



**Monday, May 22, 7:30 pm**

Reviewed by Ann Hornaday      Rated PG-13      118 Mins.

‘Paterson’ arrives like a warm embrace in the midst of winter, its tenderness and compassion first inspiring the viewer to reach out and hug its characters, then the man who made it. Written and directed by Jim Jarmusch — who for three decades has personified indie-film cool and ironic detachment — this love letter to love and letters feels both like a throwback and an improbably bold leap forward.



Adam Driver plays Paterson, a bus driver in Paterson, N.J., who wakes up at 6:15 every morning, goes to work, spends his day eavesdropping on passengers, comes home to his wife, Laura (Golshifteh Farahani), walks their dog, stops at the corner bar for one beer, returns home, goes to bed and starts all over again the next morning. Paterson is a creature of habit with the soul of an artist — he composes simple, carefully crafted poems which appear on screen while he works them out in his head — whereas Laura’s creative life is chaotic and ever-changing. One day it’s cupcakes, the next it’s country music. Whatever she’s obsessed with, Paterson unconditionally supports her, even when her mania for black-and-white design threatens to drown him in a sea of polka dots, stripes and swirls.

There’s little narrative tension in ‘Paterson,’ aside from one or two random encounters Paterson has in the bar, and an episode involving the bus. What becomes clear in the course of the movie is that Jarmusch has constructed his own version of a poem, with recurring images and themes that allow him to delve into the nature of commitment, artistic ambition and how inner life is shaped by the tidal pull of place and history.

Laura knows that her husband is a great poet. He could join the ranks of fellow Patersonian Allen Ginsberg, but he’s adamantly undriven. In fact, he’s a driver in Paterson, played by a Driver as Paterson, a nifty example of the motif of twins and doubles that Jarmusch plays with throughout a movie whose circular structure begins to feel as comforting as a familiar song — in this case, an

anthem to a city that not only produced Ginsberg, but the boxer Hurricane Carter, the comedian Lou Costello and the anarchist Gaetano Bresci.

Those luminaries and others are referenced in ‘Paterson,’ which Jarmusch and cinematographer Frederick Elmes frame in ways that heighten the title city’s postindustrial beauty, from its stout redbrick factories and bridges to its waterfalls. (Paterson’s poems, reminiscent of William Carlos Williams — another working man from New Jersey, who paid his own homage to the city — are composed by Ron Padgett. Supporting players include the rapper Method Man and erstwhile ‘Moonrise Kingdom’ couple Jared Gilman and Kara Hayward.) If Farahani’s Laura threatens to grow cloying with her boundless, breathless enthusiasms, Driver is her perfect foil, his hangdog features and deliberate physicality singularly well-suited to Jarmusch’s talent for finding some of cinema’s greatest faces.

Lyrical, winsome and unhurried, ‘Paterson’ finds Jarmusch attentive to the same straightforward visual composition and human foibles that graced such early films as ‘Stranger Than Paradise’ and ‘Down by Law,’ as well as his succeeding works. (There are also dashes of his signature screwball humor, here delivered by Paterson’s strong-willed bulldog Marvin.) But unlike much of the filmmaker’s oeuvre, ‘Paterson’ is characterized by a sincerity so disarming that at first it feels like it might be put on. The seasoned Jarmusch fan may wait for the absurdist shoe to drop, but it never does — or at least not on the film’s striving protagonists.



Instead, viewers are treated to a portrait of romantic devotion, contentment and vocation all the more affecting for being so utterly, unapologetically heartfelt. Although Rilke is one of the few poets who isn’t explicitly invoked in ‘Paterson,’ the movie uncannily captures his observation about two solitudes that instinctively ‘protect and touch and greet each other.’ Here, Jarmusch draws a similarly tender portrait of love, in this case of two people nurturing one another’s most fragile dreams and guarding them anew, day in and day out.

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**Monday, June 12, 7:30 pm**

*Reviewed by Justin Chang / Contact Report PG-13 113 Mins.*

In the opening moments of “Frantz,” the latest intricately layered mystery from the French writer-director François Ozon, a German woman named Anna (Paula Beer) visits the grave of her fiancé, a soldier recently slain in the trenches of World War I. You can sense the war’s immense reach in a few fleeting details — a man who whistles in Anna’s direction is missing an arm — but also in the eerie quiet that has descended on the town’s cobbled streets and in the somber cast of the movie’s black-and-white images.

