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CAST

Pierre Brice Hans von Arnim
Scilla Gabel Elfie Wahl
Wolfgang Preiss Dr. Loren Bohlem
Dany Carrel Liselotte Kornheim
Liana Orfei Annelore
Marco Guglielmi Ralf
Herbert A.E. Böhme Professor Gregorius Wahl
Olga Solbelli Selma
Alberto Archetti Konrad / Rudolf

CREW

Directed by
Giorgio Ferroni

Screenplay by
Remigio Del Grosso, Ugo Liberatore, Giorgio Stegani and Giorgio Ferroni

From the short story of the same name from "Flemish Tales"
by **Pieter van Weigen**

Production Manager
Giampaolo Bigazzi

Director of Photography
Pier Ludovico Pavoni, A.S.C.

Production Designer
Arigo Equini

Film Editor
Antonietta Zita

Music by
Carlo Innocenzi

Costumes
Casa d'Arte Firenze, R. Peruzzi



Blood from Stone: Giorgio Ferroni's *Mill of the Stone Women*

by Roberto Curti

Alongside the first tangible effects of the strong financial growth (for which the *Daily Mail* coined the expression “economic miracle”¹) which was turning Italy from a poor and rural nation into an industrial power, the hot summer of 1959 brought a new fad into the lives of many Italians. Following the extraordinary box-office success of Terence Fisher's *Dracula* (1958), all things related to horror (and vampirism in particular) invaded the realm of popular culture, even inspiring songs, musical stage plays, and mundane events.

Hence, in addition to acquiring (and rereleasing) foreign horror movies, distributors started demanding national products as well. If Steno's *Uncle Was a Vampire* (*Tempi duri per i vampiri*), released in October 1959 and featuring Christopher Lee, was a spoof, in tune with Italians' habit of never taking things too seriously, the quintet of films put in the pipeline over the following months and distributed between May and November 1960 – Renato Polselli's *The Vampire and the Ballerina* (*L'amante del vampiro*) Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* (*La maschera del demonio*), Anton Giulio Majano's *Atom Age Vampire* (*Seddok l'erede di Satana*), Giorgio Ferroni's *Mill of the Stone Women* (*Il mulino delle donne di pietra*) and Piero Regnoli's *The Playgirls and the Vampire* (*L'ultima preda del vampiro*) – formed the first wave of Italian Gothic, not counting Riccardo Freda's forerunner, *The Vampires* (aka *I vampiri*, 1957, aka *Lust of the Vampire*).

¹ Ninetta Jucker, “The Italian Economic Miracle,” *Daily Mail*, 25 May 1959.

Together with Bava's official debut, *Mill of the Stone Women* was the most ambitious of the lot. A 70%/30% Italian/French co-production between Rome's Vanguard Film and the Paris-based Comptoir d'Expansion Cinématographique,² the project was submitted to the ministerial board for preventive approval in late November 1959. With an estimated cost of 180 million lire and a six-week shooting schedule (from January 20 to March 1, 1960) in Cinecittà, plus one week of exteriors in Holland and Belgium, it was a medium-budgeted effort. As was customary for Italian producers, Vanguard relied on the so-called "*minimo garantito*" (minimum estimate) – that is, the 40 million lire advanced by distributor Cino Del Duca, an entrepreneur who had been among the first to exploit the novelty of *fotoromanzi* (photonovels) in the post-war years, launching two immensely popular magazines, the French *Nous Deux* and the Italian *Grand Hotel*. Active as a producer and distributor since the mid-50s, Del Duca wavered between arthouse cinema, with such titles as Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) and Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961), and reputable genre fare. Other participants in the venture were three more Italian producers – Faro Film, Europa Cinematografica, and Explorer Film '58 – with 15 million lire each. The deal established that it would be up to the French co-producer to provide a couple of transalpine actors, an internationally renowned thespian (Wolfgang Preiss), plus 65,000 feet of Eastmancolor film, in addition to financing the week of shooting abroad. Overall, Ferroni's film was conceived (as was *Black Sunday*) as a dignified, classy product.

The tentative cast listed in ministerial papers features several notable differences from the definitive one. It includes Scilla Gabel as Elfy³ and Wolfgang Preiss as Bohlem, the same roles they would play in the film, whereas Pierre Brice – soon to

² The tentative French title, *Le Moulin des femmes de pierre*, identical to the Italian one, became *Le Moulin des supplices* ('the mill of torture') upon its release in France.

³ Spelled "Elfy" in the official papers. Bohlem, in turn, is spelled "Bolem".

become popular as Apache chief Winnetou in a string of German-made westerns, and already featured in another Europa/Explorer Film production distributed by Del Duca, Damiano Damiani's debut, *Lipstick (Il rossetto)*, 1960 – was originally listed in a supporting role as Raab (played in the movie by Marco Guglielmi). Initially, in fact, it was the 30-year-old Matteo Spinola, an up-and-coming actor who had worked in secondary roles in such films as *Aphrodite, Goddess of Love (Afrodite, dea dell'amore)*, Mario Bonnard, 1958) and *Labyrinth* (1959, Rolf Thiele), who was to play Hans, the male lead. Spinola's withdrawal had an understandable motivation: in early 1960 he embarked on a demanding stage tour. Soon, though, he left acting for good and embarked on a much more successful career, teaming up with Enrico Lucherini and becoming the head of Italy's most powerful press agency. Likewise, Herbert Böhme was originally cast in a minor part as Gregorius Wahl's factotum Konrad, whereas Wahl was to be played by Roldano Lupi, a noted stage actor and the lead in such ground-breaking films as Pietro Germi's debut, *The Testimony (Il testimone)*, 1946). In the finished film Alberto Archetti plays Konrad whereas Lupi is nowhere to be found. Finally, Dany Carrel was a last-minute replacement for Pascale Audret as Liselotte, whereas Liana Orfei replaced Wandisa Guida as Annelore.

