Dawn and lamplight, midnight, noon
Sun follows day, night stars and moon
The day ends, the end begins.

Peter Kemp

Eugène Lourie selected filmmography:
Madame Bovary 1934; Lower Depths 1936; La Grande Illusion 1937; La Bête Humaine 1938; The Règle du Jeu 1939; This Land is Mine 1943; The Southerner 1945; Diary of a Chambermaid 1946; The River 1951; Limelight 1952; Shock Corridor 1963; The Naked Kiss 1964; Burnt Offering 1976; An Enemy of the People 1978

CLONING THE FUTURE
ONÉSIME, CLOCKMAKER
1912 FRANCE 9 mins @ 18 fps
Source: NL Prod Co: Gaumont Dir: Jean Durand
Cast: Ernest Bourbon
French intertitles with simultaneous translation
In order to receive an inheritance from his uncle, Onésime accelerates time to his benefit. Onésime the clockmaker does not conceive of time travel as it is in HG Wells’ The Time Machine. Instead, Onésime steals into the Central Office of Pneumatic Clocks and tampers with the master clock so that it runs faster. By doing so, all clocks, based on this clock, are accelerated and by compressing time, Onésime can collect his fortune earlier than anticipated. Obviously the film uses the simple device of speeding up action, but many amusing and unexpected situations arise, including the birth, and rapid growth of a child. In dealing with the manipulation of time, ONÉSIME, CLOCKMAKER can be seen as a precursor of René Clair’s début film Paris qui dort (1924).

Little known director Jean Durand was instrumental in the development of the slapstick and action genres during the early years of French cinema. Between 1907 and 1929 he turned out many shorts and features before the attack upon Guernica POSSIBILITIES OF WAR IN THE AIR
1910 UK 9 mins @ 18 fps
Source: NL Prod Co: Warwick Trading Co. Dir: Charles Urban
The turn of the last century created much optimism for the future amongst the developed nations. A great interest in the future and technology thrived. By 1910, the possibility of the advance of many areas of WW2). Before the attack upon Guernica POSSIBILITIES OF WAR IN THE AIR includes dirigibles, dogfights and guided missiles (the last of which were not to become a reality till the end of WW2). The advanced subject isn’t matched by technique which, considering that the British lead the world in filmmaking during the early part of the Twentieth Century, is relatively primitive. However, there are some early examples of model work and the action occurs with great verve, compensating for the awkwardness of the futuristic designs (though they are no more clumsy than those in Fritz Lang’s METROPOLIS, 1927).

Charles Urban was an American inventor who moved to England in 1898 when he managed a film distribution outlet. He soon moved into filmmaking – producing newsreels, documentaries and scientific films – and later pioneered the development of colour film.

Les Joyeux Microbes
1909 FRANCE 5 mins @ 18 fps
Source: NL Prod Co: Gaumont Dir: Emile Cohl
French intertitles with simultaneous translation
Les Joyeux Microbes, microbes under a microscope form caricatures of the parasites which feed off a businessman. Simultaneously, Cohl pokes fun at the modern science of microbiological medicine – the doctor was readily recognisable by the French as a caricature of a publicity-loving surgeon who was frequently the butt of satirists jokes.1

Le Peintre Neo-Impressionniste is Cohl’s best known film, inspired by the work of the Incohrents, an art movement which was forgotten by the general public by 1910, hence the more recognizable, if less relevant reference to neo-impressionism in the film’s title.

Donald Crafton notes:
The jokes arise from the interplay between the ridiculous titles and the colours in which the various pictures originally would have been tinted. The title “First we have a picture showing a cardinal eating lobster with tomatoes by the Red Sea,” for instance, preceded a scene tinted entirely red. A few seconds of black leader were spliced in for the picture of “Negros making shoe polish in a tunnel at night.”

Crafton’s assertion makes great sense and is in keeping with the nature of the film, expanding an animation exercise into a wonderful satire.

Michael Koller
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POSSIBILITIES OF WAR IN THE AIR
1910 UK 9 mins @ 18 fps
Source: NL Prod Co: Warwick Trading Co. Dir: Charles Urban
The turn of the last century created much optimism for the future amongst the developed nations. A great interest in the future and technology thrived. By 1910, the great visionary of the last century, Jules Verne, was dead and HG Wells had written The Time Machine (1895), The Invisible Man (1897), War of the Worlds (1898) and The First Men on the Moon (1900). Georges Méliès had made his famous A Trip to the Moon (1902) plus a number of other science fiction trick films. Charles Urban’s film sits alongside this company. Made seven years after the first Wright brothers’ flight and twenty-seven years before the attack upon Guernica POSSIBILITIES OF WAR IN THE AIR includes dirigibles, dogfights and guided missiles (the last of which were not to become a reality till the end of WW2).

