

SENSITO FILMS PRESENTS

MAUD WYLER GÉRALDINE NAKACHE GRÉGOIRE COLIN



AND YET WE WERE ALL BLIND

A FILM BY BÉATRICE POLLET



DIRECTED BY BÉATRICE POLLET STARRING MAUD WYLER / GÉRALDINE NAKACHE / GRÉGOIRE COLIN / ROMAN KOLINKA / FANNY COTTENÇON / PASCALE VIGNAL / PASCAL DEMOLON / OPHELIA KOLB
WRITTEN BY BÉATRICE POLLET DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GEORGE LECHAPTOIS SOUND PIERRE TUCAT, CHARLES AUTRAND, GILLES BENARDEAU COSTUME DESIGNER LOÏC LALLEMAND EDITOR CHARLOTTE FILLER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CHARLOTTE LEBOURGEOIS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NELLY ROBIN PRODUCED BY SABINE POLLET PRODUCED BY NOÉLÈNE DELLUC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BASILE JULLIEN MUSIC BY PIERRE SCHMIDT AND MATHIEU CHOCAT PRODUCTION SENSITO FILMS COFINANCED BY JOUR 2 FÊTE WITH THE SUPPORT OF CANAL+ AND CINE+
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A FILM BY BÉATRICE POLLET

2022 – 1,66 :1 – 5.1

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Fiction – Legal thriller
France

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SYNOPSIS



Claire and Thomas are happily married with two kids. As the Police find by their house a newborn believed to be Claire's, their lives are thrown into turmoil. Claire claims she didn't know she was pregnant but how could one not notice it? As her best friend and lawyer Sophie builds her defense, the very essence of motherhood soon becomes the heart of the case.

INTERVIEW WITH BEATRICE POLLET

How did you become interested in the subject of pregnancy denial?

From reading a news item, ten years ago: a woman had given birth alone at home, overcome with pain and fear without knowing what was happening to her or even that it concerned a newborn. That delivery ended in tragedy – the infant died. I couldn't grasp how the presence of that child in her belly for nine months could have escaped her notice, as well as that of those around her. After doing some research, I learned that in the event of pregnancy denial, the belly doesn't grow, a woman's period doesn't necessarily stop, and there are sometimes none of the usual symptoms of pregnancy. The more I tried to understand and the more I read, the more this situation captivated and excited me. I was fortunate enough to meet the right people very early on.

Your film is dedicated to the memory of Félix Navarro. Did you meet this doctor during your research?

Dr. Félix Navarro created the Association Française pour la Reconnaissance du Déni de Grossesse (French Federation for the Recognition of Pregnancy Denial), or AFRDG, in Toulouse in 2006. He has since passed away and I've dedicated this film to him. I met him in 2011 at a symposium organized by his association: this 2-day symposium entirely devoted to pregnancy denial brought together obstetricians, psychiatrists, experts, members of the legal profession, and more... I also met a woman without knowing that she herself had gone through pregnancy denial and that her tragedy had led to the creation of the Association (her baby died at birth, she was tried and sentenced). This woman was the first to tell me her story, the prison in which she spent 9 months. In a way, she was my "great witness". So, my motivation arose from this human encounter. I wanted to talk about her suffering, that of her family, and also her child, because she already had a son. She actually appears in the film with this son who is now 20 years old.

Did it take long to write the script?

I worked on the script for almost eight years, basing my writing on several true stories. For me, identifying with the heroine was crucial in order for all of us, men or women, to become aware of this symptom and the personal tsunami that pregnancy denial represents. I met my producer, Stéphanie Douet (Sensito Films) in May 2019, and we immediately went to work on the text, opting to make a legal thriller. Throughout the writing process, the script was

reviewed by doctors, lawyers, judges, expert psychiatrists, and obstetricians. It was very important to me that everything down to the smallest details be validated and credible. Corinne Acker, an expert psychiatrist at the Assises de Strasbourg, reread the text and gave some fascinating feedback. She told me this wonderful phrase: "Two things distinguish a human being from a piece of meat: culture and the law." With every encounter, with every reading, I hoped to learn more, but all specialists come up against a mystery they must nevertheless accept.