To legitimize the movie as a believable Gothic yarn, the opening credits boast a foreign literary source, a short story of the same name in Pieter van Weigen's collection *Racconti fiamminghi (Flemish Tales)*. Too bad neither the book nor the author exists, the script being the work of Remigio Del Grosso, Ugo Liberatore, Giorgio Stegani and the director, from a story by Ferroni and Del Grosso. It is the first of several instances in Italian Gothic cinema – the most notorious being Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath (I tre volti della paura)*, 1963) and Antonio Margheriti's *Castle of Blood (Danza macabra)*, 1964) – where a film sports partly or entirely fake literary origins in a somewhat naïve





effort to reassure viewers about the quality of the source material. Horror and the *fantastique* were perceived as a foreign specialty.⁴

Rather than relying on literary models, though, Ferroni's film draws from cinematic ones, in a creative reshaping and merging of diverse influences. In reviewing and commenting the scenario (a common practice in the days of preventive censorship), the ministerial committee noticed its "*Dracula*-style mood," adding that the plot "recalls, in its general framework, other similar films with a giallo-scientific character ... namely *Les Yeux sans visage*" (*Eyes without a Face*). Georges Franju's 1960 film had been submitted to the ministry earlier that year to achieve the status of French-Italian coproduction (and the ensuing law benefits). Despite the similarities, however, it is unlikely that the scriptwriters had taken inspiration from a movie which had not even been released in France yet (and would be distributed in Italy only in May 1960). Other, more likely inspirations were Hammer Film productions as well as earlier horror films such as Michael Curtiz's *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933) and André de Toth's 1953 remake, *House of Wax*. Besides the idea of statues concealing dead bodies and a wax figure with Elfie's features, the central image of the mill's carillon – with its macabre life-size reproductions of female portraits – owes much to the wax museum in Curtiz and De Toth's films, as does the climactic fire that destroys it.

The theme of medical experiments and blood transfusions associated with more or less idiosyncratic vampire figures, in turn, evokes not just such predecessors as *The Return of Doctor X* (Vincent Sherman, 1939) – which was distributed in Italy after the war and gained unexpected notoriety thanks to the presence of Humphrey Bogart – but also more recent titles. One of the eleven foreign horror movies released in

⁴ The mention of Van Wiegen's book is absent from the opening titles in the French version, which credit the script solely to Del Grosso. The director is credited as "*Georges Ferroni*."



Italy in the 1958–1959 season after the commercial exploit of Fisher’s film, *Blood of the Vampire* (Henry Cass, 1958) concocted a scientific-oriented variation of the vampire theme with medical transfusions as surrogates for the bite on the neck; incidentally, an early scene in Cass’s film takes place inside an old windmill where a doctor performs a heart transplant on the titular vampire. On the other hand, the insistence on decaying female beauty, soon to become a recurring trope in Italian Gothic, is more in tune with *The Vampires*. Unlike Freda’s film, however, Ferroni opts for a period setting instead of a contemporary one: the date 1912 can be glimpsed early in the film on a sketch portrait of Elfie, although other elements seemingly point to late 19th century instead.

But the film’s most intriguing influence may well be Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Vampyr* (1932), from which Ferroni reprises visual and narrative elements, from the man ringing the bell on the pier in the opening scene to Hans’s wristband appearing covered in blood and then immaculate (a nod to the transfusion sequence in which David Gray hallucinates about the blood he sees dripping onto his arm). Even the titular mill, with its impressive gears in evidence, recalls the one where the vampire’s accomplice is buried under the flour in the ending of Dreyer’s film. Such references are noteworthy because *Vampyr* never had a proper theatrical release in Italy. Still, it had some diffusion through the festival circuit (starting with a Dreyer retrospective at the 1947 Venice Film Festival) and was one of the titles regularly screened for students at Rome’s film school, the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (C.S.C.). Not unsurprisingly, scriptwriter Ernesto Gastaldi, a C.S.C. graduate, would rehash David Gray’s premature burial scene twice, for Polselli’s *The Vampire and the Ballerina* (*L’amante del vampiro*, 1960) and Riccardo Freda’s *The Horrible Dr. Hichcock* (*L’orribile segreto del dr. Hichcock*, 1962).

The use of color makes *Mill of the Stone Women* an exception among the first wave of black and white Italian Gothic films released in the biennium 1960–1961. The gorgeous cinematography is the work of the then 34-year-old Pier Ludovico Pavoni. An accomplished DoP who had just won a Nastro d'Argento (Silver Ribbon) for his work on Carlo Lizzani's documentary *Behind the Great Wall* (*La muraglia cinese*, 1958), Pavoni had attended C.S.C. and trained with the prestigious Mario Craveri and Leonida Barboni. Moreover, he was also involved in the introduction and diffusion of anamorphic lenses in Italian cinema as cheaper competitors of CinemaScope through his company NC (Noleggio Cinematografico). Over the following years Pavoni moved on to other capabilities, as production manager and eventually as director, with a trio of films – *A Way of Being a Woman* (*Un modo di essere donna*); *Amore libero – Free Love*; and *The Sinner* (*La peccatrice*) – helmed between 1973 and 1975.

