



**FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: FOR THE LOVE OF FILMS**

# **The Story of Adele H. (L'Histoire d'Adèle H.)**

## **François Truffaut on 'The Story of Adele H.'**

It was in 1969 that I first felt I wanted to make a film whose heroine would be Adèle Hugo. I had just read in the collection 'Bibliothèque Introuvable' (Editions Minard) the biography of Adèle as reconstructed by Miss Frances Vernor Guille, professor at Wooster College, Ohio.

While working on the script for *The Wild Child* from Dr Jean Itard's memoir, we discovered, Jean Gruault and I, the great pleasure to be had from organising a fictional story on the basis of real events, taking pains to invent nothing and not to alter the truth of the documentary material.

First making certain that Jean Gruault shared my enthusiasm, I made contact with Miss Guille, who was enchanted by the project right away, then with Jean Hugo, who showed himself at first reserved and even reticent. That is understandable: the true story of his great-aunt was little known. It brought up a kind of family secret and I think that Jean Hugo was also troubled by the possibility that Victor Hugo himself would be shown in the film. I took pains to reassure him, promising that I would spare him the spectacle of a bearded bit-part actor prancing in and announcing: 'I am Victor Hugo,' and that I even planned to work out a screenplay without ever showing his great-grandfather. I finally asked him to let us draw up a first draft which would be submitted to him in a year's time.

Then I took on three films, but between each shooting I still moved ahead on the script of *Adèle*. Our first treatment having won Jean Hugo's approbation, I asked Suzanne Schiffman to join forces with Gruault and me. We had decided to carry the screenplay right to its end, but we became aware that, if it is difficult to construct a unified plot involving a dozen characters whose actions intersect, it is almost as difficult to write an intimist film putting a single character on screen.

Yet, I believe it was that solitary aspect that attracted me most in this project. Having filmed love stories with two persons and with three persons, I felt as if I were attempting a passionately interesting experiment in tying myself down to a single person devoured by a one-way passion.

If I have to sum up in seven points what attracted me in the story of Adèle Hugo, they would be:

1. This girl is alone throughout the story;
2. She is the daughter of the most celebrated man in the world;
3. That man is spoken about but never seen;
4. Adèle lives under false identities;
5. Driven by a fixed idea, she pursues an unattainable goal;
6. Not a phrase, not a gesture of Adèle's has to do with anything else but her fixed idea;
7. Even if she is fighting a losing battle, Adèle shows herself continually active and inventive.

I am not unaware that everything one writes, everything one films, has its significance, but I must confess that, as for me, emotion precedes the general idea and it is most often because of what is written about my work that I discover the subterranean reasons that led me to choose one subject or another.

Years pass, I make good films and bad ones, but all freely chosen, and I am indeed obliged to realise that only the realm of feelings engrosses and interests me.

Working in a more instinctive than intellectual manner, I do not understand what my films mean until two years after their release. This delayed enlightenment constitutes a help rather than a handicap, because it seems to me I just wouldn't have the enthusiasm to go out morning after morning and shoot a film whose entire meaning has been settled in advance.

Obviously I am certainly beginning to recognise that I make only films that show what is askew and painful in certain family or love relationships. I am led to go back, for the heart of each film, to the same conflict between definitive feelings and provisional feelings, thus to film always the same heartbreaks. Those interested in that kind of thing – the gentle description of violent emotions – will say that these are all variations on a single theme; those who are bored by such things will say I'm repeating the same drivel.

*The Story of Adele H.*, which resembles a piece of music for a single instrument, does not need long preliminary explanations. Let it be said only that, decidedly incapable of making films 'against,' I continue to film 'for' and that I have the same love for Antoine Doinel, Catherine, Montag, Julie, Muriel Brown, Victor De l'Aveyron or Adèle H.