The advanced subject isn’t matched by technique which, considering that the British lead the world in filmmaking during the early part of the Twentieth Century, is relatively primitive. However, there are some early examples of model work and the action occurs with great verve, compensating for the awkwardness of the futuristic designs (though they are no more clumsy than those in Fritz Lang’s METROPOLIS, 1927).

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Michael Koller
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La Maschera Del Demonio / The Black Sunday Part 1
La Maschera Del Demonio / The Demon’s Mask / Revenge of the Vampire / The House of Fright
1960 ITALY 83 mins
See Mario Bava filmography for credits, p.60

English language version
If Delphine Seyrig (still considered the definitive European lesbian vampire) can be described as, “an oozing French desert cheese” then Barbara Steele, the star of BLACK SUNDAY, must be her dark, Stilt(ed)forebear.1 From the opening scenes of Bava’s brooding vampire pic Steele’s sinful performance as Asia inspires both admiration and fear. As the titular ‘mask of Satan’ is lowered over her face to be nailed in place, she cries out in contempt, “You will never escape my hunger.” A vampire threat that shudders across generations but also a thoroughly commendable defiance.

Throughout BLACK SUNDAY, Bava exploits this ambivalence. Clues to his masterful take on the vampire genre lie embedded in the narrative. What often distinguishes one vampire story from another are the ‘rules and regulations’ that bound the vampires’ behaviour. In BLACK SUNDAY the curative measures for an infestation of vampires lie simply in the traditional crucifix (ie the power of the mise-en-scene) and the additional flourish of a stake through the eyeball (hence Bava’s emphasis on POV and an ostentatiously subjective camera).

On the matter of mise-en-scene it can be said that Bava is the director who has most conclusively put the fear back into atmos. The castle in which much of the action takes place is treated as if a corporal participant in the drama. Its corridors are arteries from which the inhabitants are slowly sucked one by one. The oblique symptoms of the presence of death abound – fires flare without cause, furniture topples, draughts blow and smoke, a portrait is mysteriously altered, a portrait is mysteriously altered. Throughout, Bava maintains a graphic intensity which threatens to suffocate his characters at a moment’s whim. Only the protective powers of the cross can cause the camera’s sudden retreat. And at precisely this point Bava shows us on which side of the crucifix we sit.

In the scene setting opening moments Bava uncovers his intention to place us firmly in the seat of both victim and vampire. The mask that is lowered onto the condemned vampire’s face is also ‘our’ mask, lowered over the camera. Later the hero, Andrej gazes softly on Delphine Seyrig’s face. She too gazes on the camera. Her gaze is not distracted by the murmur of voices. The contrast could not be more cruel.

Two additional features of the vampire genre are artfully played out in the film:
1. The centrality of repetition as a thematic preoccupation. In BLACK SUNDAY all the family’s female descendants resemble each other. None make it beyond the age of 21. As

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the vampires begin to stir a father's despair is articulated — “It is this resemblance, this repeating that terrifies me”. 2. The ambiguity surrounding common sense opposites. Once the fundamental categories of life and death are thrown into doubt other fixtures are similarly loosened most obviously that of vampire and victim. Once we move from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, Bava drops the ‘voice-of-God narration’ only to reintroduce it when the film concludes (literally – the voice seems to belong to a priest). In between these parentheses anything goes. When Barbara Steele appears again as Katia, the enigmatic ‘repetition’ of Asa we even get her with a pair of snarling dogs. Is she the pre-credit vampire risen again? Are the dogs her accomplices in beastliness? Bava toys with us mercilessly. And he jokes. The film takes considerable interest in the vampire’s gruesome regeneration — or perhaps recomposing is a better term since Katia plays piano whilst her antecedent ‘knits’. Asa’s eye sockets slowly filling to the brim, the bava suddenly shifts scenes to the village tavern, his camera emerging backwards from within a French horn.

There are other embellishments to admire. The suggestive dialogue between variations on a Steele when Asa and Katia finally meet. Their extraordinary exchange expresses both the desire to possess and to occupy their antithesis. A literal narcissism and an evocative love that young man had for you could have been concocted by me to Satan. But you sensed it didn’t you...That’s why my portrait was a constant temptation to you. Why it frightened you. You felt that your life and your body were mine. You felt like me because you were destined to become me – a useless body without life. The love that young man had for you could have saved you – you know that. You might have been happy together. But I was stronger and now you shall enjoy a beautiful life of evil and hate in me.

