

The Aldrich Arts Collaborative

IMAGE Journal's "The Arts & Faith Top 100 Films List"

Written and directed by Terrence Malick, *Days of Heaven's* plot is similar to the stories of Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah in the Biblical Book of Genesis, and the film's title was derived from Deuteronomy 11:21 ("That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.")

Disharmony and tragedy in the poetic film's conclusion arise because of the conflict between the male protagonists in a fatal, fiery love triangle, who both demand the exclusive love of a female. A wealthy, lonely, landowning, raw-boned farmer (Shepard in his acting debut) of the Great Plains falls in love with the girlfriend (Adams) of a hot-headed wheat-field farmer (Gere) who is masquerading as the field hand's sister. The 'heavenly,' golden-hued, contented, and idyllic days of the drifters who have found salvation on the wheat field is shattered with the discovered revelations of the real nature of the relationship between the brother and sister, and an accompanying plague of locusts and fire (typical of Old Testament judgements). Scheming deception, greedy avarice, jealous envy, adultery, and eventually murder result from the conflict. At the time *Days of Heaven* was Malick's second film and it was nominated for Academy Awards for Costume Design, Original Score, and Sound. It won an

"No one's perfect. You just got half devil and half angel in you."

Linda

Academy Award for Best Cinematography by Nestor Almendros.

Suggestions for Reading and Viewing Books and Stories

- ◆ Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone Books, 2002.
- ◆ Cohen, Hubert. "The Genesis of *Days of Heaven*," in *Cinema Journal* 42, No. 4, Summer 2003.
- ◆ Heidegger, Martin. *The Essence of Reasons*. Translated by Terrence Malick. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.
- ◆ McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2000.
- ◆ Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Films

- Giant (1956)
- Jules and Jim (1962)
- Wings of a Dove (1997)
- George Washington (2000)

Film: 1978
Director: Terrence Malick
Screenplay: Terrence Malick

Bill: Richard Gere
Abby: Brooke Adams
The Farmer: Sam Shepard
Linda: Linda Manz

Length: 95 minutes