Another thing that makes *Mill of the Stone Women* stand out amidst Italian Gothic cinema of the period is the use of on-location footage to match with the Northern European setting, instead of making do with Italian landscapes and manors passed off as foreign ones. For one thing, the Molenmuseum in Koog aan de Zaan, in the Netherlands, can be glimpsed in the scene right after Elfie's apparent death, as Hans crosses the narrow wooden bridge over the nearby canal. A noted documentary filmmaker with a past better forgotten as one of the directors who had joined Mussolini in the short-lived Republic of Salò after the Fall of Fascism, Ferroni had helmed several feature fiction films in post-WW2 years, including the gritty *film noir*, *Tombolo* (*Tombolo paradiso nero*, 1947). The moody Cinecittà studio sets designed by Arrigo Equini (as opposed to the real-life ambiances of many low-budget Gothic films shot inside the castles of Artana or Balsorano) allow the director to employ elegant camerawork to dramatic effect. Ferroni's quick advancing tracking shots (a more elegant way to achieve the same result as the then-quickly expanding zoom lens)





emphasize objects and scenic elements which thus acquire a mysterious quality, such as a necklace hanging from a statue's hand which later disappears. He also shows a keen eye for frame composition and pleasant aesthetic references, such as the shot depicting Elfie in her coffin surrounded by flowers, a reference to John Everett Millais' celebrated Pre-Raphaelite painting *Ophelia*. Unlike *The Vampires* and *Black Sunday*, the out-and-out horror moments are mostly confined offscreen, with no gore but plenty of macabre touches (such as disembodied hands in formaldehyde in Wahl's lab); even though the original scenario describes the sight of Elfie's face covered with "repugnant blue stains" after her apparent death, Ferroni does not insist on it. This did not prevent the censor board from giving it a V.M.16 (forbidden to audiences under 16 years old) rating. However, the film does come up with some creepy, subtly horrific moments, as when Wahl arranges the dead Annelore's rigid hands in the same posture as one of the mill's statues, the sound of bones being bent and broken accompanying his gestures.

Mill of the Stone Women represented a shot of fresh blood for the 52-year-old Ferroni, who gave up documentary filmmaking and lent his technical prowess to genre cinema throughout the 1960s and up to the mid-1970s. Over the following years he went on to direct a handful of sword-and-sandal films, starting with the remarkable *The Bacchantes* (*Le baccanti*, 1961; also produced by Del Duca and co-written by Stegani) and *The Trojan Horse* (*La guerra di Troia*, 1961; a box-office hit in Italy, outgrossing *Two Rode Together*, *Judgement at Nuremberg*, and *Pocketful of Miracles*). Then, when the *filone* faded, Ferroni moved on to other genres, most notably the Western, with a successful tryptic starring Giuliano Gemma – *Blood for a Silver Dollar* (*Un dollaro bucato*, 1965), *For a Few Extra Dollars* (*Per pochi dollari ancora*, 1966) and *Wanted* (1967) – plus a fourth, *Two Pistols and a Coward* (*Il pistolero segnato da Dio*, 1968), starring Anthony Steffen. He returned to horror for

his penultimate work, *Night of the Devils* (*La notte dei diavoli*, 1972), an impressive and gory modern-day remake of Bava's "I Wurdalak" (from *Black Sabbath*).

Ferroni's film premiered on August 30, 1960 in Montecatini. With 164 million lire grossed in Italy, it was the most commercially successful Italian horror film of the year (*Black Sunday*, released three weeks earlier, grossed 139 million lire) but not enough to convince Del Duca to persist with the horror genre despite good foreign sales. The French version, *Le Moulin des supplices*, released in September 1962 with Carrel top-billed, ran several minutes shorter yet featured a scene missing from the Italian cut, with Liselotte and Raab walking by a canal and stopping by a carillon with human figures, where Liselotte confides to his friend her love for Hans. The movie surfaced overseas in January 1963, as *Mill of the Stone Women*, in a dubbed print distributed by Parade Releasing Organization and featuring a voice-over absent from the original.⁵ The same year it got a theatrical release in the United Kingdom as well, with a version rated X and running 82 minutes, through E.J. Fancey Production (who would distribute another Italian Gothic, this time a more conventional vampire yarn: Roberto Mauri's *Slaughter of the Vampires* [*La strage dei vampiri*, 1962]), as *Drops of Blood*.

Compared with the ensuing works in the genre by Bava, Freda and Margheriti, *Mill of the Stone Women* is a somewhat tentative effort. Nevertheless, it features several themes and elements which will become staples of the *filone*, from the emphasis on the macabre to the use of a sound leitmotif to express horror: think of the carillon which accompanies the macabre parade of the "stone women" but also of the bell that rhythmically signals the timing for blood transfusions. Moreover, the story

⁵ Dialogue adaptation is credited to John Hart and Richard McNamara and Hugo Grimaldi is listed as executive supervisor. Incidentally, the opening credits for the US version claim that the color photography be in Technicolor instead of Eastmancolor.

revolves around a duplicitous female figure – a mysterious, seductive woman who turns out to be dangerous. Elfie, in fact, is both a victim and an unwilling source of death, and both the film's mad doctors – Wahl and his assistant, Bohlem – are moved by their love (and lust) for her. Elfie's entrance early in the film atop a spiral staircase, holding a greyhound on a leash and a rose in her hand, is similar to both Gianna Maria Canale's in the climax of *The Vampires* (where Duchess Du Grand welcomes the police from atop the staircase of her castle) and Barbara Steele's in *Black Sunday* (where princess Katja first appears with two hounds on the leash), hinting at a shared imagery of perturbing, haughty female beauty. The then-22-year-old Gabel (born Gianfranca Gabellini) – a blonde, turned raven-haired for the film, incidentally – makes for a strikingly sensual lead, her high cheekbones and ample bosom evoking one of Italy's sex symbols par excellence, Sophia Loren (Gabel had been Loren's stand-in in *Boy on a Dolphin* and *Legend of the Lost*). In a move that highlights the perfidious attitude at the core of the genre, Elfie is juxtaposed to an opposite female type, the virginal, down-to-earth, morally upright Liselotte, in another recurrent narrative ploy that would often characterize early Italian Gothics, sometimes taken to the extreme of having the "good" and "bad" girl portrayed by the same actress (as in *Black Sunday*). Ironically, it is Liselotte's character who provides a glimpse of nudity, as Dany Carrel's nipple is briefly uncovered on the operating table.