Eventually Asa goes for the chop but is repelled by Katia’s crucifix necklace, reminding us once again that before the seventies there was no place for jewellery and adornment in the lesbian vampire world. Think Stilton not Camembert.

Deb Verhoeven


BLACK SABBATH

Il Tre Volti Della Paura /The Three Faces of Fear / Black Christmas /The Three Faces of Terror

1963 ITALY/FranCe 95 mins

see Mario Bava Filmography for Credits, p 62 English Language Version

Mainly being horror films — making them disposable, more so with BLACK SABBATH a mere anthology film (just a bunch of shorts) it’s somewhat understandable how the works of Mario Bava have travelled in all sorts of strange ways. Recut, retitled, banned and even refilmed for distributors and censorship boards across the planet, chances are, wherever you are, you’re highly unlikely to be able to view any of Bava’s films as they were intended, in the original format, ever. For a full frame by frame comparison and analysis of several different versions of BLACK SABBATH you’re urged to seek out Video Watchdog No.4. Meanwhile, there’s no doubt that any sample from the colour maestro’s illustrious horror palette will provide a harrowing good time. At the very least, even a cursory glance will make his legacy apparent in the work of a galaxy of filmmakers ranging from fellow countrymen Lucio Fulci (RIP), Dario Argento and his own son Lamberto Bava, to Russell Mulcahy or Scott Spiegel. Awash in strident colour gels as seen through a constantly shifting and often fighting plot coherence, the best of Bava can leave a haunting and indelible stain on the brain.

Most importantly, at the dawn of the 60s, Bava put sex and violence together on the big screen and it was packaged for a mainstream audience.

BLACK SABBATH as the AIP English-language version is known, eagerly answers ‘Yes’ to all of the above and begins with a seated Boris Karloff dressed in black and trying to look disem bodied as he delivers the serious but incisive introductory words. Shards of colour mix shade his face. Close-ups. Then from behind a glass of water we’re into the first story, the almost dialogue-free, ‘The Drop of Water’. Late one dark and stormy night a nurse reluctantly answers the call to attend the house of an old clairvoyant who has expired in mid-sequence. Due to a stroke the paralysed face of this old woman is ugly, distorted and frighteningly familiar. The nurse spies her dead client’s bewitched jewel and decides to commit a rip off. Back at her flat things start falling about the place. Sound effects are pushed to the fore. The old crone reappears to reclaim her jewellery. A strangulation occurs. The next day the dead body of the nurse is discovered and officially deemed a suicide. Her assistant can provide no knowledge of circumstances immediately preceding the death. Fade out on a close up of the face of the dead nurse with her own hands wrapped tightly around her neck.

Time for Boris to pop back in for a wacky moment introducing the next film, ‘The Telephone’. Shot under relatively subdued colour schemes this story, unlike the pair that precede it, is set in the dour house and surroundings of an upmarket prostitute called Rosy. As she talks to her pimp about his new client, the telephone rings. She asks her assistant (a mildly attractive young woman) to answer it and of course she does. As we go to the phone we see a hand emerge from the phone and slowly pull it towards itself. The woman at the other end of the delivery line asks for the number of the man behind the voice. When the nurse answers ‘It’s me’ the voice seems to belong of God. Back at her flat the uninvited visitor in the dour house is discovered and officially deemed a suicide. Her assistant can provide no knowledge of circumstances immediately preceding the death. Fade out on a close up of the face of the dead nurse with her own hands wrapped tightly around her neck.

The camera then slowly pulls back to show all the artefacts used to create the illusory world we’ve just left. From the man sitting beneath the voice-of-God narration, the Mole in the wall, the man sitting beneath the string of prop men running in an empty circle past the camera holding tree branches This scene was obviously intended as a massive piss-take on the whole exercise and the perfect antidote to a supremely downbeat movie which has just taken us through several scenes of sadism, infanticide, incest, and has been genuinely misanthropic just by allowing the triumph of evil. BLACK SABBATH just ends with the audience left hanging with the anticipation that Karloff may return.

Not only does BLACK SABBATH provide a fitting final creepy character role for Karloff (he lived six more years after BLACK SABBATH and played in half a dozen more films including Peter Bogdanovich’s clever but largely inferior TARGETS, 1968) but it also demonstrates the stylistic details immediately embraced or imitated by the Italian film industry who began churning out crime films (or Giallo movies after the yellow spines worn by many of the cheap crime novels that were used as source material) at a frantic pace. Years later another genre (slasher films) emerged in America formed from the basic tenets of Bava’s films but that’s a whole other story.

Nihilistic, grim and often lost in sentiment details BLACK SABBATH should’ve displaced DEAD OF NIGHT (1945) at the top of the horror anthologies tree years ago.

Michael Helms