

The Wonders of Editing:

An Interview with Mathilde Bonnefoy and Tom Tykwer

ELAINE ROTH AND HEATHER ADDISON

EDITOR MATHILDE BONNEFOY AND DIRECTOR TOM TYKWER have collaborated for more than a decade on films such as *Run Lola Run* (1998), *Heaven* (2002), and *The International* (2009). Their artistic relationship has been defined and enriched by their respective backgrounds: Bonnefoy is a native of France who moved to Berlin soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and Tykwer was born and raised in Wuppertal, Germany. Both speak multiple languages: Bonnefoy is fluent in French, German, and English; Tykwer is fluent in German and English; and both have also worked in Italian. Their artistic partnership has produced films with an international flavor: *Heaven*, for example, based on a screenplay by Polish writer and director Krzysztof Kieslowski, is set in Italy, with dialogue in both English and Italian; and *The International* takes place in Germany, the United States, France, Italy, and Turkey, with dialogue in English, German, Italian, and Danish.

Bonnefoy, who also directs, initially thought editing might be akin to directing, so she pursued that route first. Tykwer and Bonnefoy met in Berlin in the mid-1990s when the latter was

an editing assistant and one of the first people in the city to learn the AVID editing system. The two quickly joined forces for the breakthrough hit *Run Lola Run*. Tykwer had already shot two features as a director, and in Bonnefoy he found a partner with whom his artistic perspective and working methods were in sync. They were drawn to projects that challenge audiences to imagine alternate realities, from a central narrative that plays again and again until it reaches a satisfactory conclusion (*Run Lola Run*), to a stratospheric exit that allows for the impossible escape of two ill-fated lovers (*Heaven*), to the tension between morality, vindication, and the conventions of the action genre (*The International*).

On 24 May 2008 in Berlin, where Bonnefoy and Tykwer were engaged in postproduction work on *The International*, Heather Addison and Elaine Roth discussed the role of the editor, as well as the dynamics of a long-term creative relationship, with Mathilde Bonnefoy and then were joined by Tom Tykwer. The interview was conducted in English and later revised to clarify the spoken language.

Mathilde Bonnefoy on Editing *The International* (2009)

ELAINE ROTH: Maybe we could talk about *The International*.

MATHILDE BONNEFOY: It's a thriller. It's a genre film with a specific moral stake that is outside of the genre, I would say.

HEATHER ADDISON: Do you feel like this is the first genre film that you've done with

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Tom Tykwer? Because it seems like most of the films are not specifically in a particular genre.

MB: It's maybe our first film that goes so clearly in that direction. That's true. It's about an Interpol agent played by Clive Owen, who tries to bring to light the immoral and illegal dealings of an international bank and who has a hard time doing so. He is assisted in his search by a character played by Naomi Watts, who is the assistant to the New York—Manhattan—D.A.

ER: At what stage do you become involved? Do you read the screenplay before the shooting begins? Are you on the set during the shooting? Do you participate in conversations about what the film is going to look like: the set, the props? How much do you collaborate with the other people?

MB: The role of the editor is to come in after the shoot, of course, but I would say that most people read the script in advance, and this is something that changed in my relationship with Tom because the first film we edited together was *Run Lola Run*, and I actually started working without having read the script. And I liked that idea so much that on the next film I kept it, and I didn't read the script until after we started because I liked the idea of just discovering the film in the editing room.

Since then, we have started to exchange thoughts about films that he wanted to do, of

course, and it's not possible to avoid reading the script. And actually, it's been a creative exchange at that early stage, as well. He is surrounded by producers and the writer he's working with most of the time. But, for example, this *International* film: I read several versions and commented on them prior to the film being made. I do get involved, and this time, in a way, is the first time that we worked in this classical Hollywood structure which meant that I would be editing in parallel to the shoot. Until now, we had favored a very luxurious approach, which was that we would wait until the film was completely shot, and then we would watch the dailies together from A to Z in chronological order without doing one cut.

