

= Henri @-@ Georges Clouzot =

Henri @-@ Georges Clouzot ( French pronunciation : ? [ ? ? ?i ???? kluzo ] ; ( 1907 @-@ 08 @-@ 18 ) 18 August 1907 ? 12 January 1977 ( 1977 @-@ 01 @-@ 12 ) ) was a French film director , screenwriter and producer . He is best remembered for his work in the thriller film genre , having directed *The Wages of Fear* and *Les Diaboliques* , which are critically recognized to be among the greatest films from the 1950s . Clouzot also directed documentary films , including *The Mystery of Picasso* , which was declared a national treasure by the government of France .

Clouzot was an early fan of the cinema and , desiring a career as a writer , moved to Paris . He was later hired by producer Adolphe Osso to work in Berlin , writing French @-@ language versions of German films . After being fired from German studios due to his friendship with Jewish producers , Clouzot returned to France , where he spent years bedridden after contracting tuberculosis . Upon recovering , Clouzot found work in Nazi occupied France as a screenwriter for the German @-@ owned company Continental Films . At Continental , Clouzot wrote and directed films that were very popular in France . His second film *Le Corbeau* drew controversy over its harsh look at provincial France and Clouzot was fired from Continental before its release . As a result of his association with Continental , Clouzot was barred by the French government from filmmaking until 1947 .

After the ban was lifted , Clouzot reestablished his reputation and popularity in France during the late 1940s with successful films including *Quai des Orfèvres* . After the release of his comedy film *Miquette et sa mère* , Clouzot married Véra Gibson @-@ Amado , who would star in his next three feature films . In the early and mid @-@ 1950s , Clouzot drew acclaim from international critics and audiences for *The Wages of Fear* and *Les Diaboliques* . Both films would serve as source material for remakes decades later . After the release of *La Vérité* , Clouzot 's wife Véra died of a heart attack and Clouzot 's career suffered due to depression , illness and new critical views of films from the French New Wave . Clouzot 's career became less active in later years , limited to a few television documentaries and two feature films in the 1960s . Clouzot wrote several unused scripts in the 1970s and died in Paris in 1977 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early years = = =

Henri @-@ Georges Clouzot was born in Niort , France , to mother Suzanne Clouzot and father Georges Clouzot , a book store owner . He was the first of three children in a middle @-@ class family . Clouzot showed talent by writing plays and playing piano recitals . In 1922 , Clouzot 's father 's bookstore went bankrupt and his family moved to Brest , France , where his father became an auctioneer . In Brest , Henri @-@ Georges Clouzot went to Naval School , but was unable to become a Naval Cadet due to his myopia . At the age of 18 , Clouzot left for Paris to study political science . While living in Paris , he became friends with several magazine editors . His writing talents led him to theater and cinema as a playwright , lyricist and adaptor @-@ screenwriter . The quality of his work led producer Adolphe Osso to hire him and send him to Germany to work in Studio Babelsberg in Berlin , translating scripts for foreign language films shot there .

= = = Career = = =

= = = Screenwriting career ( 1931 ? 1942 ) = = =

Throughout the 1930s , Clouzot worked by writing and translating scripts , dialogue and occasionally lyrics for over twenty films . While living in Germany , Clouzot saw the films of F. W. Murnau and Fritz Lang and was deeply influenced by their expressionist style . In 1931 , he made his first short film , *La Terreur des Batignolles* , from a script by Jacques de Baroncelli . The film is a

15 @-@ minute comedy with three actors . Film historian and critic Claude Beylie reported this short was " surprisingly well made with expressive use of shadows and lighting contrasts that Clouzot would exploit on the full @-@ length features he would make years later " . Clouzot 's later wife , Inès de Gonzalez , said in 2004 that *La Terreur des Batignolles* added nothing to Clouzot 's reputation . In Berlin , Clouzot saw several parades for Adolf Hitler and was shocked at how oblivious he felt France was to what was happening in Germany . In 1934 , Clouzot was fired from UFA Studios for his friendship with Jewish film producers such as Adolphe Osso and Pierre Lazareffe .