How did you create the character of Claire Morel?

I chose to tell the story of a woman suffering from total denial – a woman from an affluent background, educated, and already a mother: that makes the situation even more incomprehensible. Contrary to popular belief, women who experience denial come from all kinds of social circumstances, are already mothers, and are loving. Nothing predisposes them to becoming potential infanticidal mothers. I also wanted Claire and Thomas' child to be alive, for there to be hope... I quickly saw Claire as a lawyer, a profession that easily crystalizes questions. A lawyer incarcerated for murder elicits a reaction from everyone. Then came the character Sophie, her longtime friend, and a lawyer herself, who takes on her defense. Claire isn't some fragile little thing. After a period of shock, she rebuilds herself with help from her husband and her friend. Facing them are the investigation, led by the investigating judge, the prosecutor, and the experts. What we call the legal machine.

The justice system does indeed react quickly... but by imprisoning this woman.

I still don't understand why we inflict prison on these women. It's monstrous to lock them up and separate them from their families at a time when they're extremely fragile. When there's a trial, the magistrates must decide whether there's been a breach, an intent to kill or murder, with or without impaired consciousness. Suspicion is automatically projected onto these women who must try and demonstrate why and to what extent they were not at all aware of their pregnancies. In 1990, some psychiatrists argued for pregnancy denial to be included in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), but they came up against very strong resistance. Still now, the verdict in these trials depends heavily on the jury, the judge, and their assessors. It's a lottery.



Pregnancy denial involves the intimate and can end up in court. This huge gap really intrigues and challenges me!

We realize that a denial often tears a family apart, pushes friends away, draws hatred...

There are threats, hateful people, like the ones who sack the office of Claire's lawyer, Sophie. That hatred is even stronger if the baby dies after birth. Pregnancy denial is a problem for our society because it inherently concerns a woman's body. I chose not to have a child, and I had to deal with looks from others, looks of incomprehension combined with suspicion that are probably like the one we give women after their pregnancy denial. These women, who I could have been among, shook me with their stories, the absurdity and often injustice of their situations.

I get the impression that the men change their minds about the denial over the course of the film.

They all evolve in their understanding of the mystery: Thomas, Claire's husband, the investigating judge, and Paul, Sophie's assistant. Even the police treat Claire less harshly after a few weeks. If I can use a metaphor, I'd say that the quest for truth in this case is like quicksand: as soon as someone sets foot on a somewhat stable step, the others follow them. But the incomprehension in the face of a denial isn't in any way limited to men – it also affects women. It's a

human mystery. It concerns everyone – I'd like people to understand that when they see the film.

Why did you choose Maud Wyler to play Claire?

I've wanted to work with her for a long time, ever since seeing her in several short films and then in *Le Combat ordinaire*. Her face is so expressive, it shows each of her character's emotions. She also works a lot with her postures. For Claire's character, she alternates between a broken woman whose body is falling apart and what remains of her past as a lawyer, as mistress of her image. It was important for the viewer to empathize with her, to believe her: she is forthright, sincere, and restrained. Her gestures remain economical, everything is internalized, yet everything is visible. Maud has vast evocative power.

Her friend and lawyer, Géraldine Nakache, is highly combative. For her, "in pregnancy denial, the mother isn't a murderer, she's a victim. In addition, it's a fight entirely akin to that of women's rights."

As spectators, her character, Sophie, is our guide. Her generous, empathetic perspective leads us to the crucial question: "Was there any impairment or loss of judgement?" Géraldine Nakache fed her character with her own unique brand of energy, and humor, too. I found her to be a very humble, extremely sensitive woman deeply disturbed by the phenomenon of pregnancy denial, which she rediscovered while



reading my script in one sitting. Géraldine is an attentive, curious, and sharp actress. I think Sophie resembles her in her humanity, her humor, and her unique, almost musical, phrasing. Sophie and Claire are two sides of the same coin, reflections of each other. If this had happened to Sophie, Claire would have defended her in the same way.

Though sometimes overwhelmed, Thomas is a very supportive husband. What made you choose Grégoire Colin?