For me it was nice because I tried to keep myself far away from the process at that time. I would discover the film in the editing room, in its longest possible form, of course, which would mean a few weeks of just watching footage in the order of the scenes. You still do have an idea of the film progressing, of the story progressing, but you see all the takes, all the repetitions, so it's like a super-long experimental film. It was very interesting. But this time we didn't do that.

HA: Why was the shift made?

MB: It's a question of time, and it's a question of money as well. This film, in particular, had a release date that has now been changed but was planned for the fifteenth of August,



Photo 1: Clive Owen as Louis Salinger in *The International* (2009).

which was incredibly tight. It was already not quite certain if we would make the date, so we had to do this. But it's also the classical way of making films, which gives me the opportunity to comment on the footage much more, since I'm getting it in a completely chaotic order, but still I see the characters being developed, and I have a long archival reserve of text messages I sent to Tom on the shoot saying, "Oh, be careful. Salinger"—who is the main character—"looks like he's always angry. You have to tone that down a bit." So I would be constantly commenting, something I would do in the editing room normally as well, but that's too late for many things.

HA: Do you think that this approach to editing actually enhances the creative process for you?

MB: It's a very strange way to approach a film. I still don't exactly know. For Tom and myself, the experience was very interesting because we work a lot together, so each stage of our work is a development of a relationship and our creative process. It was very interesting for us to see what it would be like for me to be working completely without him because that was the result. I've been working actually on this project almost alone.

ER: Because he's somewhere else doing the shoot?

MB: And after doing the shooting, since all of this was so compressed in time, he was doing the music, or checking visual effects, and so on. I don't know if I'm exaggerating, but it felt like he was with me twenty percent of the time, or even less, and the rest it was me alone.

ER: So text messages were very important, then?

MB: They were important during the shoot. Then I edited the scenes alone, and he got to see them when they were edited, and then we of course commented and watched them together as usual. And then I would work on them again. So it was a very different approach, and it was interesting for us because we found out it works very well. It was a lot of fun.

ER: It was fun? Not alienating?

MB: Well, for me it's been hard to be alone for so long, working so much, but for our creative relationship it's been a deepening of the bond because we found out that we were working very well, in a way almost telepathically.

ER: It seems that you would have to trust each other more if you're not physically present.

MB: That's true. But it works. I mean, we already trusted each other. We were used to a very symbiotic process where we would comment on each edit together and speak about it. That's also part of the fun, of course, to exchange views: this edit is actually representing views about life, and my life is going this way and hers is going this way. That's how we were working. This time we had to be very concentrated.

ER: What was fun about that?

MB: Well, the fun of it for me was that it was more of a personal process. To work that way with Tom for the first time, to discover what I would do without any outside influence, that was very interesting for me. It produced a major step in my own development.

I think for Tom it was important because he's maturing enormously in his career right now. And part of that is to be able to let go of certain control reflexes. Of course that's easier when you have a long-term relationship with someone you work with, but it's also a show of maturity to be able to trust the unexpected, and that's what he's learning, I think, in this situation.

Bonnefoy's Career with Tykwer

HA: How would you describe the creative relationship that the two of you have? Could you speak a little bit about how it became established and how it's developed?

MB: Our first project was *Run Lola Run*, and for me it was extraordinary. It was luck because I hadn't edited any films before. That's typical of Tom—that was something he was always able to do, to decide he was interested in someone and just pick that person and go

ahead with this person. That's what he did with me, because we met in an editing studio setting. I wasn't an editor yet, but I was organizing editing phases for other films, and that's how we met, and we had an interesting conversation, and after that he offered me to do a little job with him, and then right after that he said, "Okay, the next film we'll be doing together." It was completely like a present from fate.

So that's how we met: very, very suddenly. And then we jumped into this project together, also very suddenly, when we were very new to each other, and it was a wonderful experience: an immediate burst of fondness for each other, and speaking about each edit and life in general at the same time and being very enthusiastic with all of this.

The first experience, *Run Lola Run*, was very exhilarating because the film itself offers the possibility to express energy in a way that's completely unrestrained, even though that's something that happened in the editing process. If you saw the script the way it was shot, you would find many scenes that were taken out and many beats that were steering the film in a more pensive direction. We found more and more when we were editing that the real nature of this film was to express a feeling more than it was to express philosophical thoughts verbally because they were expressed anyway by what was happening and what was shown. So we got the film to become more and more of this energy and lightning ball that it became, and that was very exciting. That was part of the fun of working together at that time.