Overall, Elfie is as much a descendant of silent cinema's *femmes fatales* as she is a thinly veiled rehash of the aggressive maneaters of 1950s melodrama, who would put weak-willed heroes (as Hans turns out to be) under their spell and would hide their true nature under a façade of innocence (see, for instance, Antonio Leonviola's extraordinary *The Temptress*, [*Le due verità*, 1951]). Elfie is beautiful, seductive, and singularly licentious. Her lust for love prompts her to welcome Hans in her arms despite the latter's mild objections ("Don't you want me?" "Of course, Elfie, but

afterwards..." "Who cares about that? What matters is that I want you now!") and later confessing to her one-night lover that "there were others before, who were able to take advantage of my solitude here, and also of my inexperience."

Feverish to the point of trance and lost in her own delusional passionate world, Elfie is a perturbing and sometimes eerie variation on the romantic heroine. Condemned to die and be revived again with the blood of young women, she is – even more than her predecessor, Duchess Du Grand, and her peer Asa – the embodiment of Italian Gothic's female character par excellence: the seductive undead who, to paraphrase a famous line of dialogue uttered by Barbara Steele's *revenante* in *Castle of Blood*, lives only when she loves.

Roberto Curti is the author of Italian Crime Filmography 1968–1980 and Italian Gothic Horror Films 1959–1969, as well as other books and essays on Italian cinema. He lives in Genoa, Italy.







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Multiple Mills: The Many Versions of *Mill of the Stone Women*

by Brad Stevens

Giorgio Ferroni's *Mill of the Stone Women* (*Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, 1960) begins with a brief pre-credits sequence showing writer Hans von Armin arriving in a fictitious Dutch village called Veeze, and enquiring after one Professor Wahl. The latter, he is told, lives "on the other side of the canal, at the mill of the stone women". A mill can be seen in rear of the frame, and although various international releases position the opening credits differently, the main title invariably appears over a shot in which this mill is visible. We naturally surmise that this onscreen mill is the one referred to by the title, and although von Armin cannot know he is merely a character in a film, he shares something close to this assumption, gesturing at the mill and asking the person giving him directions "Is that it?" The response he receives, however, is unambiguously negative: "No, it's further on."

So there are two mills, one of which is teasingly offered to us as having eponymous status before quickly being withdrawn from our consideration – for the actual 'mill of the stone women' will make its initial appearance even before the credits have finished playing. Although this seems to be among the most pointless of red herrings, it is nonetheless a neat indicator of the peculiar position occupied by both Ferroni's film specifically and this form of exploitation cinema in general. Unlike their American counterparts, in which everything – good and evil, normality and abnormality, science and superstition, hero and villain – is clearly demarcated (at least prior to the 1970s), European horror movies prefer to blur categories, resulting in a state of entropy that is as much textual as thematic. These films are

frequently constructed around notions of doubling, a tendency which is usually linked to a concern (derived from German expressionism) with the figure of the doppelgänger, but might just as easily adduce a purely formal emphasis on pattern-making, perhaps even an acknowledgement that whatever transfer we happen to be watching represents just one in a series of possibilities. For among the foremost characteristics of these works is their propensity to circulate in variant versions. It is not simply that such films push at whatever boundaries exist at the time of their creation (the presence in many cases of 'softer' takes of potentially controversial moments suggesting an awareness on the part of the filmmakers that boundaries often push back), but also that their circumstances of production render them incompatible with ideals concerning the unified text. *Mill of the Stone Women* might well stand as representative: an Italian-French co-production, its leads are played by French (Pierre Brice, Danny Carrell), Italian (Scilla Gabel, Marco Guglielmi, Liana Orfei) and German (Wolfgang Preiss, Herbert Böhme) actors, most of whom appear to be speaking their mother tongues, the end result being dubbed into the language of whatever country the film was being released in (though a song performed by Orfei remains in French in all variants). French prints bear the title *Le moulin des supplices*, and attribute the direction to 'Georges Ferroni'.

Although the French track is preferable, it can hardly be considered definitive. Indeed, certain scenes appear never to have been dubbed into French, since this version (running 89m 51s) is missing several moments, notably Professor Wahl's first appearance, ordering his manservant to halt the mill's carousel of statues ("Stop it, Konrad! Never abruptly. You understand?"), as well as the striking scene preceding it, in which Hans watches the carousel (the cut here makes it seem as if Hans's response to the sound of the carousel starting up is motivated by Wahl's entrance). Also missing is Wahl asking his housekeeper, Selma, about an unnamed