In 1935 , Clouzot was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was sent first to Haute @-@ Savoie and then to Switzerland , where he was bedridden for nearly five years in all . Clouzot 's time in the sanatorium would be very influential on his career . While bedridden , Clouzot read constantly and learned the mechanics of storytelling to help improve his scripts . Clouzot also studied the fragile nature of the other people in the sanatorium . Clouzot had little money during this period , and was provided with financial and moral support by his family and friends . By the time Clouzot left the sanatorium and returned to Paris , World War II had broken out . French cinema had changed because many of the producers he had known had fled France to escape Nazism .

Clouzot 's health problems kept him from military service . In 1939 , he met actor Pierre Fresnay , who was already an established film star in France . Clouzot wrote the script for Fresnay 's only directorial feature *Le Duel* , as well as two plays for him : *On prend les mêmes* , which was performed in December 1940 , and *Comédie en trois actes* , which was performed in 1942 . Despite writing scripts for films and plays , Clouzot was so poor that he resorted to trying to sell lyrics to French singer Édith Piaf , who declined to purchase them . After France was invaded by Germany and subsequently during the German occupation of France during World War II , the German @-@ operated film production company Continental Films was established in France in October 1940 . Alfred Grevin , the director of Continental , knew Clouzot from Berlin and offered him work to adapt stories of writer Stanislas @-@ André Steeman . Clouzot felt uncomfortable working for the Germans , but was in desperate need of money and could not refuse Grevin 's offer . Clouzot 's first film for Continental was the adaptation of Steeman 's mystery novel *Six hommes mort* ( *Six Dead Men* ) . Clouzot retitled the film *Le Dernier des six* , having been influenced by actress Suzy Delair while writing the script , allowing her to choose the name of the character she would play .

= = = = Early directorial work ( 1942 ? 1947 ) = = = =

After the success of *Le Dernier des six* , Clouzot was hired as the head of Continental 's screenwriting division . Clouzot began work on his second Steeman adaptation , which he would also direct , titled *The Murderer Lives at Number 21* . It starred Fresnay and Delair playing the same roles they had performed in *Le Dernier des six* . Released in 1942 , the film was popular with audiences and critics . Clouzot 's next film was *Le Corbeau* based on a true story about a woman who sent poison pen letters in France in 1922 . Grevin was against Clouzot making this film , stating that topic was " dangerous " . *Le Corbeau* would be the last film that Fresnay and Clouzot would work together on . Clouzot had used all possible means to try to anger the actor during the filming , and after he quarreled with Fresnay 's wife , Yvonne Printemps , Fresnay and Clouzot broke off their friendship.*Le Corbeau* was a great success in France , with nearly 250 @,@ 000 people having seen it in the first months of its initial release . *Le Corbeau* was released in 1943 and generated controversy from the right @-@ wing Vichy regime , the left @-@ wing Resistance press and the Catholic Church . The Catholic Church considered the film " painful and hard , constantly morbid in its complexity " . The Vichy press dubbed it the antithesis of the *Révolution nationale* and demanded it be banned due to its immoral values . The anti @-@ Nazi resistance press considered it Nazi propaganda because of its negative portrayal of the French populace . Two days before the release of *Le Corbeau* , Continental films fired Clouzot .

After the liberation of France , Clouzot and several other directors were tried in court for collaborating with the Germans . For his sentence , Clouzot was forbidden from going on set of any film or from using a film camera for the rest of his life . Clouzot received letters of support from

filmmakers and artists Jean Cocteau , René Clair , Marcel Carné and Jean @-@ Paul Sartre , who were against the ruling . Clouzot 's sentence was later shortened from life to two years . There is no official document making note of any apology or appeal . During his two @-@ year banishment from filming , Clouzot worked with one of his supporters , Jean @-@ Paul Sartre , who had been one of the first people to defend *Le Corbeau* .

