

L'Ombre du Doute

("Shadow of Doubt")

France : 1993 : dir. Aline Issermann :

: 102 / 105 / 106 / 110 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Sandrine Blancke](#)

Alain Bashung; Mireille Perrier

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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The accuser must be believed – that seems to be the thesis – even in the teeth of conflicting evidence. We all know that children are incapable of falsehood or malice, immune to manipulation by an adult agenda. In short, the Sex Abuse industry wishes us to do away with the presumption of innocence altogether. A man should be guilty until proven innocent, when sex is the substance of the allegation. Interesting liberal position. Source: NFT bulletin

NFT bulletin – Nov/Dec 94 – review:

“Skilfully constructed as a psychological thriller, with an astonishing central performance by Sandrine Blancke as a 12-year old who accuses her father of sexual abuse [sic], this is a compassionate portrait of a family thrown into turmoil. Director Issermann spent two years researching her film, working alongside social workers, lawyers and therapists. The result is a remarkable film, mature, thoughtful and engrossing.”

Sunday Times review:

“An 11-year old girl, Sandrine Blancke (from **"TOTO THE HERO"**), worries her teacher by her apathy, anorexia and habit of giving fairy-tales downbeat endings, and the teacher becomes suspicious. After prompting¹ the child tells the police that her father, Alain Bashung, has been sexually abusing her [sic], but she withdraws the accusations under

¹ Or under pressure, to put it another way.

pressure², facing the disbelief of her mother, Mireille Perrier. In spite of the father's denials social workers move in, and although there are some suspicions that the girl is fantasising, the case comes to trial. Aline Issermann's film looks at how an outwardly normal middle class family is destroyed. The truth is left to the end, but the law is seen to grind on insensitively. Issermann maintains a fairly objective stance, but can make no positive statement, and in the end it amounts merely to a psychological whudunnit with a social-issue theme [sic]."

"Serious doubt is cast over a highly imaginative 12-year old's claim that her father has been abusing her [sic]."

Daily Mirror note:

"Child abuse drama [sic] ** "

Radio Times review:

"French drama exploring complex themes of abuse [sic] and childhood imagination."

"A 12-year old girl informs the local authorities that her father is abusing her [sic]. Stars Sandrine Blancke, Mireille Perrier, Alain Bashung. *** "

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

² Or "after prompting"?

No further information currently available. Not to be confused with the 1943 Hitchcock film "**SHADOW OF A DOUBT**", which does have certain similarities of theme. The title is the nub of my problem with this entire deluge of recent films on incest or paedophilia. There *is* no shadow of doubt, for example, in the terminology of the reviews above, nor in media coverage of any related topic. There is no shading of any kind – it is a black and white "issue". And even though it has become a cliché of modern criminal trials to hear a defendant claim she/he was "abused" as a child – as though to expiate their having tortured their own children, or murdered their parents – the burden of proof in sex allegations has effectively been shifted onto the defendant, violating one of the most fundamental premises of criminal justice. Director Issermann spent two years "working alongside social workers, lawyers and therapists" on similar inquiries, as a result of which her film "maintains a fairly objective stance"? Is that a joke?

We shouldn't pre-judge the stance of this film of course, but the whole question of sex prior to the "age of consent" – let alone incest, with its additional burden of family pressures – has been so exploited by people with a variety of hidden social agendas that it seems to defy all rational thought. If classroom apathy, or anorexia in pre-pubertal girls, are to be read now as indicators of sexual trauma, why not throw in obesity and autism for good measure? And since social workers and "specialist" police units now actively trawl for allegations – in children's home cases, for example, writing to all former inmates *inviting* them to report past "abuses" (with the implicit incentive of "compensation" payments) – false allegations of unwanted sexual interference, so far from being rare, are almost inevitable. The "victim culture" now offers financial rewards to new conscripts.

Sandrine Blancke gave an assured performance as the central character's elder sister in the rather more upbeat Belgian film "**TOTO CE HEROS**". It too had connotations of brother/sister incest, but conveyed with none of the hatred and indignation characteristic of "sex abuse" melodramas. Nothing else is known of her.

See subject index under **POLICE / SOCIAL WORKERS**, [SEX & SEXUALITY](#) (for other treatments of incest) and presumably **TRIALS / COURTROOMS**.