ER: Did you know that you wanted to be an editor? Is that why you were working organizing other editing projects?

MB: No, I wanted to be a director. That's why I was working there. And I still do, but I'm very happy that I'm also an editor. That's extremely important, actually, for me. But I wanted to make films, and I thought that editing is probably one of the closest processes to directing—which it is, but there are others, as well.

HA: Do you see an approach or a theme in this body of work that you two have been creating together? One of the things that Tykwer has talked about is the importance of subjectivity, and trying to construct that, and figure out what it is. What do you see as some of the major ideas or principles that some of these films have touched upon, or maybe have in common?

MB: I don't know exactly if my answer concerns really my input because since Tom is an author of his films, he is very, very subjective in his choice of stories and feelings he's expressing. There his psyche is represented very strongly—and it's not mine. But my role as an editor is in a way to help him—in a way it's like a midwife because my role is to turn what is extremely intimate and an inner process into something that will become an object that is outside of him.

HA: That other people can connect with.

MB: That's right.

ER: Or reject.

MB: It's not about making it likeable. It's about giving it some form, condensing it into a form that will express what was meant without staying in that magma quality of what's going on inside the mind.

ER: I like your idea that you assist *his* narrative, and *his* story, but it seems that in some way you must, more than a midwife, shape that baby. For instance, on the DVD extras of *The Princess and the Warrior*, there's a clip of the two of you talking about gender, and power, and sexuality, and femininity, and masculinity. Part of it was about the decision to take out that shot where Bodo's brother reveals his tattoo, and Sissi touches the tattoo on his arm, and you said, "We thought she already had too many compromising relationships with men," and I thought, now *that's* interesting, and I also thought, "I wonder if that would have occurred to a man in the same way." It just seemed to me that there was this fascinating dynamic in terms of representations of gender and power, and you were bringing some influence to the project in a way that I thought was very interesting.



Photo 2: Franka Potente as Lola in *Run Lola Run* (1998).

MB: Yes, yes. I'm always extremely careful to steer away from the clichéd idea that the editor is only making the vision of the director blossom—because in a way it's true, but then one has to be very, very careful about how one expresses it, because of all of these clichés about directors being very often male, which is not the case so much anymore, but it's still predominantly the case, and editors being predominantly female. One always thinks of the director as the creative mastermind, and everyone just working towards an optimal result, which is true, but it's not. I mean, the editing process is extremely close to the writing process. You write with images and sounds, you really do, and you constantly make decisions that will alter the audio-visual sentence you are creating. In doing that, even the smallest change changes the nuance of that sentence, which in turn will change the nuance of the whole paragraph, and in the end, the whole story. And you do that all the time. That is a major, major recreation of the script, or, in other words, it's the last moment of writing the script. That's the final writing. So it's crucial. The script has been destroyed, in a way, by the shoot. It has been cut into pieces, and made to be a huge mess, and then you create from scratch, in a way, a new film. That's what editing is. And of course the editor in that process is crucial, and I've been very influential in steering films in directions, even though, naturally, we have had many discussions about everything we're doing.

I'm not suggesting at all that I'm passive because it's not true. On the contrary. But of

course we appreciate each other's opinion very, very much. To come back to the beginning of our work together, I was new to all of that when I was editing *Run Lola Run* with Tom. I remember he would ask me, "What do you think of this take?" for example, so I would say, "Oh I don't like it as much as the first one." And then he would say, "Why?" And I was used to thinking, "Well, because I know it's not as good. That should be enough." And then he'd say, "Well, I'm not convinced because you haven't been able to convince me, and so I'm not going to follow on that if you're not able to explain to me exactly why you think it's not as good."