= = = Return to filmmaking and acclaim ( 1947 ? 1960 ) = = =

After Clouzot 's ban was lifted , he reestablished his reputation and popularity in France during the late 1940s with films such as *Quai des Orfèvres* and *Manon* . For *Quai des Orfèvres* , Clouzot asked the author Stanislas @-@ André Steeman for a copy of his novel , *Légitime défense* , to adapt into a film . Clouzot started writing the script before the novel arrived for him to read . *Quai des Orfèvres* was released in 1947 and was the fourth most popular film in France , drawing 5 @.@ 5 million spectators in that year . Clouzot directed and wrote two films that were released in 1949 . For *Manon* , he wanted to cast unknown actors . He scoured schools to find an actress for the lead role , and chose 17 @-@ year @-@ old Cécile Aubry after viewing over 700 girls . *Manon* was released in 1948 and was watched by 3 @.@ 4 million filmgoers in France as well as winning the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival . Clouzot directed and wrote the short film *Le Retour de Jean* , which was part of anthology film *Return to Life* . *Le Retour de Jean* was influenced by the short period when Clouzot lived in Germany in the early 1930s and stars Louis Jouvet as a survivor of a concentration camp who finds a wounded Nazi war criminal whom he interrogates and tortures . Clouzot 's next film was the comedy *Miquette et Sa Mère* , which was a financial failure . During the film 's production , Clouzot met Véra Gibson @-@ Amado , whom he married on 15 January 1950 . Clouzot and Véra took a film crew with them to Véra 's homeland in Brazil for their honeymoon , where Clouzot made his first attempt at directing a documentary film . The Brazilian government took issue with Clouzot filming the poverty of people in the favelas rather than the more picturesque parts of Brazil . The film was never finished because the costs became too high . Clouzot became fascinated with the region and wrote a book , *Le cheval des dieux* , recounting his trip .

Upon returning to France , he was offered a script written by Georges @-@ Jean Arnaud , an expatriate living in South America who had written about his own experiences there . Clouzot found it easy to imagine the setting of the script and was very anxious to film Arnaud 's story . He started writing the film , *The Wages of Fear* , with his brother , Jean Clouzot , who would collaborate with him on all his subsequent films under the name of Jérôme Geronimi . Production on *The Wages of Fear* lasted from 1951 to 1952 . In order to gain as much independence as possible , Clouzot created his own production company called Véra Films , which he named after his wife . The sole female role in *The Wages of Fear* is played by Véra . Clouzot wrote the role specifically for his wife , as the character does not exist in the original novel . *The Wages of Fear* is about a South American town where a group of desperate men are offered money to drive trucks carrying nitroglycerin through rough terrain to put out an oil well fire . *The Wages of Fear* was the second most popular film in France in 1953 and was seen by nearly 7 million spectators . It won awards for Best Film and Best Actor ( for Charles Vanel ) at the Cannes Film Festival . Clouzot 's next big hit was *Diabolique* , whose screenplay he took away from director Alfred Hitchcock . *Diabolique* involves the story of a cruel headmaster who brutalizes his wife and his mistress . The two women murder him and dump his body in a swimming pool , but when the pool is drained , no corpse is found . In 1954 , *Diabolique* won the Louis Delluc Prize and the New York Film Critics Circle Award for best foreign film . In this early and mid @-@ 1950s period , with the films *The Wages of Fear* and *Diabolique* , Clouzot came to be fully embraced by international critics and audiences . Both films were screened and reviewed in America as well as in France , and were rated among the best thrillers of the decade . In 1955 , Clouzot directed the documentary *The Mystery of Picasso* , about the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso . The film follows Picasso drawing or painting 15 different works , all of which were intentionally destroyed following the film 's production . Clouzot and Picasso were old acquaintances , having met when Clouzot was 14 . *The Mystery of Picasso* won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival , but was a financial failure in France , being seen by only 37 @,@ 000

filmgoers during its initial run in 1956 . In 1984 , the film was declared a national treasure by the government of France .

