

an"). She denies being ever feeling lonely despite her long lasting reclusive lifestyle in an apartment in Paris. (*"Ich lese. Ist man nie einsam, wenn man liest."*) She keeps up to date by reading Böll, Gass and Handke and denies ever watching her old movies again.

Those who think that she lacked compassion and was cool, even outright cold in regard to other people and her own life ("That woman has ice where others have a heart.") seem to be vindicated when she talks about her father who had died early in her life.

Schell: *Ihr Vater ist ziemlich früh gestorben. Hat er Ihnen gefehlt?*

Dietrich: *Nein. Wenn man das nicht kennt, kann es einem ja nicht fehlen. ...Ja, das ist heute das große Getue: „Ich hatte meinen Vater nicht“ und so – das ist ja alles Quatsch.*

Yet at the end of the interview we see a completely different side of her. Schell starts to recite old verses from her childhood that her mother loved as well. It's the poem "O lieb, solange du lieben kannst" by Ferdinand von Freiligrath (1810 – 1876):

O lieb, solange du lieben kannst!
O lieb, solange du lieben magst!
Die Stunde kommt, die Stunde kommt,
Wo du an Gräbern stehst und klagst!

Dann kniest du nieder an der Gruft
Und birgst die Augen, trüb und nass,
Sie sehn den andern nimmermehr
Ins lange, feuchte Kirchhofgras.

Und Sorge, dass dein Herze glüht
Und Liebe hegt und Liebe trägt,
Solang ihm noch ein ander Herz
In Liebe warm entgegenschlägt!

Und sprichst: O schau auf mich herab,
Der hier an deinem Grabe weint!
Vergib, dass ich gekränkt dich hab!
O Gott, es war nicht böß gemeint!

Und wer dir seine Brust erschließt,
O tu ihm, was du kannst, zuliebt!
Und mach ihm jede Stunde froh,
Und mach ihm keine Stunde trüb!

Er aber sieht und hört dich nicht,
Kommt nicht, dass du ihn froh umfängst;
Der Mund, der oft dich küsste, spricht
Nie wieder: Ich vergab dir längst!

Und hüte deine Zunge wohl,
Bald ist ein böses Wort gesagt!
O Gott, es war nicht böß gemeint, -
Der andre aber geht und klagt.

Er tat's, vergab dir lange schon,
Doch manche heiße Träne fiel
Um dich und um dein herbes Wort -
Doch still – er ruht, er ist am Ziel!

O lieb, solange du lieben kannst!
O lieb, solange du lieben magst!
Die Stunde kommt, die Stunde kommt,
Wo du an Gräbern stehst und klagst!

O lieb, solange du lieben kannst!
O lieb, solange di lieben magst!
Die Stunde kommt, die Stunde kommt,
Wo du an Gräbern stehst und klagst! (1845)

(In 1847, Franz Liszt uses this poem for his famous composition "Liebesträume No.3)

Dietrich grows quite emotional as she recites the poem with Schell. She repeats and stresses the line: *Bald ist ein böses Wort gesagt! O Gott, es war nicht böß gemeint – der andere aber geht und klagt.* It seems at this moment as if her memory is suffused with pain, both the pain she suffered and the pain she caused others. She tries to control her emotions but starts crying: *"Ich kann das ja leider nicht sagen. Muss ich heulen. Schon gut! Schon gut!"* So despite her avowed determination to shield her private life and inner self from the public, here at the end of the documentary we glimpse a hidden person who is in stark contrast to her public image. That latter image was of a person who was a product of a "Prussian" upbringing demanding constant discipline and self-control.

Dietrich died in her sleep on May 6, 1992 at age 90 in her apartment in Paris. Fifteen hundred people attended her funeral in Madeleine Church in Paris before her body was moved to a Cemetery on Stubenrauchstraße in Berlin-Schöneberg . According to her wishes, she was laid to rest there next to her mother.

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Marlene

By Maximilian Schell

January 17th, 2013

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

Non-Members \$15, Members \$12

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

Marlene (1984)

Credits:

Director:	Maximilian Schell
Producers:	Zev Braun Karel Dirka
Written by:	Maximilian Schell Meir Dohnal
Music:	Nicolas Economou
Cinematography:	Henry Hauck Pavel Hispler Ivan Slapeta
Distribution:	Futura Film, Munich
Released:	March 2, 1984
Length:	94 Minutes
Country:	West-Germany

Commentary by Karl Moehlmann



“ Ich bin zu Tode fotografiert worden.”