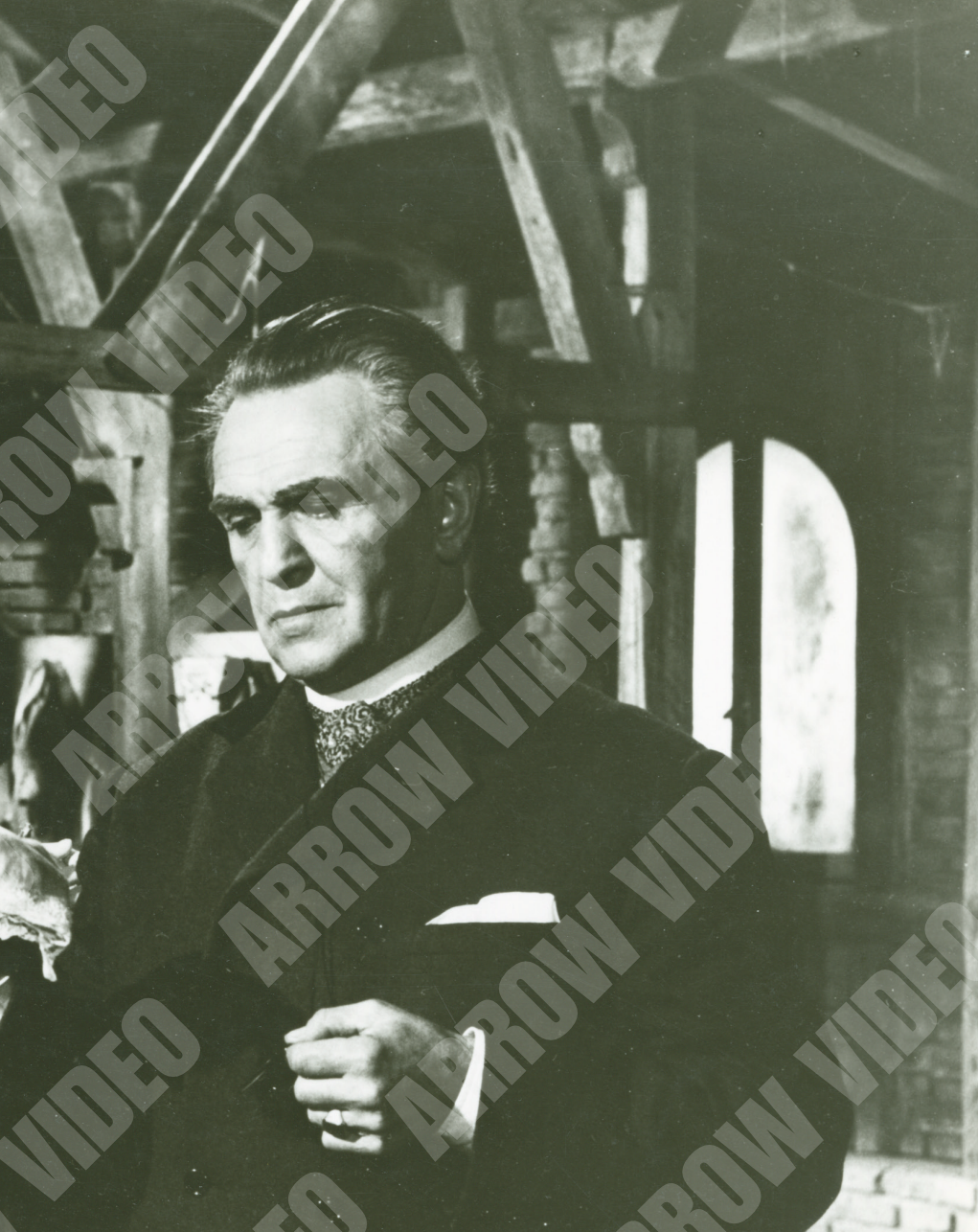




person, and being informed that she is “resting peacefully” (the first reference to the professor’s daughter, Elfie, seen by Hans earlier, but not yet identified); a hauntingly Dreyeresque scene in which Hans returns to the dock where we first saw him and joins a funeral procession; Hans seeing a knife next to a pool of blood on the floor; Wahl advising Hans to forget whatever he thinks he has observed “if you don’t want to be considered a madman”; most of the transfusion scene; and part of Hans’s conversation with his friend Raab (“In all this story you just told me, there are some things that are absurd, and others that are certainly true”). But the French version also contains some unique material: a close-up of Raab’s drawing of model/singer Annelore with a French inscription (“Annelore avec toi jusqu’en Enfer!”) has been substituted for the one used in Italian prints (“Annelore con te anche all’Inferno!”), though the Italian sketch can still be observed here in subsequent shots; similarly, a close-up of Elfie’s hand as she writes a letter to Hans makes use of an alternate take in which the text appears in French; and an entire scene has been added (apparently at the request of the French producers, in order to clarify the character relationships) in which Raab and his fellow art student Liselotte walk across a bridge while the latter discusses her unresolved romance with Hans (“We pretended to be engaged, but I really loved him. I still do. I never stopped... It’s as if I don’t exist. He never said he cared for me”). One oddity of the French-dubbed edition is that it is the only variant in which dialogue can be heard as Elfie watches Hans greeting Raab and Liselotte.

Ferroni’s cut, prepared for the Italian market, runs 95m 29s. An English-dubbed edition created for export (it was released in the UK in June 1963 as *Drops of Blood*) is identical aside from the credits, which attribute the “English language version” to John Hart (aka ‘John Davis Hart’) and Richard McNamara. But an alternate English version (running 94m 32s) was constructed specifically for US release





by Hugo Grimaldi (credited with “Executive Supervision”), who added music to previously silent footage and entirely redubbed Herbert Böhme’s performance as Professor Wahl, providing him with a strong German accent. Wahl’s dialogue was extensively rewritten for this dubbing session, though not to any great effect; the constant resort to slightly rephrased sentences suggests little beyond a preference for apples over oranges. The most notable aspect of Grimaldi’s redubbing is the opportunity it offered him to change the name of Wahl’s manservant from Konrad to Rudolf, an alteration that surely has no basis in anything except personal taste. Grimaldi also took advantage of the dialogueless opening shot to add a voiceover narration: “Trouble began with a woman. Here in the country village of Veeze outside Amsterdam, Holland, you are about to meet a young man, a writer, who would deny that obvious truth. For he is naive. He respects and loves women. He is about to change his mind.”