Grégoire Colin gives off a certain magnetism. I was always struck by the intensity of life and the energy we sense in his expression. An instinctive actor, he's often played dark, disturbing characters. But his acting palette is far more diverse, and he likes to experiment. He and his character, Thomas, share a deep sensitivity and love of solitude. They are men who struggle with words, who need to look and touch. Claire's husband works at the ONF (National Forests Office), so nature and the forest are like deep breaths, moments of relief in the tragedy the couple experiences. Thomas can record the electrical energy travelling through a tree, but he didn't feel the child growing in Claire's belly,

and he can't forgive himself for it. He tells Claire: "We can't blame you for something no one could see, not even me. It doesn't make any sense."

The judicial officers are played by atypical actors far from any stereotypes.

For the young prosecutor present during the reenactment, I chose Ophélie Kolb, whose sometimes almost childlike face contrasts with the harshness of her words. Her role is to bring out the truth; she's young, aggressive, and no doubt shocked: she looks the horror of the newborn left in a trash can head on. Pascal Demolon, who plays the investigating judge, has an entirely different role. His character asks a lot of questions, that's his job, and he's also not supposed to express too much of his feelings. At each hearing, he observes and picks up on what Claire and Sophie reveal outside of their answers. Pascal Demolon is an actor whose humanity jumps out at you. His hands, his generous gestures, and his deep, broken, sometimes shattered voice are some of the reasons I went to him. I didn't want to fall into the caricature of the judge who's there to ruin someone's life. He resembles the judges I got to meet who love life, who are trying to give second chances to the defendants in their charge, so a far cry from the cliché.

How does Claire's story become a real investigation, a legal thriller?

We needed a simple, direct narrative. Without pathos. I wanted action, to give the facts, only the facts, by basing the film on the construction of Claire's defense and the investigation carried out by the prosecution. The viewer needs to be sure of having seen and felt the same thing, the same ambiguities, as the protagonists. It explores two worlds: that of Claire, a victim of herself, and that of the court, never immune to a possible miscarriage of justice. I was lucky to work on the editing with Loïc Lallemand who was a real ally, especially since part of the editing took place in parallel with filming. We accompany Claire and Sophie on their journey, never leaving their sides. The further we get in the story, the closer they are in terms of rhythm, energy, and their desire to be heard.

What choices did you make in terms of lighting and frames?

I wanted to maintain a real closeness with the viewer. To never leave the characters' sides. I insisted on filming faces beyond the dialogue, their ambiguities, and things that aren't said. The image reveals what each is really thinking. It's in the image that we decipher their inner conviction. George Lechaptois, whose work I admire on several films, was a dream chief cameraman – very calm, serene, and understanding. He's an artist with whom I was able to work on the nuances. Indoors, in the first part of the film, and then in prison, the backgrounds are fairly undefined, without us distinguishing the backdrops, with rather flat, almost milky lighting. It's similar to that in *Procès de Viviane Amsalem* by Ronit and Shlomi Elkabetz, in which Jeanne Lapoirie's lighting is white, soft, and in contrast with the

words that are said in this huis-clos. In the second part of my film, when Claire goes home on parole, the decor of her house has changed, as has the lighting. The characters lit by smaller sources inhabit the décor in a more realistic, more anchored way.

The title *Toi non plus, tu n'as rien vu* (*And Yet We Were All Blind*) addresses everyone: is pregnancy denial a collective phenomenon?

The film opens on the sequence with Claire, eight months pregnant, jumping into a pool with a completely flat stomach. She gives birth two weeks later, and the viewer didn't see anything either. Does that make them an accomplice? It's so disturbing that we refuse this mystery. The baby hides: we sometimes discover it randomly in an x-ray, an ultrasound for kidney pain, for example.

It grows along the spine under the ribs; the mother's uterus doesn't tilt forward; she doesn't have a large belly. Denial is different for each woman who has experienced it, but there is one common denominator: the absence of any of the usual physical symptoms of pregnancy. Gynecologists have told me about women who discovered their pregnancies very late, at six or seven months, and whose bellies grew in the two hours after they accepted their state! I'm convinced these women all share an invisible wound, something related to maternity, something they've carried with them since childhood, or that was passed on to them by their ancestors. Pregnancy denial reflects a psychological fragility that is unknown to us. But instead of admitting that we don't know, we prefer to judge. But to judge, one must know.

