



PROJECTING THE ARCHIVE

# Flesh and Blood

*Introduced by Jason Morell, actor and son of Joan Greenwood*

In a denouement befitting these times, the last act of *Flesh and Blood* sees Charles Cameron (Todd) fight a deadly epidemic. Based on a stage play exploring ideas of heredity by Hitchcock collaborator James Bridie, the film takes us through three generations of a family beset by illness and poverty, eventually proving that genius will out. One of those generations takes the form of Joan Greenwood (whose centenary was earlier this year) as the ruthless daughter of an alcoholic consumptive (also Todd). Though slightly hampered by its theatrical origins and intricate plot, the film features some excellent performances, especially from Greenwood and her future husband André Morell.

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## Joan Greenwood

The irresistible leading lady of some of the most enduring British films, seductive of voice, face and figure, searching the language – and indeed the world – for booby traps, Joan Greenwood's performance record must be nearly unrivalled among British leading ladies. RADA-trained and on stage from 1938 (delectably malicious as Hattie in *The Grass Is Greener*, 1959; sharply ambiguous in *The Chalk Garden*, 1971), she was in films from 1940.

She was one of *The Gentle Sex* (1943) celebrated in Leslie Howard's film, was a sympathetic helper for *The October Man* (d. Roy Ward Baker, 1947), and a doomed Sophie Dorothea in *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (d. Basil Dearden, 1948), but it was as the female lead in a series of benchmark comedies that she made herself indispensable to British films.

In *Whisky Galore!* (d. Alexander Mackendrick, 1949) and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (d. Robert Hamer, 1949), she is the drily beguiling Peggy and the wonderfully minxish Sibella respectively; she deflects Alec Guinness from his experiments in *The Man in the White Suit* (d. Alexander Mackendrick, 1951) and she is, in her way, as imperishably Gwendolyn as Edith Evans is Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (d. Anthony Asquith, 1951).

She did better in America than some of her contemporaries (cf. *Moonfleet*, d. Fritz Lang, 1955, and *Stage Struck*, d. Sidney Lumet, 1958). She played character roles back in Britain but remained a star until the end, which came after *Little Dorrit* (d. Christine Edzard, 1988), as Mrs Clennam, and it was good to see her brilliant at the finish. There was some TV and stage work but she is above all a British *film* star, the genuine article.

**Brian McFarlane, BFI Screenonline, [screenonline.org.uk](http://screenonline.org.uk)**

## From the archives: a 1956 profile of Joan Greenwood

It is less than a year since *Moonfleet*; and already one misses her.

The Hollywood journey, besides, had been preceded by one to Paris, where she appeared as a cat-burglar in a minor film with Bourvil. It seems that the British cinema, which developed her, is in danger of losing this extraordinary actress; but she is the kind of exquisite, idiosyncratic luxury that it can ill afford to lose.

First of all, Joan Greenwood demands a surrender to personality. Her use of deliberate ironic mannerism, her method of speaking lines of dialogue as if, as one critic has remarked, 'she dimly suspected some hidden menace in them', reflects a nature which can best be described as beautifully eccentric. The eccentricity is not wholly of our time, and for this reason it flowered most fully in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *Father Brown* (the latter, though technically present-day, seemed really to be masquerading in modern dress). Her work with Robert Hamer brought out a *fin-de-siècle* perverseness and elegance, a joy in the refined but outrageous gesture; and in her feline, purring yet deadly Sybilla, her playful widowed Lady Warren (she must have poisoned Lord Warren, one thought immediately), there was a suggestion of the leisure, the *outré* sophistication of another age. The same love of the deliciously freakish links two other performances with these: her Gwendolen in Anthony Asquith's adaptation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, supercilious, wickedly affected – above all in her display of lorgnette, and her insolent filling of Cecily Cardew's cup of tea with innumerable lumps of sugar – and her Lady Clarissa, the drawling, mocking but somehow formidable villainess of *Moonfleet*.

Yet this is not the whole truth. Though the extraordinariness is always there, in the quizzical scoop of the voice and the faintly derisive air of astonishment at wherever – and with whoever – she happens to be, she is by no means as limited an actress as one might expect. Coming down to earth, she knows at once, really, where she is. Her Scots girl in *Whisky Galore!*, her industrialist's daughter in *The Man in the White Suit*, her suburban girl in *Knave of Hearts*, were all genuinely felt and observed creations. Whether slanted to comedy (the delicious moment in *Whisky Galore!* when she refuses to admit the customs officials in the middle of the night with the simple announcement, 'Post Office is closed') or to drama (the beautifully played scene with Gérard Philipe in *Knave of Hearts* when she suspects he is going to desert her), they have a subtle individual truth. And they are never simple: the reward, perhaps, of the eccentric's temperament.