Other modifications are of interest in that, aside from the removal of a single shot in which Danny Carrell’s nipples are visible, they do not appear to have been motivated by the usual concerns (censorship, demands for a shorter running time), but rather by a desire to engage Ferroni in a battle for authorship, one which ironically mirrors attempts made by the film’s characters (whether ‘innocent’ or ‘corrupt’) to exert control over each other. The voiceover (whose claims are echoed by the trailer: “They say that trouble began with a woman – and you’ll see why!”) certainly functions in this way, either redefining the film as an expression of misogyny, or bringing out a misogynistic subtext perceived as already present. To say that Grimaldi’s subsequent adjustments have less obvious impact is to wonder why they were thought worth making in the first place. Replacing the shot of Elfie writing a letter in Italian (or French in the French version) with a newly filmed insert showing the message in English is obviously sensible (interestingly, Raab’s sketch retains

its Italian inscription), but one wonders why Grimaldi bothered creating a shot of a sign reading “Academy of Fine Arts” to introduce the scene of Wahl’s life drawing class – it’s as if he felt the need to answer a question it is difficult to imagine anyone actually asking. The main changes here are made to the section involving Hans’s hallucination. After Hans takes the drug handed to him by Wahl’s collaborator Dr. Bohlem, distortion effects have been added to two shots of the latter (the first as he says “I’m sure you’ll be feeling better”, the second as he remarks “A bloodstain? From what?”), and part of the hallucination – in which Hans imagines himself placing Elfie on a bed – has been both truncated and moved to slightly earlier (with additional distortion effects accompanying those dissolves that now bring us into and out of the scene), though this repositioning seems no more explicable than Grimaldi’s preference for ‘Rudolf’ over ‘Konrad’. Even more curiously, additional smoke has been added to exterior shots as Hans and Raab break into the windmill, while the image of the burning mill with motionless sails that concludes other versions has been replaced by a take in which the mill’s sails are rapidly turning.

Of course, these alterations were intended to be ‘invisible’ to audiences encountering *Mill of the Stone Women* during its original release. And if the availability of multiple cuts on Arrow’s Blu-ray enables modern viewers to make comparisons unavailable to their predecessors, it may well be that such juxtapositions, while inevitably distancing us from the text as it was initially offered to the general public (which is to say as an object for consumption), better enable us to get to grips with a mode of filmmaking which seems more fascinating not only with each passing year, but with each additional piece of information we acquire about it.

Brad Stevens is the author of Monte Hellman: His Life and Films (McFarland, 2003) and Abel Ferrara: The Moral Vision (FAB Press, 2004), as well as a regular contributor to Sight & Sound. He is currently working on an updated version of the Abel Ferrara book.



Contemporary Reviews

Rassegna Cinematografica – “Il mulino delle donne di pietra”
Not signed, *Corriere della Sera*, 2 October 1960

There is a windmill in the hazy Flemish plain, but nothing is milled inside it. It is inhabited by a strange professor who installed a macabre carillon of statues inside it, portraying famous women who perished under tragic circumstances, from Cleopatra to Joan of Arc, just to give an idea. Elfie, the professor's beautiful and sick daughter, falls for Hans, who, being already engaged, escapes vigorously from the girl's charms. The delicate Elfie passes away suddenly. Hans, horrified, confesses what happened to the deceased girl's father; but much to his even greater horror, Elfie reappears a few days later, more beautiful and alive than ever.

Was it then just a nightmare and poor Hans is crazy? No, he is not. Fact is, Elfie has already died many times, but the professor, with the help of a doctor, always managed to bring her back to life, draining the sick blood from her veins and replacing it with that of young girls whose bodies were then converted into the aforementioned statues.

Whispers and laments, creaking doors, empty coffins, wide open eyes, baroque sets, a big final fire which consumes the sinister building and its inhabitants: these are the elements of the color film *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* by Giorgio Ferroni, in which Italian, French and German actors are gathered in the common effort of eliciting some scares in the willing spectator. The decorative part is entrusted to Scilla Gabel, Liana Orfei and Dany Carrel, and only the latter comes alive to the final shot, together with Pierre Brice. The cast features also Wolfgang Preiss, Herbert Boehme, Olga Solbelli and Marco Guglielmi.

“Il mulino delle donne di pietra”: coffins, corpses, screams and creaks
Not signed, *La Stampa*, 9 March 1961

Diligently traced on classic and recent models alike, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* aims for horrific effects with a variation on the theme of the wax museum. A mad sculptor keeps his terminally ill daughter alive with the blood he obtains from pretty girls, whose artistically petrified body will enrich a macabre gallery. A courageous young man, after running the risk of going mad because of so many horrors, breaks the series of killings and saves his girlfriend from the sculptor’s clutches, leaving him and his people to perish in a great final fire.

Director Giorgio Ferroni has skill and a rather careful technique, but he is content with the usual paraphernalia of coffins, corpses, screams and creaks to elicit thrills. Therefore, force of habit makes the latter less frequent than expected.

Le Moulin des supplices

Michel Caen, *Midi-Minuit Fantastique* n. 3, October-November 1962

When, for five years, you insist on defending a blithely reviled director, when “serious” critics agree in denying him any semblance of style, it is heartwarming to see the *Midi-Minuit* program, five years after *Dracula*, the first film dedicated to Fisher: *Le Moulin des supplices*. As the admirers of Gourguet salute the advent of Chabrol, likewise Fisher fans celebrate Giorgio Ferroni. Those who, targeting *Midi-Minuit*, rather hastily classified Fisher among plagiarists, those who labeled him a compiler of the works of Whale and Browning (how many of them have seen Browning’s two *Dracula*, Whale’s two *Frankenstein* films?), those who, to hide their ignorance of basic works, joyfully attack modern production, will find today the most formal rebuttal to their accusations: Fisher’s work set a trend.