I want to lead the viewer towards a vision without prejudice, towards grasping this incredible yet simply human complexity that is pregnancy denial.



PREGNANCY DENIAL... WHAT IS IT?

A TIMELINE

(according to the FARDP- French Association for the Recognition of Denial of Pregnancy)

- 1681** Doctor François Mauriceau (gynecologist) talks about "*ignorance of a pregnancy*" induced by persistent menstrual bleeding
- XIX^e century** Doctor Marcé (psychiatrist) gives the first full descriptions of pregnancy denial without naming it.
- 1874** Doctor Tardieu (jurist and criminologist) talks about "*dissimulation*"
- 1898** Doctor Gould uses the terms "*unconscious pregnancy/unknown pregnancies*"
- 1949** Doctor Hélène Deutsch, cites, in her book about women's psychology, cases of women who "*deny their pregnancy in all good faith*" and for whom "*biological motherhood does not lead to maternal mentality*"
- 1900** Doctor Brouardel (medical examiner) writes, in one of his books, a chapter entitled "*Can a woman be pregnant without knowing it?*" but goes without a clear answer.
- 1970** The concept of "*pregnancy denial*" appears
- 1990** DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – the "bible" of psychiatric nosography) refuses to include pregnancy denial as a psychiatric disorder

DEFINITION

The state wherein a pregnant woman is unaware of being pregnant, her body doesn't tell her that she is, and no one else sees it (partner, parents, friends, doctors, etc.)

This symptom covers multiple situations, whether they involve a partial or total denial.

In the event of a partial denial, an ancillary event removes the denial before the delivery, like an x-ray of another part of the body, a remark from a third party...

In the event of a total denial, the delivery occurs without the woman knowing what is happening to her. If she delivers alone, the baby can be put in danger and the delivery will become a forensic problem.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

Since the uterus doesn't tilt, these women don't show. As such, the baby develops vertically, according to x-ray documents that have sometimes dispelled denial...

Additionally, amenorrhea doesn't necessarily occur, and none of the usual symptoms of a woman's pregnancy manifest.

WHAT DO THESE WOMEN RISK?

In the event of a total denial, resulting in the abandonment or death of the newborn, these women can face up to life sentences.

Regardless of whether the child lives or dies, they can be taken into custody. The investigating judge determines their involvement, either conscious or not, their intention to kill a child under 15 with or without premeditation; they assess the disturbance to public order, the failure to provide care, etc. Subsequently, the case can either be closed or go before the courts, the Criminal Court or the Correctional Court.

AN ATTEMPT AT CONCLUSION

No one is immune to pregnancy denial, regardless of age or socio-economic situation.

It is a medical reality that remains underestimated and probably underdiagnosed.

The symptom causes varied and obvious suffering, danger for the baby, difficulties in the mother-child relationship, etc.

A FEW ESTIMATED FIGURES:

Based on one of the few solid epidemiological studies made in 1990 and published in 2002, the Jens Wessel Study – Berlin, as applied to the number of births in France in 2018, for example:

Out of 760,000 annual births:

- 1/500 partial denials
- 1/2500 total denials = 304 total denials per year
- 1/10 000 home births (in the event of total denial) = 76 births per year
Of these 76 home births, 15 deaths of newborns per year = more than 1 baby per month.
(NB: These deaths have multiple causes: complications during unassisted childbirth, abnormal positioning of the baby, hypothermia, strangulation by the umbilical cord... they are not solely the result of infanticide...)

And yet, of these women:

- 80% are in stable relationships.
- 50% are already mothers.
- Many are not necessarily adolescent, immature, or suffering from cognitive or psychotic disorders.

** Pregnancy denial is the most dangerous obstetric complication to be ignored by research and scientific literature.*

(Jens Wessel, obstetrician)

BÉATRICE POLLET - BIOGRAPHY



Béatrice Pollet enrolled in the photography program at Louis Lumière in 1986 while also earning a master's degree in Cinema from the University of Paris VIII.

