

PERSPECTIVE FILMS PRESENTS

# IMMEMORIAL

## Songs of the Great Night

a film by **Béatrice Kordon**



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tënk



Scam\*



Moulin d'Andé-Céci  
Centre des Écoles  
Cinématographiques

A FILM WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY BÉATRICE KORDON / ASSISTANT DIRECTORS: VALENTINA BECHI, EMANUELA MELONI, MARIE LELARDOUX, HARRIS NIKOLAÏDIS / IMAGE: BÉATRICE KORDON / SOUND: MARIE LELARDOUX, HARRIS NIKOLAÏDIS, JONATHAN LE FOURIN / MIXING: MIKAËL BARRE / EDITING: BÉATRICE KORDON / COLOR GRADING: SÉBASTIEN DESCOINS / ORIGINAL MUSIC: NAÏSSAM JALAL / PRODUCED BY GAËLLE JONES, PERSPECTIVE FILMS / WITH THE SUPPORT OF CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE / TËNK / RÉGION NORMANDIE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CNC AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH NORMANDIE IMAGES / BROUILLON D'UN RÊVE DE LA SCAM AND LA CULTURE AVEC LA COPIE PRIVÉE / THE CREATION OF THE ORIGINAL MUSIC BENEFITED FROM THE SUPPORT OF SACEM / THIS FILM BENEFITED FROM A WRITING RESIDENCE AT CED-MOULIN D'ANDÉ

# IMMEMORIAL

SONGS OF THE GREAT NIGHT

a film by Béatrice Kordon

*Documentary / 112 minutes  
Ratio 16/9 / Sound 5.1 / 2024*

*Country of production: France  
Languages: Italian, Greek, invented language  
Shooting format: Digital / Screening Format: DCP  
Original title : Immémorial, Chants de la Grande Nuit*

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## SYNOPSIS

Death is on the horizon of every life, and yet, we know nothing of it, and we can't say anything about it. We can only attempt to grasp some reflections through the mirror that we hold out to it: myths, rituals, dances... which then become places where ties can be established with the inexpressible.

Essentially based on documentary materials, and inspired by the narrative structure of myths, this film is an invitation to walk towards the edge of the inexpressible, between the world of the living and the world of the dead, between the visible and the invisible, between the creation and the destruction, and to go beyond the contradictions.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ten years ago, I took care of my father during his long agony in an intensive care unit. An intensive care unit is a particular place, bordering on the edge of the world. An intermediary point between the world of the living and the dead, where this boundary itself becomes irrelevant: like an embodiment of limbo. We were immersed in it, my father and I, in a relationship as intimate as inexpressible, far beyond his silent coma and the machines artificially keeping him alive. I lived poignant moments, often tough, but also very peaceful and sometimes very happy - not the least of the contradictions I was confronted with. As the weeks went by, I saw myself losing all my bearings, one by one, while others imposed themselves on me, obscure, seeming to float in this room and wait there for me to seize them.

**The linearity of time and the contours of space gradually lost their prerogatives, opening me up to a world that seemed suddenly enlarged, at once serene and chaotic.**

Strangely, I had this curious impression of being closer to reality and its complexity. And yet, as soon as I left the hospital, everything I had experienced there suddenly seemed totally unreal. I gradually came to understand the cause of this contradictory feeling: on the "outside", there was no framework in which to share and resonate with what I was going through.

After my father's death, "normal" life gradually resumed, but the unsettling atmosphere of the limbo we'd been in never really left me. I often wondered how I could capture the complexity of those moments, how I could make them tangible. Intuitively, I felt that I first had to transpose them out of my own story, to anchor them in a reality outside my own - and this was probably the only way to stay as close as possible to the unspeakable and the contradictions that had run through me. To find a narrative (and symbolic?) framework where all this could unfold, express itself, invent its own language. But I couldn't find one.



In the years that followed, I wanted to find out if there were any communities or social settings in my own culture where this question of death remained visible and relevant to the living. I found some, mainly in southern Europe.

**In certain mountain villages, and sometimes in towns too, there are still places or rituals that stage encounters between different worlds: the world of the living and the world of the dead, but also the tangible and invisible worlds, the human and non-human worlds.**

At the same time, I found in reading mythological tales a symbolic and narrative framework in which to question and resonate with what I had experienced. And so, little by little, I began to shift my experience and collect material, both filmed and written, with which I began to work; this led to further reflections, further scouting, further encounters, further readings, and so, gradually, to the making of this film. Starting from a very intimate experience, he gradually freed himself from it to rediscover its essence by a totally roundabout route; much more than the subject, it's the general tone of the film and the choices made in its direction that reflect it.