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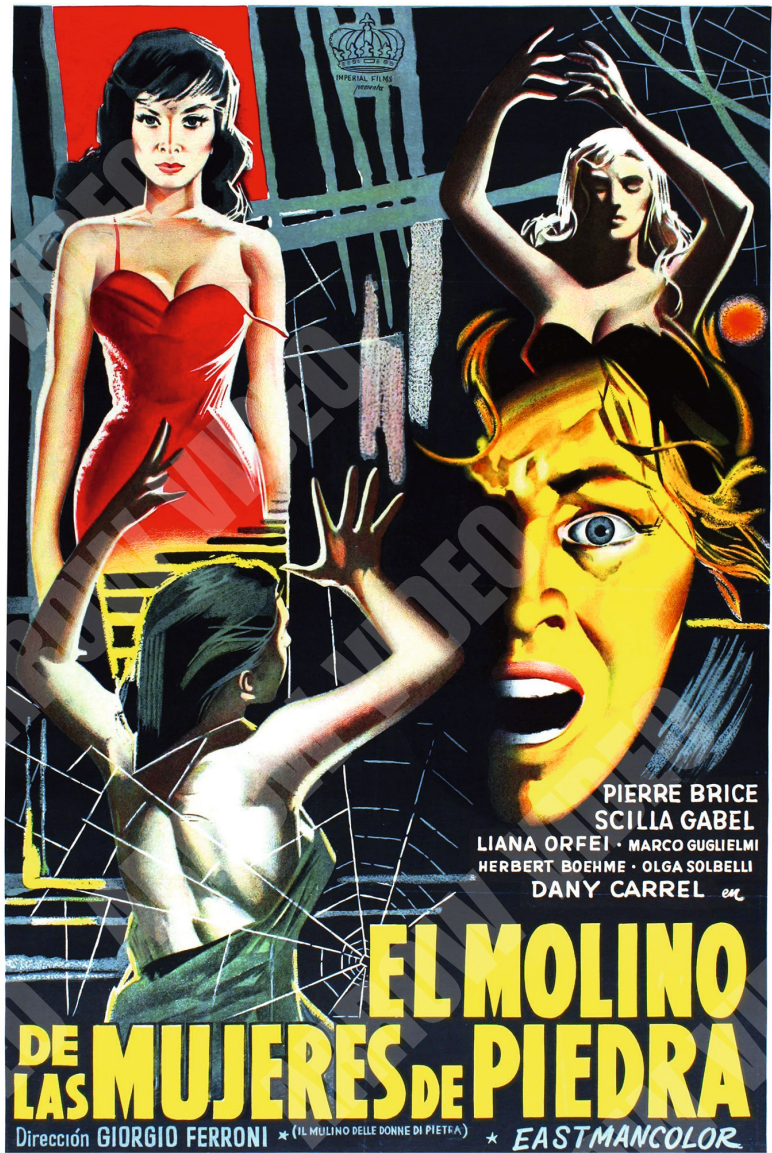
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As for Ferroni, it's not a matter of speaking of plagiarizing. This term, most particularly regarding cinema, has hardly any meaning. In art as in biology, there is no such thing as spontaneous generation, and every work is dependent on previous ones. Just as Fisher borrows from a certain 1930s lyricism (and nevertheless adds his own materialism and his "realism" which make him the filmmaker of Victorian scientism), likewise Ferroni owes much to Fisher. Plagiarism does intervene only when, poorly assimilated, inspiration shows through in clumsy reminiscences and unbalances the narrative, thus the term can in fact be applied only to an ugly work.

Quite the contrary, *Le Moulin des supplices* is a movie of great beauty. I won't deny the many borrowings from Fisher's aesthetics: the rooms decorated with dark fabrics, the ochre illumination of the interiors, the odd red spot of a velvet robe... So many touches that refer to the model. Certain scenes seem to come straight from *Dracula* or *The Brides of Dracula*, such as the inn sequence, shot with a dolly, which inevitably recalls the friendly taverns that Hammer build on the stage of Bray Studios. Even the music, which takes inspiration from James Bernard, would suit very well a Peter Cushing in top form, jumping nervously over the stair ramps, whereas Pavoni's excellent cinematography evokes Jack Asher's best works.

If the aesthetic references are many, the script borrows from a whole realm of the *fantastique*. One can easily spot *Blood of the Vampire*, *Le Rideau cramoisi*,⁶ *House of Wax* and the baroque and little-known *I vampiri*, where Gianna Maria Canale "kept her young girl complexion" thanks to the blood of innocent girls. This scenario-catalogue does not bother me, for Ferroni has merged harmoniously such diverse influences and made *Moulin* a very attractive film, and most of all marvelously crazy.

⁶ Aka *The Crimson Curtain* (1953, Alexandre Astruc), based on Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly's novel.





Is that to say that the movie is without flaws? Certainly not. The first part is a bit long, sometimes even awkward, and unfortunately one can glimpse some automobiles at the limit of the depth of field, and the ravishing Scilla writes (in the French version) with a ball-point pen such as you and I. However, these are but minor reproaches to the movie, considering that such exposition, albeit imperfect, introduces to us the splendid Elfi [sic]. The first appearance of this marvelous woman, preceded by a greyhound bitch, evokes certain sequences of *La maschera del demonio* where Barbara Steele radiated the same languid charm.

Scilla Gabel gathers here the ambiguous seduction of Edgar Allan Poe's dying beauties and the frenzy of Apollinaire's "religious lovers". Everyone knows that languid illnesses encourage the pleasures of love, and we know the reputation that phthisis earned during the century of Romanticism. In this regard, the "rape" of poor (!) Pierre Brice by Scilla Gabel is admirable. The sequence opens on a very curious fetishist notation: the fetishism of sleep. When Hans enters the bedroom, Elfi lies motionless in her red velvet robe, her too peaceful sleep perturbs Hans and yet he hesitates to wake her up, preferring to admire her a while longer, abandoned, inert.

