beauty and intelligence from finding their way into popular films. And yet a popular film that interrogates us about our life is such a great thing! That there should, on the one hand, be adult films and on the other, immature films, is not my idea of cinema. *Notting Hill* is not an auteur film, but it moves me, for the better I hope.

## **Excerpted from LE FIGARO**

### **Is life a giant chessboard?**

I wanted to show that there can be immensity, majesty and a vertiginous quality in our life while we believe there's nothing extraordinary about them. In *Kings and Queen* there are two parallel stories, that of Nora and that of Ismael which finally come unraveled on the same chessboard. Nora will undergo all her trials, alone. She has to come to exist by herself, much like the Nora of Ibsen's *Dollhouse*, first shut in, then free. In general, while writing the script I don't yet have the names of the characters or the film's title. I call the protagonists X or Y. Then, there's all the work of putting into place a whole Romanesque and mythological geography of names, creating puns and euphonies. Ismael may bring to mind, for some, the first words of Melville's *Moby Dick*, "I, Ismael," or refer to the Bible.

### ***Kings and Queen* is a tragi-comedy. Why mix the tragic, through Nora and the burlesque chaplinesque through Ismael?**

At first, it was a desire to associate melodrama with Commedia dell'arte. In general in cinema male characters can allow themselves all kind of ambiguity, whereas women are handed the good girl, good friend roles. They don't have the right to be Ingrid Bergman! I wanted a woman to be able to confront the very worst and to win, like Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious*.

### **Nora, a Hitchcockian heroine?**

Totally. She's a woman hounded by guilt. And who is finally able to get rid of it, in a noble way. Ismael's path is the same, but is treated differently, in a trivial Dionysian manner.

### **You share some of Ismael's neuroses or in the very least his taste for psychoanalysis, don't you?**

In all my films I hide behind a character. He's called Jean-Jacques. "JeJe", a rather easy code name. A being who is in retreat, who is not well-loved by Nora. If I were an actor, this is the kind of character I'd like to play. Playing the unloved character is very classy.

### **And in life?**

Also not bad.

### **Are you a masochist?**

No, it's my penchant for the romanesque...

### **Getting back to psychoanalysis...**

In hindsight, I see I have a relationship with all forms of translation. I skip from one meaning to another. In *Comment je me suis dispute [My Sex Life... Or How I Got Into An Argument]*, Emmanuelle Devos is a translator. In *Esther Kahn*, she asks what can and what cannot be translated in the Bible. With *Léo* I was translating Edward Bond... I'm an interpreter.

### **Why choose once again to explore death, a theme that has haunted you since your first film?**

It's something I came to know when I was very young, like in many families. What I find very cinematic is that death is not more sacred than life. In life, nothing's disposable. It's all good. Ismael can quote Paul Celan, *Batman*, a popular film or a confounding German poem.

### **The father's post-mortem letter to his daughter Nora, is so utterly cruel. What inspired you?**

Strindberg, I imagine. Or maybe *King Lear*, a child's terror, a bit of a Phillip Roth novel, Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*. Nora's father is a terrible kind who has burned her. He loves her too much, with a sick love, almost incestuous. There is violence, brutality, crossing into an incredible forbidden territory. I also remembered a new edition of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* with the father who curses his son. That malediction, I think. And it terrifies me.

## **About Wellspring**

Wellspring is one of the leading American distributors of films by leading international filmmakers. Current releases include Todd Solondz's *Palindromes*, Jonathan Caouette's award-winning debut *Tarnation*, executive produced by Gus Van Sant & John Cameron Mitchell, Academy Award® winner Jessica Yu's *In the Realms of the Unreal: The Mystery of Henry Darger*, Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre Musique* and Cédric Kahn's Spirit Award nominated *Red Lights* starring Carole Bouquet and Jean-Pierre Darroussin. Upcoming releases include Savi Gabizon's smash Israeli hit *Nina's Tragedies* and Anne Fontaine's *Nathalie* starring Emmanuelle Béart, Gerard Depardieu and Fanny Ardant.

Past releases include some of the most acclaimed and successful arthouse films of recent years such as *Russian Ark*, hailed by Roger Ebert as "one of the most astonishing films ever made.," Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece *Ran*, *The Brown Bunny* by Vincent Gallo, *The Circle* by Jafar Panahi, *Yi Yi* by Edward Yang, *Under the Sand* by François Ozon and Lorene Machado's *Notorious C.H.O.* **Wellspring** has fostered the careers of some of the most important directors in world cinema today including Bruno Dumont (*Life of Jesus*, *Humanité*, *Twentynine Palms*), Alexander Sokurov (*Russian Ark*, *Father and Son*) Jafar Panahi (*The Circle*, *Crimson Gold*), Leos Carax (*Mauvais Sang*, *Pola X*), Tsai Ming-liang (*What Time is It There?* *Goodbye Dragon Inn*), Olivier Assayas (*Les Destinées*), Claire Denis (*Friday Night*), Bahman Ghobadi (*Marooned in Iraq*), Liz Garbus (*Girlhood*), Marina de Van (*In My Skin*) and Karim Ainouz (*Madame Satã*). **Wellspring** has also been committed to the theatrical re-release of classic films including the works of Rainer Fassbinder, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Demy and François Truffaut.

Together, the **Wellspring** Home Entertainment and Worldwide Sales libraries boast over 1,000 titles including major works by François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Luchino Visconti, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, The Taviani Brothers, Peter Greenaway, Jacques Demy, Akira Kurosawa, Pedro Almodóvar, Michelangelo Antonioni and Lina Wertmüller among others.

**Wellspring's** Direct Response unit sells arthouse and specialty video/DVD titles via **The Video Collection** and the **artfilm collection** direct mail consumer catalogs and websites, [www.videocollection.com](http://www.videocollection.com) and [www.artfilmcollection.com](http://www.artfilmcollection.com)

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