

Little Ashes

By Lynette Klooster Tibbetts

I've watched this movie over and over again – and I keep wanting to see it yet again. It has been permanently in my DVD player since the UPS guy delivered it last week – I keep thinking I want to watch this or that, but I can't quite bring myself to actually take it out of the machine. Why does it appeal to me so? I've been examining that as I've watched, jotted down quotations, watched, sighed, cried, watched (oh, did I say that already?) --- and this list of the "whys" has been forming in my head:

- I'm obsessive and this film appeals to me in that respect on many levels – I understand these characters and their passions
- I'm creative and I have felt the sentiments deeply and personally that are expressed in this film – the frustration, inspiration, desolation, desperation, exhilaration – and I do not remember ever finding this realized in film before now. I could be these people. Maybe I AM these people.
- I learned a lot of new things. Of course, as an art major, I knew about Dali, but I'd never heard of Garcia Lorca or Bunuel – and now I want to know more. I will own Garcia Lorca's poems before much longer, and I've been researching the period, the war, etc. I love learning new things, even though the frustration at how much I *didn't* learn in school is a constant irritation to me. I would kill to get my hands on a copy of the script – in a normal case, I'd just go "buy the book" – but this isn't from a book... sigh
- I didn't expect to like it. I bought it mainly to feed my obsession with Robert Pattinson, figuring I could just watch it with the sound down if I hated it too much... and RPatz does not disappoint, but it has been the *depth* of the film that has overwhelmed me
- It is such a beautiful, touching, heart-breaking love story
- It is quite erotic, and I enjoyed that a lot. This quality is hard to find. Hollywood doesn't do subtle very well – it's either explicit trash or not there.
- It is beautifully filmed. One really *could* watch this movie with the sound down and just enjoy the stunning visuals. There are three or four scenes in particular that are paintings within themselves: the sunrise scene w/ Garcia Lorca and Bunuel's conversation; the scene where Garcia Lorca is reading his poems to Dali on the cliff; the studio scene; the swimming scene; the sunset out the window "goodnight" scene; – ah, and so many others...
- I don't remember enjoying such complete and satisfying character development through such very subtle means in any previous film. Usually, the writing is really in your face – you KNOW what you're supposed to think and learn because the writer basically TELLS you – but here, it is so nuanced and natural that the character development becomes a plot device. Screenwriters everywhere should aspire to this
- On a rebellious level, I know that most of the people I know would hate / dismiss this film just because of the homosexual nature of the relationship between Garcia Lorca and Dali. I look at that as a reactionary, fearful response (just as Bunuel responds to their relationship in the film!). I am proud to say that I have found that my general theoretical, philosophical acceptance of homosexuality has been specifically exonerated by my reaction to this film.

In the end, this film broke my heart. It is imprinted on my soul, and I will probably watch it often over my life time. It does not have a happy ending... but alas, neither does life. It is beautiful.. (but that is inadequate, faint praise).

Particularly Enjoyable:

- Watching Dali's character develop:
 - from the shy, introverted, almost reclusive teenager that shows up at university in Madrid
 - his attempts to interject himself into conversation (inappropriately, then gradually more appropriately)
 - his attempt at a personal style transformation in front of the mirror (with the startlingly interesting scene where he ends up naked and playing with himself in front of the mirror! I do love that scene...)
 - the gratifying RESULT of that personal transformation
 - the development of his confidence
 - his self-realization gaining voice
 - watching him become the egotistical, self-absorbed character that he has been depicted as in every other treatment of Dali that I've ever read
 - his unsuccessful attempts to mold Garcia Lorca into *his* new world
 - his utter devastation and descent to madness when he learns that Garcia Lorca is dead

- The dynamic of the developing relationship between Dali and Garcia Lorca:
 - The changing nature of who is pursuing whom
 - Garcia Lorca's guilt, denial, then realization that he is in love with Dali
 - Dali's ability to see through Garcia Lorca's pretenses and cut right to the bottom of Garcia Lorca's soul (and Garcia Lorca's awe at that ability)
 - Watching Dali trying to accept Garcia Lorca's love – he wants to *believe* “no limits” – but can't quite get himself to go there, no matter how strong the desire...
 - The “substitute” scene > where Magdalena becomes the vessel for their passion – and the devastating, gut-wrenching reaction of all three of them (see note above on character development – how can so much emotion be packed into one small scene??)
 - How much they care for each other, even after they've stopped pursuing a physical relationship

- Bunuel's character development
 - From leader of the pack to helpless bystander
 - Angry young revolutionary
 - Aggressive gay-basher, born of fear
 - Maturing and acceptance – realizing that he can't change nature, and reaching back around to Garcia Lorca, not willing to sacrifice their relationship (although he does seem to abandon Dali)

Little Ashes – 2008

Starring: Javier Beltran as Federico Garcia Lorca; Robert Pattinson as Salvador Dali; and Matthew McNulty as Luis Bunuel

IMDB Link: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1104083/>

Wikipedia Link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Ashes

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