This notation merely announces the story's latent necrophilia which will come to the fore freely later. If *Le Moulin des supplices* assimilates to its advantage a certain *fantastique* (the wax museum, "vampirism", petrification, the mad scientist, cemeteries...), it does not disdain the addition of unsavory seductions: necrophilia, very accentuated fetishism (the black ankle boots), and above all a certain sadism which is admittedly more aesthetic than "effective". Bound maidens, needles, scalpels, it's all there. Ferroni also takes advantage of the loosening of censorship to stealthily exhibit Dany Carrel's breast, while she is bound with leather straps atop an operating table. Thankfully, there is not the slightest trace of vulgarity in all that.





When Hans puts on the purple bed the lifeless Elfi, who, like Morella, will be reborn in herself, one thinks of an Alberto Martini illustration for Edgar Allan Poe, and when the carillon statues spin one last time during the fire and the flames reveal the dead bodies under the wax, it is some Bosch figure which comes to mind. I could quote everything in this film without exhausting its beauties... In this dreary cinematographic season where the worst turnips occupy Parisian screens, *Le Moulin des supplices* reassures us about the vitality of the cinema we love. It is the most beautiful sequel to the all too wise *Le Rideau cramoisi*, ruined by the display of style. Most of all, it allows us to admire the ravishing Scilla Gabel, who dazzles our gaze when, over her frogging dress, her hair falls "blacker than the raven wings of the midnight".

Le Moulin des supplices

Raymond Lefèvre, *Image et Son - La Revue du Cinéma* – Saison 64
(January 1965), p. 189:

A film *fantastique* of uneven value which is especially valid for its last ten minutes (the extraordinary mill fire and the decomposition of the petrified bodies). The idea behind the script is interesting but the realization is not always up to the intentions. It would have taken a more nervous rhythm, the effects are too predictable, and the direction of actors lacks vigor.

Les Films Eddie De Jong présentent



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CARREL
Pierre
BRICE

LE MOULIN DES SUPPLIGES

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Le Moulin des supplices

Not signed, *L'Écran Fantastique* n. 2, série 2 (April-June 1971), p. 31:

The story is similar to that of *Les Yeux sans visage*, but here Professor Wahl steals blood and not flesh, to save the life of his daughter Elfy.

One of the best Italian *fantastique* films.

Le Moulin des supplices

Jean-Paul Török, *Positif* n. 48, October 1962, p. 74

This is the horror film of the Common Market (except England), a French-Italian co-production with a decidedly German atmosphere, whose action is situated somewhere in the Netherlands, undoubtedly because of the windmill. This half black castle, half museum of horrors, is the home of a repulsive doctor, a scary sculptor, and the latter's daughter, diagnosed with a mysterious blood disease. Starting with these elements, which could not be more traditional, the threads and knots of the intrigue are easily foreseeable, and half-heartedly embroider on classic themes: we'll soon realize that the two acolytes drain the blood of unfortunate creatures to regenerate that of the sculptor's (leukemic?) daughter. The sculptor turns dead bodies into wax statues, elements of a macabre carillon moved by the windmill's wings. The surgical graft, which had been exploited a great deal, here leaves room for blood transfusion, end-of-century-style, as in *Blood of the Vampire*, all embellished with the "wax masks" variant. The problem with this European film lies in its conforming to a borrowed scenario, yet it is commendable, first of all because of the rather judicious use of color (the lesson of English films has been retained, even though Eastmancolor is unfit to render the "bloody" nuance which gave them their charm), then, the influence of German films of the 1920s, noticeable in the Expressionist

acting of some thespians, and in the ruptured order of the décor strewn with shattered limbs and with chopped heads and hands. The young hero (reminiscing?) is well-suited to the name Von Arnim, and a certain romantic influence marks the only purely Fantastic sequence, that of the resurrection of the false dead, where reality and hallucination are skillfully combined. The final fire is complemented with a parade of burning corpses moving to the sound of barrel organ music, a spectacle of horrible beauty arranged with very confident taste. There is no need to point out that another important reason to take this film as an innocent pleasure is Dany Carrel's smile as she strolls with a little girl's grace amid such scares.

Sourced and translated by Roberto Curti















About the Restoration

Mill of the Stone Women / Il mulino delle donne di pietra is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.66:1 with Italian, English and French mono sound and was restored by Arrow Films.

The original 35mm negative was scanned and restored in 2K resolution at L'Immagine Ritrovata, Bologna. Additional 35mm intermediary elements were scanned and restored in 2K for the opening titles in the English export version.

The film was confirmed and graded at R3Store Studios, London. The separate French and US versions were subsequently conformed at Arrow Films, using a combination of the original 35mm negative and additional scanned material supplied by Subkultur Entertainment via LSP Medien.

The mono mixes were remastered from the original sound negatives at L'Immagine Ritrovata. The audio synch will appear slightly loose against the picture, due to the fact that the dialogue was recorded entirely in post-production, as per the production standards of the period.

All original materials supplied for this restoration were made available by Intramovies.

Restoration supervised by James White and Michael Mackenzie, Arrow Films.

L'Immagine Ritrovata:

Gilles Barberis, Alessia Navantieri, Charlotte Oddo, Caterina Palpacelli,
Davide Pozzi, Elena Tammaccaro

R3Store Studios:

Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Rich Watson

Intramovies:

Paola Corvino, Paola Mantovani, Manuela Mazzone

Subkultur Entertainment:

Tino Zimmermann

LSP Medien:

Benjamin Albrecht, Jan Frederik Kuhn

Production Credits

Discs and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**
QC **Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Disc Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services / Bea Alcalá (Disc 1)**
Fidelity in Motion / David Mackenzie (Disc 2)
Design **Sister Hyde, Oink Creative**
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