She had her first roles in silent movies before she became in succession the dashing Lola in the “Blue Angel”, Amy Jolly in “Marokko”, the Spy in “Dishonored”, Shanghai-Lily, Cathryn the Great and the “Witness of the Prosecution”. In Maximilian Schell’s eponymous work documentary convention is subverted. The aged Marlene Dietrich (82 at the time of the filming) is heard but not seen. She simply narrates her life story without actually appearing before the camera.

“Even if she had nothing but her voice she could break hearts with it”, her friend Ernest Hemingway once wrote. This magic is still evident even though it is a “*Gespräch der Verweigerung*”, a conversation of refusal. “Marlene never knew what I wanted”, said Schell. “I didn’t know it either. The movie originated from this chaos.”

And so that inimitable heart breaking voice whispers, talks, snaps and pouts as we view pictures of Dietrich’s life and scenes from her movies. Ms. Dietrich refused to allow Maximilian Schell to photograph her or even her apartment. “I have been photographed to death”, she says and insisted that no picture should be taken of her although she had reluctantly signed a contract for 40 hours of interviews. Schell had worked together with Dietrich on “Judgment At Nuremberg” in 1961 and had tried to persuade her for years to participate in a documentary about her life.

Dietrich, living reclusively in an apartment in Paris since 1972 refused his requests for a decade, but finally agreed to participate in the project under these bizarre circumstances. Schell tries to compensate and enhance his project by reconstructing a portion of the apartment and filming the living room where the interviews take place from the hallway through an open door. He also occasionally films through the slim opening between door and frame where an imaginary vague image of Dietrich is visible and the interview scene is reenacted.

A German-American Legend (1901 – 1990)

Marlene Dietrich was born on December 27, 1901 in Berlin Schöneberg. Her father died when she was nine. At age 18, she enrolled at the Max Reinhardt acting school and appeared on stage in small roles. She met and married casting director Rudolf Sieber in 1924 at age 23 and their only child, daughter Maria was born the following year. When film director Josef von Sternberg held auditions for his movie “The Blue Angel” in 1929, he was captivated by the beautiful young Dietrich. “Blue Angel” premiered in Berlin on April 1, 1930 to standing ovations.

Immediately afterwards, Dietrich left Germany for Hollywood where she had received several offers. She left her husband and daughter behind and although they joined Marlene in Hollywood a year later the marriage was essentially over, despite the fact that they never divorced. Marlene subsequently engaged in countless affairs with Hollywood’s leading men, acquiring an array of provocative appellations along the way such as the “International Diva”, “Glamour Girl”, the “Sex Symbol” and the wonderfully understated “Blonde Venus”.

In America, Dietrich’s career flourished during the Golden Age of Hollywood, as the film industry’s best directors such as Billy Wilder, Orson Welles, Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, Raoul Walsh and Ernst Lubitsch vied to work with her. She made 35 American movies with “Witness for the Prosecution” (1958) and “Judgment at Nuremberg”(1961) considered to be her finest. Songs like “Lilly Marleen” or “*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt*“ became international hits and established her status as an iconic superstar.

She refused the invitation to go back to Nazi-Germany in 1933 and became a US citizen in 1939. “*Mit Hitler, da war es ja leicht, sich zu entscheiden.*” During WWII she entertained Allied troops in Europe, performing in Italy, France and Algeria, a fact that many Germans considered to be treasonous. When she returned to Berlin in 1960 for the first time after the war there were many who refused to forgive her for leaving. A bomb scare and signs like “Marlene, go home” fueled her fears and trepidations. But her cabaret act was received enthusiastically and a genuine Berliner in echoed public sentiment by remarking: “*Wollen wir uns wieder vertragen?*”. Her trip even included a meeting with Mayor Willy Brandt that ended on a positive note.

In the early 70’s, she traded her film career for that of a cabaret singer and recording artist. It was in this period that she also appeared in **Philadelphia**. From May 27 until June 1, 1975 she performed in the **Playhouse in the Park**, a venue that stood in West Fairmount Park on Belmont Mansion Drive. Famed Philadelphian John B. Kelly had championed the creation of this structure while he was President of the Fairmount Park Commission.

Berliner Schnauze

True to her Berlin upbringing, many of her retorts in Schnell’s documentary, notwithstanding her octogenarian status, display the typical “*Berliner Kodderschнауze*”. She is wide awake, combative, very sharp, unsentimental and seemingly without compassion. She talks about God (“*Meschugge*”) and Heimatlosigkeit (“*Quatsch*”), about the “Blue Angel” (“*Der kommt einem doch zum Halse raus*”), about women’s emancipation (“*Penis Neid*”, “*Ich habe ja überhaupt kein Mitgefühl für die ‚females‘*”), about Fritz Lang (“*Scheusal*”), Orson Wells (“*Genie*”) and her own career (“*Ich gehe mich einen Dreck*”).