If you happen to have seen Ernst Lubitsch’s “Broken Lullaby,” the 1932 antiwar drama on which this new film is based, you might also sense something more: a curious and telling shift in perspective. Lubitsch’s film, adapted from a play by Maurice Rostand, was a rare message picture from a director celebrated for his exquisite comic touch, unfolded through the eyes of a French veteran making an unexpected visit to the grieving loved ones of a dead German soldier.



“Frantz” retains the earlier film’s central premise and pacifist themes. A Parisian musician named Adrien Rivoire (Pierre Niney) has come to pay his respects to Dr. Hoffmeister (Ernst Stötzner) and his wife, Magda (Marie Gruber), and to share his memories of their fallen son, Frantz (played by Anton von Lucke in flashbacks). But this time, the story’s moral and dramatic fulcrum is Anna, whose loving, protective attitude toward the Hoffmeisters, whom she regards as her own parents, is matched by her intense curiosity about this stranger in their midst.

The presence of a Frenchman in Germany so soon after the Great War does not go unremarked upon by Dr. Hoffmeister, who receives Adrien coldly at first, or by the glowering locals — one of whom, Kreutz (Johann von Bülow), wants to marry Anna himself. Adrien, for his part, is sympathetic but not entirely above suspicion. His recollections of many happy hours spent with Frantz in Paris before the war, visiting museums and playing the violin together, bring the Hoffmeisters no small measure of solace. But his sad eyes and halting, fearful demeanor seem to tell a darker, more unsettling story.

That story will not be revealed here, though Ozon, a master of misdirection and one of French cinema’s most prolific chroniclers of gay desire, delights in raising the sort of romantic possibilities that are easier for an audience to countenance now than they were in 1919. More than once, “Frantz” hints that it will reveal itself as a homoerotic reworking of “Broken Lullaby.” But Ozon has something simpler and no less intriguing up his sleeve.

One of the director’s chief aims here — articulated with rueful clarity by Stötzner’s sober-minded doctor — is to eliminate the distractions of nationalism and politics, and to remind his characters and his audience of the unimaginable suffering endured on both sides of the conflict. Not for nothing has Ozon rechristened the dead German soldier “Frantz,” playfully evoking both his own name, François, and the nation of France itself. It’s as if he were suggesting that the responsibility for a man’s death does not always belong to his killer alone.

At one point, Ozon goes so far as to deconstruct a famous scene from “Casablanca,” investing a moment of unambiguous moral triumph with undercurrents of menace and dread. By this point, “Frantz” has shaken off the last vestiges of “Broken Lullaby” and plunged forward in an entirely new narrative direction, one that begins when Anna boards a train for France and sets out to find answers of her own.

In doing so, she becomes the latest in a line of richly conflicted Ozon heroines — the women played by Charlotte Rampling in “Under the Sand” and Catherine Deneuve in “Potiche” come especially to mind — forced to confront impossible situations, usually set in motion by the men in their lives. Anna, reeling from devastation and disbelief to a startling rush of desire, doesn’t know what either the past or the future holds, but she rises to the occasion with a bracing mix of clever calculation and pure instinct.

Something similar might be said of Ozon, whose work often attempts — not always successfully, but always impressively — to bridge the gap between style and feeling, between his flair for formal trickery and his desire to usher the viewer into a realm of unbridled emotion. In perhaps his most Ozonian gesture, he occasionally floods cinematographer Pascal Marti’s monochrome palette with a sudden infusion of warm color, usually to signal a flashback to happier times. These moments are sometimes dreams, sometimes memories and sometimes beautiful lies, which is very much to the director’s point.

One of the key questions he’s asking here is about the moral necessity of telling a falsehood, particularly when the need to shield those already in mourning from further pain becomes its own moral imperative. “Frantz” achieves its own version of this paradox. It is a cunningly crafted fiction, full of visual artifice and narrative sleight-of-hand, that by the end could hardly feel more sincere. In German and French with English subtitles.



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A FILM BY KORE-EDA HIROKAZU  
**AFTER THE STORM**

**Monday, June 26, 7:30**

Glenn Kenny / NY Times      Not Rated      117 Mins.