I really started to look for words to express it, which I would find, and it was very interesting because that's what brought me to verbalize the whole creative process that happens in one's mind, but in a way so as to be able to share it with someone else, and be able to have a conversation about it, and be open for discussion—which is very necessary in the film process, and everywhere, actually. So at some point I became a virtuoso in explaining why I thought take two was better, and he is also good, so we would be constantly exchanging arguments—not angry arguments—exchanging reasons for thinking this is better or this is less good, and either being convinced or convincing the other, or finding we were of the same opinion. There were many, many times where I was thinking, "This cut *has* to be that way," and I would have to make a big convincing campaign, sometimes over weeks. Those are the wonders of editing.

Editing with Other Directors

ER: Have you been able to engage in a similar collaborative process with the other directors that you've worked with?

MB: I have. Probably the most important experience was with Wim Wenders. This was the complete opposite of my work with Tom because at that time I was used to working in this symbiotic exchange, and on the first project I did with Wim Wenders, he didn't speak much. It was a documentary about blues music (*The Soul of a Man*). He had three blues singers in mind, wasn't sure if all of them would fit into one film, and at some point he told me, "This is the rough idea." It was in Los Angeles in the home he had there at the time. I came all the way there to edit. He said, "This film for me needs to be about earthly love and spiritual love." And then he left. He was away for months. [She laughs.] I had walls full of videocassettes of archival footage and a few performances he had shot, and that was it. But it was an interesting experience, and I like him very much. But he's the complete opposite. It's really the director fleeing the . . .

HA: Fleeing the scene.

MB: Fleeing the scene, exactly.

ER: What happened when he got back?

MB: When I showed him a cut, he was a little more communicative. He had a direction suggested by me, so he would say, "Hmmm, this, and this, and this." I could feel that he had a very strong emotional feeling toward his footage, and I could understand where his emotional connection was, and sympathize with it, so I could use that as a . . .

HA: A way in?

MB: Yeah. But it was very . . . solitary.

Tykwer and German Cinema

HA: I'm very interested in your thoughts on the relationship between these films that you've done with Tykwer and German history or culture. Is it useful to think of them—especially the films in German—as German films? Are

there markers of German style or cinema? For the most part, I think that Tykwer hasn't positioned himself as a *German* filmmaker, but as a sort of international auteur or director. Do you see his films as German films or more broadly as global films?

MB: From a film historical perspective, I'm not very able to answer that. I'm cautious because I have a very partial culture about those things. But I can tell you I feel there is a psychological aspect of Tom's relationship to Germany in his films. I think even though Tom is, in a way, *striving* to be a global director, he carries in his work a German conflict.

Let me explain. When *Run Lola Run* came out, my feeling was that this was one of the first explosive demonstrations of unrestrained energy and *fun* [in postwar Germany]. There were a few other moments in culture in Germany which had a similar impact, but this was one of the very early ones. And that came in a context that has now changed very much also, in part due to that film. I mean, not *due* to it, but in the wake of that film. It was in the context of a lot of contrition in Germany, of self-perception, and a heavy past, and also the reunification with East Germany, where the last generations had been completely indoctrinated by the idea of guilt. I mean, not indoctrinated, but . . .

HA: Felt the burden of?

MB: Yes, and every school child had five or six years about the Nazis, etc., etc.

ER: Where were you educated?

MB: I'm French, and I grew up in France. I left France when I was nineteen, to come here, right after the fall of the Wall. My first socialization in Germany was East Berlin, so I was actually very attuned to the zeitgeist and very interested by it. That's one of the very important things I did in the editing of *Run Lola Run*. It was to push Tom and the film into that unrestrained . . .

HA: Direction?

MB: . . . direction, arguing a lot about the fact that in Germany then it was needed to have this explosion of colors, of energy. There

were important scenes, reflective scenes pondering about life and death verbally and all these things, and I was telling him, “These scenes are your bad conscience. They are your way of not letting yourself or the film become what it actually is in its nature, which is this feisty thing.” So I was really pushing in the other direction, and I think it’s very important for this film, to have set it free.

But also, what is specific about Tom and his placement in film history is that he reacted positively to this. He was already creating with *Run Lola Run* something that was going extremely strongly in that direction, and so of course he was very interested when I was pitching that to him, and he is that kind of young, German person who is not heavily weighed down.