#### **'Pourquoi ce film? Pourquoi pas,' press book of the film**

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##### **THE STORY OF ADELE H. (L'HISTOIRE D'ADÈLE H.)**

*Director:* François Truffaut

*©/A Co-production:* Les Films du Carrosse,  
Les Productions Artistes Associés

*Presented by:* Les Artistes Associés

*Production Managers:* Marcel Berbert, Claude Miller

*Unit Managers:* Patrick Millet, Roland Thénot,

*1st Assistant Director:* Suzanne Schiffman

*2nd Assistant Director:* Carl Hathwell

*Script Supervisor:* Christine Pellé

*Original Screenplay:* François Truffaut, Jean Gruault, Suzanne Schiffman

*Script Collaborator:* Frances Vernor Guille

*Based on the diaries by:* Adèle Hugo

*Director of Photography:* Nestor Almendros

*Camera Assistants:* Jean-Claude Rivière, Dominique Le Rigoleur,  
Florent Bazin

*Gaffer:* Jean-Claude Gasché

*Key Grip:* Charles Freess

*Editors:* Yann Dedet, Martine Barraque, Jean Gargonne, Michele Neny,  
Muriel Zeleny

*Art Director:* Jean-Pierre Kohut

*Props:* Daniel Braunschweig

*Costumes:* Jacqueline Guyot

*Make-up:* Thi-Loan N'Guyen

*Hair Stylist:* Chantal Durpoix

*Music:* Maurice Jaubert

*Solo Saxophone:* Jacques Noureddine

*Conductor:* Patrice Mestral

*Music Consultant:* François Porcile

*Sound (Recording):* Jean-Pierre Ruh, Michel Laurent

*Sound Mixer:* Jacques Maumont

*Thanks:* Carol Mc Daid Seib, Air France, British Island Airways (BIA),  
L.T.C. (Saint-Cloud), SIMO (Boulogne), Eastmancolor,  
Panavision Spherique

##### **Cast**

Isabelle Adjani (*Adèle Hugo*)

Bruce Robinson (*Lieutenant Albert Pinson*)

Sylvia Marriott (*Mrs Saunders*)

Joseph Blatchley (*Whistler*)

Ivry Gitlis (*hypnotist*)

Louise Bourdet (*Victor Hugo's servant*)

Cecil De Sausmarez (*M. Lenoit, lawyer*)

Ruben Dorey (*Mr Saunders*)

Clive Gillingham (*Keaton, bank clerk*)

Roger Martin (*Doctor Murdock*)

Mr White (*colonel*)

Madame Louise (*Madame Baa*)

Jean-Pierre Leursse (*letter-writer*)

*uncredited*

Carl Hathwell (*Pinson's Batman*)

Raymond Falla (*judge*)

François Truffaut (*officer*)

France 1975©

98 mins

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### Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)

From Fri 4 Feb

### Philosophical Screens: Jules et Jim

Thu 10 Feb 20:20

### The Representation of Women in Truffaut's Films

Fri 18 Feb 18:20

## THE LITERARY TRUFFAUT

### Anne and Muriel (Les Deux Anglaises et le continent)

Sat 5 Feb 12:20; Thu 17 Feb 17:50 (+ intro by actor Kika Markham); Tue 22 Feb 20:25

### Fahrenheit 451

Sat 5 Feb 20:45; Sun 13 Feb 12:40; Sun 27 Feb 18:40

### The Story of Adèle H (L'Histoire d'Adèle H)

Wed 9 Feb 20:55; Sat 12 Feb 20:45; Sat 19 Feb 18:20

### The Green Room (La Chambre verte)

Thu 10 Feb 18:20; Tue 15 Feb 20:40; Wed 23 Feb 20:40

## THE HITCHCOCK TRUFFAUT

### Shoot the Pianist (Tirez sur le pianiste)

Tue 1 Feb 20:50; Fri 11 Feb 18:30; Sat 26 Feb 13:20

### The Bride Wore Black (La Mariée était en noir)

Fri 4 Feb 20:45; Sun 13 Feb 18:00; Sun 27 Feb 12:10

### Finally Sunday! (Vivement dimanche!)

Sat 5 Feb 17:50; Sat 12 Feb 12:30; Sun 27 Feb 15:00

### Mississippi Mermaid (La Sirène du Mississippi)

Sun 6 Feb 12:40; Fri 18 Feb 20:35; Fri 25 Feb 18:00

### La Peau douce (Silken Skin)

Sun 6 Feb 18:20; Sat 12 Feb 17:20; Sat 26 Feb 15:30

### The Woman Next Door (La Femme d'à côté)

Tue 8 Feb 20:30; Mon 21 Feb 18:10; Thu 24 Feb 20:30

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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