The Japanese actor Hiroshi Abe has one of the great handdog faces in cinema today. At least that's the case in "After the Storm," a new film from the writer-director Hirokazu Kore-eda. Tall and lean, Mr. Abe has handsome features — floppy dark hair across his forehead, prominent cheekbones and a long jaw line. But here, playing Ryota Shinoda, a onetime literary sensation fallen on hard times professionally and personally, he also has lines around and bags under his eyes, a perpetual five o'clock shadow and a downcast mouth. He looks as if he could be trouble.

As it happens, he is trouble mostly for himself, although he manages to irritate his ex-wife, Kyoko (Yoko Maki), because of his inability to pay child support for their son, Shingo (Taiyo Yoshizawa), and frustrate his sister (Satomi Kobayashi), whom he hits up for money with grim regularity. Ryota, having never followed up on his award-winning first novel, now works as a private detective. (The novel is another thing his sister is annoyed about; "Don't you dare write about us again," she snaps at one point.) It's a gig that gives him many opportunities to alter the calibration of his moral compass — in one scene he tries to talk a subject of an investigation into buying the evidence he's gathered against her. He also spies on his ex-wife, and is less than thrilled to learn that her unctuous new boyfriend has bought Shingo a snazzy baseball mitt.



Ryota's aging mother, Yoshiko (Kirin Kiki), loves him unconditionally, though, and she doesn't give him a hard time when she walks in after he's clearly been rifling through her apartment, trying to find a family heirloom to pawn. She lives alone (the

family's patriarch has died, presumably recently) in a Tokyo apartment complex far removed from the bustling city we are accustomed to seeing in Japanese films, or films about Japan. The neighborhood isn't showy, but it's a pleasant, relatively tree-lined environment, and its older residents get together in informal groups to listen to and discuss Beethoven. Nevertheless, Yoshiko is a little preoccupied with what she sees as the approaching end of her life.

As Ryota scrambles to somehow get ahead, Kyoko seems befuddled by her own resentments and prospects for the future. Meanwhile, the young Shingo bristles at a potential stepfather who offers baseball coaching along the lines of "To be the hero, you have to get a hit" even though the situation under consideration calls for drawing a walk. At one point, Ryota, Yoshiko, Kyoko and Shingo all have to pull together during an overnight typhoon that strands them in Yoshiko's apartment, which is cozy and conspicuously lacking in privacy.



Mr. Kore-eda, whose most noteworthy family dramas include "Still Walking" (2009) and "Like Father, Like Son" (2014), works in a quiet cinematic register, and the slightest error in tone could upend the whole enterprise. Slow-paced, sad, rueful and sometimes warmly funny, "After the Storm" is one of his sturdiest, and most sensitive, constructions. "I really just can't understand how things turned out like this," one character says while sitting out the storm.

As perplexed as they are about how they got into such a mess, the characters are nonetheless obliged to move forward as some kind of family, and the story patiently brings them closer to a reconciliation with that fact. Beautifully acted by a great cast (particularly Mr. Abe, who can make a sonata of frustration out of burrowing into a stale frozen treat with a spoon), "After the Storm" brings this intimate struggle to moving life. It's a film that sticks with you. In Japanese with English subtitles.

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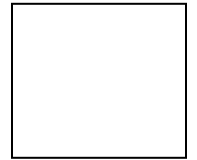
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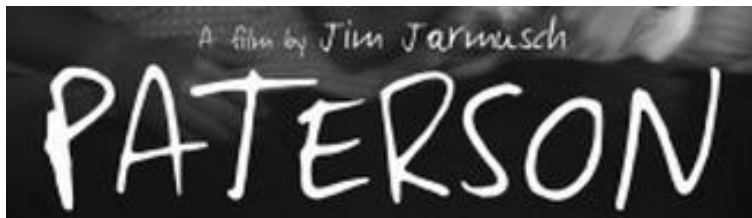
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*The Film Stage*

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"Exquisite and haunting. One of Francois Ozon's  
very best films."

*Dennis Dermody - Paper Magazine*

Monday, June 12 at 7:30 pm



"This is Kore-eda at his very best... 'After the Storm' is  
uncomfortable, invigorating and ultimately cleansing."

*Roy O'Connor, Film Stage*

Monday, June 26 at 7:30 pm

