



I HAVE LOVED LIVING THERE

A FILM BY REGIS SAUDER



SHELLAC presents



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With the participation and the texts of **Annie Ernaux**

89 mins - 1,89 - 5.1 - colour - Digital HD - DCP - french - France - 2020
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Poster, trailer, press kit, photos and clips available to download at
www.shellacfilms.com

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Synopsis

In a new town, somewhere in the suburbs of Paris, intimate stories meet the writings of the famous writer Annie Ernaux : is living in harmony a utopia, or could it be actual and overcome the paradoxes of society to welcome foreigners.



Interview with Régis Sauder

1. Upon your *return to Forbach* (2017), your hometown in Lorraine, you decided to shoot this latest film, *I Have Loved Living There*, in Cergy, northwest of Paris. Why?

I screened “Retour à Forbach” at the Utopia theater in Saint-Ouen l’Aumône near Cergy. It was then that I met Annie Ernaux who had enjoyed the movie and invited me to visit the new city of which she is a long-time resident. The film stages this encounter of May 2017, it is fueled by the correspondence that ensued.

2. The individual and collective memory of Cergy is questioned through its inhabitants and their testimonies, following the author’s literary approach. How did her work lead you through this film?

I was very familiar with her work before we met and her auto-socio-biography had obviously nourished my previous film. Here I was more inspired by her photography witting of reality as this is where I believe our works also come together. I feel like my movies humbly attempt to film life while, the heart of my cinematographic project being to allow others to outline a life narrative. Theirs.

After our first encounter, I frequently returned to Clergy to meet people and get further acquainted with the town. At each visit we would trade ideas on what I saw and heard. I would discover the city through another’s eyes with their joy of living there. I wanted to express that feeling. The film narrates this place through the accounts of its inhabitants who cross paths and shape its story.



3. How did the inhabitants appreciate Annie Ernaux's works, *Exteriors* (1996) and *Things Seen* (2000) ?
And how were the excerpts chosen ?

In parallel to my visits I spent a year working with a group of high school students. They quickly became my allies in fiction, allowing me while following them to roam through the town. I started passing the texts around starting with them. They soon told me that they recognise themselves in those texts and felt like they expressed their experience. I enjoy the idea that the literature irrigates my work, it of course has been the case since *Children of the Princess of Cleves*. Literature is a wonderful witness that you can pass around as in a relay race, from one character to another. I early on built the film around the idea that I would not be conducting interviews with Annie Ernaux but that she instead would be presented through textual fragments read by her and others. The choice of the texts was steered by the people and various locations. Agnès Bruckert, the editor, and I decided that each location would lead us to a character, who would then meet another one, and so on. I wanted to account for my experience of wandering around. The texts articulate themselves to situations without ever describing them. The image could not illustrate the texts however we needed to allow each iteration to enable a dialogue with Annie Ernaux's writings and the film's narrative that is conveyed by its protagonists.

4. The daily life of Cergy involves certain inhabitants that are introduced along the movie.
How did you select and stage them?

They are chance encounters made during my stays in the new town. The teenagers would invite me to meet their families. We had a special bond. There was also a need to include all of these people from abroad due to a very recent migration after the opening of a shelter in the center of town. The staging process for everyone takes into account their journeys through the city and the crossings that ensue. It's like a ballet.

5. Which decisions did you make with Tom Harari in regards to the image ?

I asked Tom to help me maintain some distance from them, it's a very natural movement for me, at the risk of getting too close. On the contrary, I wanted to shape each body within the urban environment. I wanted to account for its scales and its matter. I wanted a film that will make you feel good, as I did upon my discovery of the location.



6. Their wanderings, the RER commute or the “path through the memory of territory” sequence of Annie Ernaux map a sort of cartography of the city. Was this an idea that existed while writing the film ?

It is a subjective cartography that traces the writing process with those visits and walks with Annie Ernaux, I wanted to account for this first visit when she took me on the major axis, an unbelievable place. However it is mostly a sensitive cartography driven by visions and tales.

7. The author also physically appears in certain scenes, did you wish for her voice to be embodied ?

She is one inhabitant among others, it seemed natural for me to come across her. She offers these brief appearances and we quickly agreed upon the idea that this would be the film’s grammar. She did not want to converse on-film but she did want to be on my track, like the others.

8. During the church our classroom sequence, the inhabitants’ diversity living together in Clergy is apparent. The city acted as an urban utopia in its architectural project, in which form does that utopia subsist nowadays?

The utopia is embodied by the city’s dwellers and gives it this incredible energy. Common practices have left their mark on the associative network’s strong presence and this idea of a common fate, beyond the twelve columns of the major axis. A symbolical horizon summarised by this young girl from the Ivory Coast who simply says “little by little, I have made friends here in Cergy.”



Régis Sauder

Régis Sauder, born in 1970 in Forbach, lives in Marseille. After studies in neuroscience, he turns towards documentary filmmaking. He directed many films, including three feature-length theatrical releases. He has also created installations for theatres and museums.

Filmography

2017 RETOUR À FORBACH

2012 ÊTRE LÀ

2011 NOUS, PRINCESSES DE CLÈVES

2009 JE T'EMMÈNE À ALGER

2008 L'ANNÉE PROCHAINE À JÉRUSALEM

2004 AVORTEMENT, UNE LIBERTÉ FRAGILE



Annie Ernaux

Annie Ernaux was born in 1940 in Lillebonne in Normandy. After studying literature in Rouen, she taught in Annecy, the greater Paris and at the “Centre national d’enseignement à distance” (CNED). She has an aggregation in literature and lives in Cergy, Val d’Oise.

She has written 15 books published at Gallimard. She was awarded the Renaudot prize in 1984 for *La place*. In 2005 *The years* brought her unanimous critical acclaim. Her Works were compiled in the Quarto collection in 2011. In 2017 she was awarded the Marguerite Yourcenar Prize for her lifetime achievements.

Excerpts from writing by Annie Ernaux

Exteriors © Gallimard, 1993

Things Seen © Gallimard, 2000

The Years © Gallimard, 2008

Writing the life © Gallimard, 2008



Crew

Director	Régis Sauder
Script	Régis Sauder
Texts	Annie Ernaux
Image	Tom Harari - Régis Sauder
Sound	Pierre-Alain Mathieu
Editor	Agnès Bruckert
Sound editing and mixing	Fred Bielle
Colour grading	Gadiel Bendelac
Special effects	Clément Le Penven
Executive producer	Francine Cadet
Line producer	Thomas Ordonneau

A Shellac production, with slate funding from the Fonds d'Aide à l'Innovation du Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée and Région Sud Provence Alpes-Côte d'Azur, in partnership with the CNC, with the participation of the Fonds Images de la Diversité - Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires - Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, in production association with La Rose Pourpre-CinéLab et le Studio Lemon.



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