And going international now is also a very typical German striving, and also I would say it has much to do with the fact that Tom sees himself as a young, prodigal son of German culture and wants to bring the pride back. It’s a little bit clichéd the way I say it. Still, bringing pride to Germany’s idea of itself and to marshal that with films. Doing films in English is also a way to export the German talent outside. I think he has a very filial perspective; he sees himself as a son and is trying to redeem the father.

Mathilde Bonnefoy’s Short Film *Insensitive*

ER: What about your own interest in directing? What are the differences in taking on that role?

MB: Depression. [She laughs.] I just finished a short film, a fictional short film, which is of course much more personal than the films I directed for television, which were documentaries that were asked for by TV. So I was enjoying doing them, but it was not coming from the depths of myself. But this film: I had written it, and I also edited it, and I couldn’t imagine doing it with someone else because you’re putting your entrails into the hands of

someone you don’t even know well—completely impossible.

You can see when you’re editing all the emotional phases the director goes through. There is a lot of shame and negative feelings as well as excitement. For me it was extremely difficult to edit my own film. It really was depressing because you’re constantly working with the deep material of yourself, so it’s almost like psychoanalysis. Really, it was very slow and difficult.

HA: Did you find it harder to rewrite the film in the editing because you became so attached to what you’d shot?

MB: No, it was a feeling more that you’re trying to move enormous amounts of weight around because what you are dealing with is not just footage or something you can see potential in as an editor: you’re moving parts of yourself, so it’s incredibly heavy.

At some point, I will certainly ask an editor. But then it’s such a trust situation. You want to ask someone who’s going to be . . . careful with all of that.

ER: What is the film about?

MB: It’s a love story that hardly gets to become one. It’s a melancholic situation of two people who realize suddenly that they have been entertaining an ambivalent relationship to each other, and they’re suddenly faced with that and the realization that they could be together, but they find out that one of them doesn’t really want to.

It’s called *Insensitive* because of a song by Carlos Jobim called “How Insensitive.” It plays a role in the film.

HA: Is it going to be released in Germany?

MB: Luckily, it is going to be shown on TV. There is a channel, ARTE, which is French and German, that shows films. So I’m happy because I did it with my own money; I’m happy it’s going to be shown.

Themes in Tykwer’s Films

HA: Love seems to be very central in all of these films—its redemptive power. A character who loves is a character who will triumph. I

wonder if you see “love as redemptive” as a sort of through-line in most of the films? Heterosexual love?

MB: [She hesitates.] I suppose. That’s becoming very personal. But I think one would find a very complicated relationship to love at the core of Tom’s work, one that is either very idealizing and in a way far from its reality, or one that is impossible. For example in *Perfume* “love” is mistaken with being “loved by,” crowds being loved by everyone else, being loved for being artistic, and all these things.

I would say in *Run Lola Run* maybe it’s the most pure, raw, and real form of love being expressed. In *The Princess and the Warrior*, it’s a neurotic form of idealized love. There is the idea of love being really redemptive, but not being lived out, being something that is not physical, which has this disastrous combination in *Perfume*, you know, this idealizing of love that is replaced by an idea of pure art, and that makes you loved by people in the end who praise you and admire you for it.

My feeling is that the question of love is always a big problem, in all these films. And interestingly, the main problem we’re having with *The International* is also there because the female character who is played by Naomi Watts was supposed to be the love interest of the male character. But it had an interesting aspect in the script that never survived because in a way Tom refrained from making it happen on set. They were supposed to be romantically interested in each other and be longing for each other, but she was married and had children, and he would respect that. They would have one moment where they are very, very close and close to kissing, but they don’t. They’re interrupted by a call from her husband. It was a very beautiful melancholic scene when it was written, and you could feel a sadness in their connection all through the script. At some point they separate because of their professional situation, and the separation is felt like a separation of lovers. That was the idea.