Clouzot 's next feature film was *Les Espions* , which was released in 1957 . *Les Espions* featured actors from around the world including Véra Clouzot , Curd Jürgens , Sam Jaffe and Peter Ustinov . *Les Espions* would be the last acting role for Clouzot 's wife Véra , who had been suffering from severe heart problems since filming *Diabolique* . *Les Espions* is set in a rundown sanitarium that is taken over by international spies . One of the spies claims to have invented a nuclear explosive device which attracts the attention of the Russian and American counterspies . *Les Espions* was not released in the United States and was a financial failure in France . Clouzot later admitted that he only liked the first two @-@ thirds of *Les Espions* . Producer Raoul Levy suggested Clouzot 's next film should feature Brigitte Bardot as the lead actress . In response , Clouzot wrote the script for *La Vérité* . Bardot plays Dominique Marceau , who is on trial for the murder of her former boyfriend Gilbert Tellier . As her trial progresses , the relationship between Dominique and Gilbert becomes more finely shaped . Bardot later described *La Vérité* as her favorite of all the films she worked on . Released in 1960 , *La Vérité* was the second most popular film in France with 5 @.@ 7 million spectators and was Bardot 's highest grossing film . The film was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film .

= = = Later career and failing health ( 1960 ? 1977 ) = = =

Although Clouzot 's reputation had grown internationally , he lost notability in French cinema due to rise of the French New Wave . The New Wave directors refused to take Clouzot 's thriller films seriously , and expressed their displeasure publicly through articles and reviews in the film criticism publication , *Cahiers du cinéma* . Clouzot took their criticism to heart , saying in the magazine *Lui* that he didn 't find his films *Diabolique* and *Miquette et Sa Mère* important or interesting anymore . The next film he worked on was *L 'Enfer* , which was never completed . The film examines the sexual jealousy of a man towards his flirtatious wife , whose psychological state deforms everything with desire . Lead actor Serge Reggiani fell ill one week after shooting began and had to be replaced . Clouzot himself also became ill during production , which led doctors and insurance agents to order the production be stopped . Between 1965 and 1967 , Clouzot filmed for French television five documentaries of Herbert von Karajan conducting Verdi 's *Requiem* , Dvořák 's *New World Symphony* , Schumann 's *4th Symphony* , Beethoven 's *5th Symphony* and Mozart 's *5th Violin Concerto* . After production finished on the documentaries , Clouzot was able to finance his final picture .

Clouzot 's return to work reassured the doctors and insurers and he returned to the film studio to make his final film *La Prisonnière* . The film began production in September 1967 and was halted when Clouzot fell ill and was hospitalized until April 1968 . He began filming *La Prisonnière* again in August 1968 . Clouzot incorporated stylistic elements of his aborted film *L 'enfer* into *La Prisonnière* . *La Prisonnière* is about a woman who is introduced to a photographer who takes masochistic submissive pictures of young women . The woman volunteers herself as a model for these pictures and is surprised at her own pleasure in the activity . After finishing *La Prisonnière* , Clouzot 's health grew worse . In the 1970s , he wrote a few more scripts without ever filming them , including a feature about Indochina . He also planned to direct a pornographic film in 1974 for Francis Micheline , but the film was abandoned . Clouzot 's health grew worse and he required open @-@ heart surgery in November 1976 . On 12 January 1977 Clouzot died in his apartment while listening to *The Damnation of Faust* . Clouzot is buried beside Véra in the Montmartre Cemetery .

= = = Personal life = = =

In the late @-@ 1930s , Clouzot went to a cabaret show featuring entertainers Mistinguett and Suzy Delair at the *Deus Anes Cabaret* . Clouzot waited for Delair at the stage door and after meeting her , the two became a romantic couple for the next 12 years . Clouzot had Delair star in two of his films , *The Murderer Lives at Number 21* and *Quai des Orfèvres* . Delair eventually left Clouzot after

working with him on Quai des Orfèvres .

Clouzot met his first wife Vera Clouzot through actor Léo Lapara , who had minor parts in Le Retour de Jean and Quai des Orfèvres . Véra met Clouzot after divorcing Lapara and while working as a continuity assistant on Clouzot 's Miquette et Sa Mère . Clouzot named his production company after Véra and had her star in all three films made by the company : The Wages of Fear , Diabolique and Les Espions . Véra also contributed to the script of La Vérité . Véra Clouzot died of a heart attack shortly after the filming of La Vérité . Clouzot fell into a depression over her death . After her funeral , he moved to Tahiti , but returned to France in December 1960 .

