Caroline Anderson

Dr. Saskia Ziolkowski

America From Abroad

April 01, 2021

Review of Article on *U.S. Go Home*

This article was published by Valarie Orlando an Associate Professor of French and Italian at the University of Maryland College Park and discusses a study by Judith Mayne on the cinematographic oeuvre of Claire Denis. Judith Mayne is a professor of French and Women’s Studies at the Ohio State University. The purpose of this study was “to explore the range of Claire Denis's career, one that is shaped by particular collaborations with actors and writers and other artists and …. to examine her major films in detail in order to understand and appreciate Denis's remarkable cinematic vision”. Orlando and Mayne argue that Denis’s vision is shaped by desire, touch and the perception of people in her films. Their analysis is shaped by Denis’s works beginning in the late 1960s and continuing to the time of publication, 2007 and includes an interview with Denis in July, 2003. They argue that Denis’s work can be broken down into two parts “Seeing Others”, which *U.S. Go Home* falls in, and “Troubles in Paradise”.

The essay argues that Denis is “the woman behind the camera” and the idea of looking and not-looking is very important to her. For example, Alain’s hidden dance in his room in *U.S. Go Home* exemplifies her role as someone who is “observing worlds that are not necessarily her own”. The essay also speaks to Denis’s use of tracking shots such as those of Martine in the house party to show the character’s position both in space but also in time. The audience for this text is primarily others with training in cinema analyses and is more academic than a film review for the average person. It was published in Quarterly Review of Film and Video, a peer-reviewed Academic Journal covering moving image studies and one of the best-known journals in the field of cinema.

One of the major blind spots of this essay is that although Orlando discusses the cinematic influences on Denis as well as how her films are in conversation with each other it does little to address the broader political and social happenings that could and did influence Denis in her making of her films, especially *U.S. Go Home*. It is fine to say that Denis presents colonialism to a French audience throughout her career, but it would have been better to address how after the May 1968 student’s revolution created social turmoil in France it was the perfect time to have this dialogue. Indeed, there was no mention of her engaging with ideas of coming of age, only that of her portrayal of time. This seems odd to omit given that the article focuses on Denis’s progression as a director. However, this article did thoroughly explore Denis’s career and the interview provided context in her own words for her goals for her films which was helpful.

This article gives greater context to my group’s analyses of *U.S. Go Home*, both in terms of French History and recent politics, but also in terms of Denis’s broader cinematic tones and themes. U.S. go home is a very confusing film to watch out of context both for its lack of dialogue and dark lighting and because the movie itself is in French so some of the tones and connotations can be missed. Having the background on Dennis’s other works as well as some of her overall goals as a filmmaker helps us analyze the film both for its meaning and for how it fits into Dennis as a director.

Works Cited

Valérie Orlando (2007) Review: *Claire Denis* by Judith Mayne Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 25:1, 87-91, DOI: [10.1080/10509200500541223](https://doi-org.proxy.lib.duke.edu/10.1080/10509200500541223)