Interestingly, Tom shot the scene where they are almost kissing very beautifully because it was *the* subject of the scene, but then he completely refrained from showing them as potential lovers in the rest of the scenes of the film. So you had this scene that was completely alien to the rest of the impressions you had, and we struggled with it a lot. We finally had to cut it out because they weren’t living the *reality* of that connection in the other scenes, where they are actually doing their investigative work. This one scene was very beautifully shot, but the reality of it was lost. I remember sending text messages saying, “They need to look at each other more.” So now we’re cutting it out. And we’re shooting new scenes.

ER: What’s interesting about that is that in the publicity material for both *The Princess and the Warrior* and *Heaven*, there’s a shot of a kiss that doesn’t end up in the final film, so this has happened repeatedly. This is the third time it has happened, taking out the heterosexual kiss.

MB: Exactly. I’m telling you, it’s central.

ER: It’s an interesting pattern.

MB: Oh, here he is, the author.

(Tykwer arrives, gets some coffee, and returns to absentmindedly eat Bonnefoy’s croissant, which neither notices.)

ER: So we were talking about editing and the lost kiss in *The International*, the kiss that’s going to drop out, and I thought that was interesting because of the publicity material for *Princess and the Warrior* and *Heaven*, in which there had clearly been a kiss that had dropped out. So is this now the third lost kiss, and is that a pattern?

TOM TYKWER (to Bonnefoy, jokingly): You gave that away. How dare you. [He pauses.] It’s very strange, isn’t it?

I think it’s because . . . I think we’re more interested in unresolved concepts—not meaning that they have to stay unresolved, but that you finish them for yourself. If it’s about movement of characters toward and away from each other, and once you’ve shown a kiss, hmm, where do you go from

there? I think that's the question. In *The Princess and the Warrior*, it was *obviously* a problem, even though it was a super beautiful scene. I totally loved that scene. It was one of the *hardest* cuts, I think, ever, to cut that scene, because it was really, really good. But the movie was over . . . and it wasn't over. It was before they climb on the roof, so why climb onto the roof if they've kissed, you know? Where do we go from here? It didn't feel like they still had something to *achieve* because they'd done this. But the whole *resolution* of their problematic relationship happens later in the car, and he still has to go through his whole transformation, so . . . even though that kiss is really nice. [He laughs.]

In *The International*, it's a very good, strong, intimate scene, but that's for different reasons. Or maybe the reasons are similar because it was quite *early* in the movie, storytelling-wise, and it opened a door that we weren't really going through. And at the same time it was putting a lot of focus on an aspect that the film isn't really about. The film is actually very much about the fact that they don't connect romantically because they're partners in work and very close, I mean *really* very close, where you start not being really able to differentiate what is the difference between this kind of closeness and a partner relationship.

And I love that, too, because I think it's the first time in the films we've worked on where it's grown-up people in their forties, and the film describes the reality of people in their forties when they meet and get closer, and you have suddenly this aspect of seeing, "This could have been a person I might have spent my life with if we had met in a time when it was still possible," but you know the woman has a family. You just don't walk away from your life because you meet somebody great. I mean, it has to be *really* great, and your life has to be *really* shitty. [He laughs.] But usually your life *isn't*. Your life is complicated and normal and maybe still great. But then I think it's an undercur-

rent that I love about the film, that there is this whole idea that the choice we take in life is only one. There could be five others. There could be fifty others. It's a bit going away from this idea that there is this *one, true* love. It's the one you make it to be, not the one that is thrown onto you because God wants you to do that. It's kind of a process.

MB: Of course, all these kisses that have been cut out of the films—

TT: She always blames it on my Catholic background.

MB: These kisses are also highly symbolic, the way you put them in your films, and so it's not like a kiss being part of the fabric of a relationship.

TT: Except for *Winter Sleepers*.

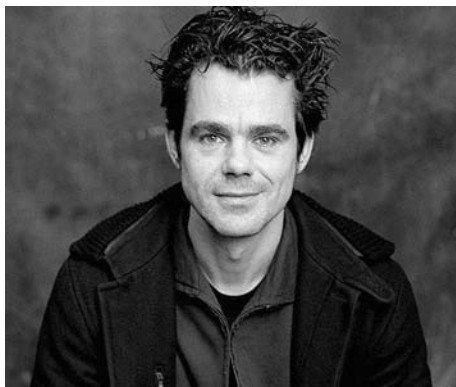
MB: Yes. But it's really kisses that when they are being done or had, then, yeah, you say the story is over because it's not a kiss that becomes part of a reality. It's a kiss that means love has arrived, and so we can end the story. It leaves love as very idealized and almost an abstract idea.