Beginning in 1988, she worked as a scriptwriter alongside directors like René Allio, Philippe Lioret, Raùl Ruiz, Hiner Saleem, Jean Marboeuf, Jean Baronnet, Thierry Binisti, and many more.

In parallel, she developed scripts for short films, documentary projects, and feature films.

After completing three short fiction films, she directed her first feature film, ***Le jour de la grenouille***, which was released in September 2012.

In 2011, she began researching pregnancy denial and writing ***And Yet We Were All Blind***, while also directing multiple films about the perinatal journey (documentaries, docudramas, video recordings).

The filming of ***And Yet We Were All Blind*** took place between the Occitania and Ile-de-France regions between December 2021 and January 2022.

BÉATRICE POLLET - FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022** *Toi non plus tu n'as rien vu*, feature-length drama (Sensito Films, Jour2Fête)
With Maud Wyler, Géraldine Nakache, Grégoire Colin
The Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival– Official Competition, Arras Film Festival – Albi Film Festival
- 2017 - 2019**
Docudramas and video recording of The Perinatal Conference at the Palais des Papes, Avignon
In partnership with Dr. Oguz Omay, perinatal psychiatrist, and the Pivot de la Teppe group.
- 2018**
Films about the exhibition on the Gueules cassées (Broken Faces)
In partnership with Philippe Lançon, writer, journalist, and author of *Le Lambeau*.
- 2014 - 2018**
Portraits de femmes (Portraits of Women) – Production of 3 docudramas
about the perinatal experience for Dr. Oguz Omay, perinatal psychiatrist.
- 2017** *La Vie d'Hélène*, 52' documentary
An account of a very difficult perinatal journey
- 2012** *Le jour de la grenouille*, feature-length drama (released in September 2012 – Jour2Fête)
Awards from the Fondation Beaumarchais, Scénario Céci, Moulin d'Andé
Selected for multiple festivals in France and overseas
The La Roche sur Yon International Film Festival: AUDIENCE AWARD
- 2006** *Qui sommes-nous ?* – 10' / 35mm / short fiction film
With Sandrine Bonnaire
Selected for multiple festivals in France and overseas and broadcast on France 3 (Libre court).
- 2001 - 2003**
Portraits de peintres, d'un atelier a l'autre : Eyewitness accounts from painters in the post-war Young
Painting movement. Painters: Jansem 52', Françoise Adnet 26', Pierre Henry 26', Pollet 52'
- 1998** *Tic Toc* 18' / 35mm/ short fiction film
Prize For The Best Short Film In French & The Fondation
Beaumarchais Prize at The Créteil International Women's Film Festival / Prades Festival /
Broadcast on France 3 (Libre court).
- 1995** *Je suis née transsexuelle* – 26' / documentary / Broadcast on Planète, Club du Doc
and at international festivals.
- 1993** *Le singe* – 13' / 35mm / short fiction film
Selected for multiple festival in France and overseas, screened in theaters before *Tu ne tueras point*
by Krzysztof Kieslowski and on France 3 (Libre court).



CAST

Claire Morel	Maud Wyler
Sophie Beauvois	Géraldine Nakache
Thomas Morel	Grégoire Colin
Paul, Sophie's associate	Roman Kolinka
Emilie Morel	Fanny Cottencçon
Pascale, Claire's mother	Pascale Vignal
Investigating judge	Pascal Demolon
Prosecutor	Ophélie Kolb



CREW

Director	Béatrice Pollet
Writer	Béatrice Pollet
Director of photography	Georges Lechaptois
Sound engineer	Pierre Tucat
Production Manager	Noélène Delluc
1 ST assistant	Basile Jullien
Editing	Loïc Lallemand
Music	Pierre Schmidt and Mathieu Chocat
Set design	Charlotte Filler
Costumes	Charlotte Lebourgeois
Makeup	Nelly Robin
Hair	Sabine Pollet
Sound editing	Charles Autrand
Mixing	Gilles Benardeau
Producer	Stéphanie Douet – Sensito Films
Distribution in France	Jour2Fête
International sales	The Party Film Sales