Now that costume pictures are out of fashion, it may be a long time again before we see her superbly frilled, parasolled and hatted, moving through a comedy of manners with that perfect, ruthless fastidiousness. But the contemporary scene also has need of her, with her special, unexpected intuitions of character, and it would be sad if she were lost to the stage. (Devotees, incidentally, may remember her in 1939 as Little Mary in *The Women*.) No doubt she was delightful on Broadway in *The Confidential Clerk*; certainly she was in London during the time she played in *Bell Book and Candle*. This was a comedy in which she was cast as a witch – and there was another, never brought to the West End, in which she changed into a cat... And this, of course, is the alarming thing. Whenever she has been absent for some time, the element of fantastic speculation enters in and strange visions fill the mind; the actress may be holidaying on a broomstick, or relaxing as a lovely blue-point Siamese in some adoring, enslaved household, or, having simply played a Dunne-like trick of time upon herself, be enjoying a characteristic foray in some vanished elegant society. One knows she will come back, because she can obviously manage this kind of thing with ease. But one hopes it will be soon.

**'People of Talent: Joan Greenwood', *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1956**

FLESH AND BLOOD

Directed by: Anthony Kimmins  
Production Companies: London Film Productions, Harefield Productions  
Producer: Anatole de Grunwald  
Associate Producer: Jack Clayton  
Production Manager: Isobel Pargeter \*  
Assistant Director: Roger Good  
Continuity: Rita Davison  
Adapted for the screen by: Anatole de Grunwald  
From the play by: James Bridie  
Photography: Otto Heller  
Camera Operator: Robert Day  
Editor: Gerald Turney-Smith  
Art Director: Paul Sheriff  
Assistant Art Director: Ray Simm  
Costume Designer: Michael Whittaker  
Assistant Dress Designer: Ann Wemyss  
Miss John’s Dresses: Kay Young  
Make-up: Geoffrey Rodway  
Hair: Waleen Whitworth  
Music: Charles Williams  
Sound: A.E. Rudolph  
Dubbing: Lee Doig  
Studio: Teddington Studios

Cast

Richard Todd (Charles Cameron/Ch. Cameron Sutherland)  
Glynis Johns (Katherine)  
Joan Greenwood (Wilhelmina)  
André Morell (Dr Marshall)  
Ursula Howells (Harriet)  
Freda Jackson (Mrs Hannah)  
George Cole (John Hannah)  
James Hayter (Sir Douglas Manley)  
Ronald Howard (Purley)  
Muriel Aked (Mrs Walker)

Michael Hordern (Webster)  
Helen Christie (Minnie Arnott)  
Walter Fitzgerald (Dr Cooper)  
Lilly Kann (Sister Maria)  
Patrick Macnee (Sutherland)  
Fred Johnson (Donovan)  
Molly Weir (Margaret)  
Hugh Dempster (Cranley)  
Alexander Gauge (Coutts)  
Betty Paul (Moir)  
Peter Macdonell (Jordan)  
Hector MacGregor (Major)  
John Vere (Leighton)  
Enzo Coticchia (Forzin)  
Archie Duncan (sergeant)  
Francis De Wolf (ambassador)  
Kenneth Downey (club porter)  
Sergio Mari (Mario)  
David Cameron (McDermott)  
Bill Logan (McGregor)  
Anna Canitano (nurse)  
John Kelly (Wilkinson)  
Joan Heal (girl In night club)  
Nina Parry (Wilhelmina as a child)  
Billy Newsbury (John Hannah as a child)  
Sally Owen (the doll)  
William Chappell (the dancer)  
Jock McKay (baker)

UK 1951  
96 mins

\* Uncredited

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**Art in the Making: Cinema Architecture and Atmosphere + discussion**  
Thu 23 Sep 18:10  
**Member Picks: Moonstruck**  
Fri 24 Sep 18:05  
**Silent Cinema: Nasty Women: A Comic Tribute**  
**+ intro by curator Bryony Dixon**  
Sun 26 Sep 12:40  
**Terror Vision: Altered States**  
Thu 30 Sep 21:00  
**Projecting the Archive: Dutchman + intro and panel discussion**  
Tue 19 Oct 18:15  
**BFI Flare: Tongues Untied + intro by programmer Rico Johnson-Sinclair**  
Wed 20 Oct 20:30  
**Experimenta: Frantz Fanon: Black Skin White Mask + discussion**  
Thu 21 Oct 18:00  
**BFI Flare: Black Is... Black Ain’t + intro by programmer Rico Johnson-Sinclair**  
Thu 21 Oct 20:40  
**Art in the Making: The Black Arts Movement on Film + discussion**  
Wed 27 Oct 20:40

**Woman with a Movie Camera Preview: Anatomy of Wings**  
**+ pre-recorded Q&A**  
Thu 28 Oct 18:15  
**Silent Cinema: Body and Soul + intro**  
Sun 31 Oct 14:20  
**Member Picks: Moonlight**  
Fri 5 Nov 18:10  
**African Odysseys: Black History Walks Presents: Cause for Concern: Equal Before the Law**  
Fri 5 Nov 18:30-21:30 Blue Room  
**African Odysseys: A Date with the Devil: Darcus Howe’s Journey from Black Power to Broadcasting**  
Sat 6 Nov 12:00-18:00  
**African Odysseys: Travels with my Camera: Is This My Country? + White Tribe**  
Tue 9 Nov 18:10  
**African Odysseys: Trouble in Paradise + Darcus Howe: Son of Mine**  
Sun 14 Nov 15:30  
**Terror Vision: Tales from the Hood**  
Thu 25 Nov 20:40  
**Seniors’ Free Matinee, in partnership with African Odysseys: Once Upon a Time... When We Were Colored + intro**  
Mon 29 Nov 14:00

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