Clouzot met his second wife , Inès de Gonzalez , for the first time at a casting call for a film based on Vladimir Nabokov 's Laughter in the Dark . In 1962 , Clouzot met de Gonzalez again after she had returned from South America . In December 1963 , Clouzot and Inès de Gonzalez married . In the 1960s , Clouzot converted to Roman Catholicism .

= = Style = =

With the exception of the comedy film Miquette et sa mère , every directorial feature of Clouzot involves deception , betrayal and violent deaths . When basing screenplays on written work , Clouzot often changed the stories dramatically , using only key points of the original story . The author Stanislas @-@ André Steeman , whom Clouzot worked with twice , said Clouzot would only " build something after having contemptuously demolished any resemblance to the original , purely for the ambition of effect " . When writing for his own features , Clouzot created characters that were usually corrupt and spineless , with the capacity for both good and evil within them .

Clouzot was very demanding with his actors and would often quarrel with them to get them in the mood he desired . Suzy Delair recalled that Clouzot slapped her , but said of it , " So what ? He slapped others as well ... He was tough but I 'm not about to complain " . Pierre Fresnay recalled that Clouzot " worked relentlessly , which made for a juicy spectacle ... That 's to say nothing for his taste of violence , which he never tried with me " . When working with Bardot , one scene required Bardot 's character to drool and sleep . Clouzot offered her powerful sleeping pills , saying they were aspirin , and this led to Bardot 's stomach being pumped . Although Clouzot was harsh on his actors , he did not treat them fiercely off set . Delair recalled that off set there was an " innocence about him " that was not seen .

Clouzot biographer Marc Godin suggested Clouzot 's life provides clues to understanding his style as a filmmaker . Clouzot was viewed by many of his collaborators as a pessimist , short @-@ tempered , and almost always angry . Actress Brigitte Bardot described Clouzot as " a negative being , forever at odds with himself and the world around him " . Clouzot 's outlook on life is reflected in his own films that reveal the darker side of humanity .

= = Legacy = =

Despite criticism following the arrival of the French New Wave , career retrospectives of Clouzot 's work have been positive . Twenty years after his death , film critic Noël Herpe wrote in the French film journal Positif that " Les Diaboliques ( just like Les Espions and La Verite ) reveals a sterile and increasingly exaggerated urge to experiment with the powers of fiction " . Film historian Philippe Pilard wrote , " There is no doubt that if Clouzot had worked for Hollywood and applied the formulas of U.S. studios , today he would be lauded by the very critics who choose to ignore him " . Clouzot today is generally known for his thriller films The Wages of Fear and Diabolique . Clouzot 's ability in the genre led to comparisons with Alfred Hitchcock . Clouzot respected Hitchcock 's work , stating , " I admire him very much and am flattered when anyone compares a film of mine to his " .

Several of Clouzot 's films have been remade since their original releases . Director Otto Preminger adapted Le Corbeau into his 1951 film , The 13th Letter . In 1977 , the year of Clouzot 's death , William Friedkin directed a remake of The Wages of Fear called Sorcerer . French director Claude Chabrol adapted Clouzot 's script for L 'Enfer in 1994 also titled L 'Enfer . In 1996 , an American remake of Les Diaboliques was released under the title Diabolique , starring Sharon Stone .

= = Filmography = =

The Murderer Lives at Number 21 ( 1942 )

Le Corbeau ( 1943 )

Quai des Orfèvres ( 1947 )

Manon ( 1949 )

Retour à la Vie ( 1949 )

Miquette et Sa Mère ( 1950 )

The Wages of Fear ( 1953 )

Les Diaboliques ( 1954 )

The Mystery of Picasso ( 1956 )

Les Espions ( 1957 )

La Vérité ( 1960 )

La prisonnière ( 1968 )