TT: Which is maybe not what we want to leave behind, so we cut all the kisses! [He laughs.]

On Working Together and Not Working Together

TT: Once you're rooted in a project and you feel safe inside the world that you want to create, "safe" meaning that simply speaking, you know what this movie is about in general, you really *know* that world. And that's what I always say about subjectivity: if I don't have a character that I can enter the world through, if I don't have any substantial arc that feels related to me and the people who work on it . . . you know, if Mathilde wasn't interested in Clive's character in *The International*, it would be really a problem. [He laughs.]

If she were just saying, "Yeah, okay, he's kind of . . ." I'm sure there are at least 99 out of 100 movies that we could look at, and Mathilde would say, "Well, I wouldn't be able to cut it because I don't care for those char-



Photos 3a–b: Editor/director Mathilde Bonnefoy and director Tom Tykwer.

acters.” It’s *really* a point. It’s always also a risk. I’m always worried that it might be that way.

You know, there were several reasons why we didn’t do *Perfume* together. One of the reasons was—it was not the main reason, I guess—but I was in Munich, and she would have had to go for a year to Munich. So I always blame it mostly on that. But I also know that you were struggling with . . .

MB: The script.

TT: The character and the concept and the idea that . . . I think you were just worried you might not be able to step into it . . .

MB: Yes, that’s right.

TT: . . . in the degree that you have to in order to make it work, and based on the novel and based on many things, I actually even knew what you were talking about. I felt like I really *wanted* her to do it because I wanted that perspective on the film, but I understood . . .

MB: It was difficult.

TT: Yes, of course.

MB: And also I couldn’t really understand why *you* were interested in that script. I couldn’t

really understand it. But there I had the feeling that it’s even more personal; it’s your domain, in a way.

TT: Maybe. I mean, I totally feel connected with the film now. Maybe you can see it a bit more in the movie, in the final film?

MB: Yes. And you explained to me, also, the reasons you had to be interested in the film, and I could accept and understand them very well.

TT: But it was tough, you know, not having Mathilde. And I was lucky because I got Alex, who was really, really good and super-impressively supportive of finding the vision in there, not so much making it just work technically. So I was lucky. But the danger is always there. And I wouldn’t want her to do it, of course, if she doesn’t . . . And we’re not identical twins, so it’s quite realistic that once in a while we stumble into material that we don’t agree on, on a level that is actually a problem. Because her decision is incredible, too. She takes a year, basically, to invest in it, more or less. This one is going to end up being a year.

Bonnefoy's Cinematic Influences

HA: Mathilde, would you say that there are seminal films for you, either more recent examples or just films that particularly appeal to you?

MB: It's difficult because I've been in a crisis with moviegoing in the last years, so I haven't been watching films much at all. The first very big influences were Buñuel films, for example, and a few French films from Marcel Carné, like *Hôtel du Nord* or *Le Quai des brumes*, or a few Japanese films, as well, like . . . what would be the name in English? . . . Mizoguchi . . .

HA: *Ugetsu*?

TT: *Ugetsu monogatari*.

MB: That's right. But of course that was very influenced by the offer there is in France. In Paris where I grew up, there are many, many

small author cinemas, and that's the kind of film you can watch. And then I was introduced to commercial films at some point. More or less at the time I moved to Berlin, I discovered *The Terminator* series. I was very impressed by it. I was very impressed by the unrestrained *fun* of it that had also a beautiful quality to it. So I became more open to that influence, as well.

TT: So you see, Mathilde is fueled by that same balance I was talking about: Mizoguchi and James Cameron. [He laughs.] That's my world. That's the philosophy, I think.

MB: That's what succeeds so well in *The Matrix*, the first movie—the fusion of the dream world and the commercial fun of things—but it is also very difficult to hold.

TT: It's amazing. I mean, that's what we all try to achieve.