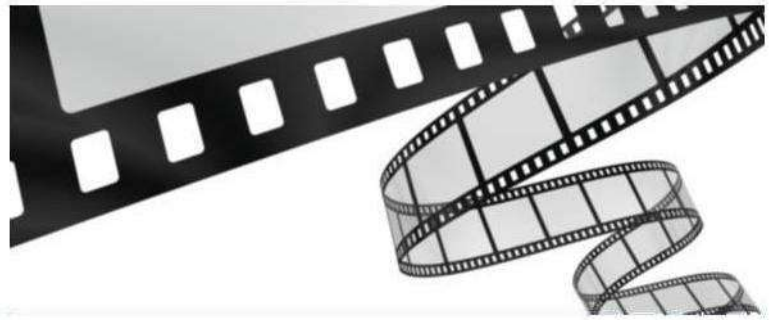


CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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Thérèse 2012

France 110 mins

Director: Claude Miller
Writers: François Mauriac (novel) /
Claude Miller &
Natalie Carter (screenplay)

Cast:

Audrey Tautou	Thérèse Desqueyroux
Gilles Lellouche	Bernard Desqueyroux
Anaïs Demoustier	Anne de la Trave
Catherine Arditi	Madame de la Trave



Claude Miller's last film (he died shortly before the premiere at Cannes) is a gorgeous, stately affair; the second adaptation of François Mauriac's 1927 novel, *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (the original being directed by Georges Franju in 1963). It is an elaborate character study with a tour-de-force performance by Audrey Tautou in the title role.

Thérèse Larroque, the daughter of a wealthy Pinery owner and socialist politician, has been destined from childhood to marry Bernard Desqueyroux, the half-brother of her best friend Anne de la Trave. Their wedding will unite the pine-forested estates of two wealthy neighbouring families – a mercenary motive that neither bride nor groom object to. Attracted more to the idea of marriage, which she hopes will “sort out all the ideas in her mind”, than to her new husband; Thérèse quickly becomes disillusioned with her new position, finding herself stifling in her sickly, self-centred husband's estate, among stiff in-laws (who are openly contemptuous of Thérèse and of her views). Thérèse quickly falls pregnant but realises that the child (and, therefore, the continuation of the Desqueyroux family) means more to Bernard than herself and she finds it difficult to form any emotional bond with her daughter.

When Anne challenges propriety, and her own arranged union, by falling in love with a Portuguese Jew, Jean Azévédo, her disapproving family imprison her and instruct Thérèse to intervene. This leaves Thérèse torn between her loyalty to Anne and her desire not to jeopardise her comfortable life. Thérèse realises that Anne's passion is not reciprocated and Azévédo's bohemian views awaken in her an alternative philosophy to her bourgeois existence, which serves to increase her disillusionment, and leads to her committing a desperate act against her husband. The consequences of this act for Thérèse demonstrate the insidious depths respectable people will go in order to protect their reputations – not that the heroine is, by any means, an innocent victim.

Whilst Millar's adaptation of the book feels rather novelistic, it is highly cinematic; the scenery fantastic and the soft-focus shots of perfectly tailored outfits masking the ugliness within. Understated and restrained performances by the lead characters serve to highlight the banality of lives lived without passion. The characters in Mauriac's tale all come across as self-absorbed and cruel and

it is difficult to feel any empathy towards them. Audrey Tautou, cast (very much against type) as the melancholic Thérèse, gives a commanding exploration of the heroine's inner torment.

Club notices:

The next discussion evening will be held on 19th February, at the Cramphorn Theatre, following the screening of the film *Lilting*. This is an informal meeting and gives out members an opportunity to exchanging opinions on the 5 films shown from *Wadjda* to *Lilting* (including tonight's film, *Thérèse*).

Our previous presentation:

Based on the feedback slips returned on the night, you rated **Nebraska**, screened on 6th January, 4.75 stars out of 5. Please visit the film page at <http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk> to read all the feedback comments.

You can still provide feedback on this, or any other film, by visiting the Discussions page (<http://www.chelmsford-filmclub.co.uk/discussion/>).

Our next presentation:

[I Wish](#), directed by Hirokazu Koreeda, will be shown on Monday, 2nd February, starting at 8:00pm.