The film that emerged from this writing process therefore has a rather singular form: its material is essentially documentary, its construction fragmentary, and in its narration it invokes certain fictional archetypes of myth. It's hard for me to define it as a "subject" in the strict sense of the word. Rather, its very form reflects the openness and porosity of what runs through it: the ever-present interweaving of life and death, creation and destruction, growth and collapse.

Béatrice Kordon





# OPENING THE NIGHT

By Éric Vidal

*"Past the bridge, the ghosts came to meet me"*

Mathieu Riboulet

Béatrice Kordon's films are born in the heart of darkness.

They are journeys within which we can dialogue with our fears, or our uncertainties, thanks to intense visual and sound experiences suspended between dream and reality: madness in *Les Insensés* (2014); death in *Immemorial*, *Songs of the Great Night* (2024). A final opus that maintains contiguities - of forms, stories, motifs or even materials - with her previous works, including *Dithyrambe pour Dionysos*, made in 2007, would constitute the first fragment of a triptych.

I. Divided into four "songs", a poetic as well as musical form, *Immemorial* addresses the threshold of the unspeakable: how, with the means of cinema, "to think the unthinkable of death"<sup>1</sup>? How to approach or stand alongside the most fundamental mystery of our existence, this dark side of our finitude inscribed from the first breath? When, at the opposite end of the spectrum, birth is generally related to a radiant, illuminated side of our coming into the world: coming out of the (placental) darkness to access the light. This motif, the film literally summons it towards its very end, the fruit of a meticulous process of metamorphoses of cinematographic materials that give birth, on the screen, to a human being. A long sequence where the plasticity of mutations combined with a dilated soundtrack, on the edge of perception, is reminiscent of *The Passing* (1991), by the video artist Bill Viola - a cross-evocation of the agony of the artist's mother and the birth of her second son, two events located at the extreme poles of life.

II. With other means, another aesthetic (an analog image more than a digital image) and stories where myths deeply irrigate the imagination, Béatrice Kordon takes up this time loop to show that at the thresholds of existence - at the beginning as much as at the end - darkness, indeterminacy, and randomness reign. Like the underground water tables that irrigate all forms of creation, including artistic creation. This is what the film's prologue suggests. Opening on a black screen, we hear the sound of a flute in a muted way, then the murmur of an unknown language (made from scratch by the director who is also a visual artist) declining different stages of the original chaos: matter/(in)form/humanity/verb. Blurring the landmarks, a voice then breaks through a succession of images and sounds of varying natures and intensities (waves of clouds, volcanic explosions, noises of landslides): "Do you know if we are at the beginning or the end?" This worrying disorientation in the form of a question is at the heart of *Immemorial*. It strives to abolish a certain number of boundaries - physical, symbolic, cinematographic - and invites us, as in dreams, to operate conversions or translations in order to open ourselves to the forms and territories of mourning.

1. Françoise Schwab, preface of *Penser la mort ?* [Thinking death?] by Vladimir Jankélévitch, 1994.

III. So how can we deploy a “movement from nothing to nowhere<sup>2</sup>”? And how can we imagine such a cinematic leap? By mobilizing, among other things, mortuary rites and rituals collected sometimes in the form of heterogeneous archives; sometimes filmed live by the director herself, in Greece or Italy, for those that have resisted the passage of time and are still practiced. Béatrice Kordon thus (re)uncover a repertoire of ancestral gestures and practices linked to beliefs, ceremonies or festivals: making funeral bread, daily visits and maintenance of tombs, songs (lamentations, melodized words about the deceased, oratorical jousts), a parade of hooded women in darkness, all dressed in black, taking care in the conservation of bones, etc. So many images that the director associates with war documents, remains of ruined cities for example, or with views of undergrowth. The camera then caresses tree trunks, lingers on moss or leaves, thereby referring to the plant and mineral origin of life.

IV. The montage of eruptive moments and calmer climates produces a very detailed score. This irritation of enveloping sounds and composite images creates new connections beyond the duality of life/death, where waking, sleeping and dreaming tend to merge. The presence of the forest with its non-human inhabitants accentuates this strange feeling of suspended time. A place of wonder or terror - and we know the central place it occupies in tales - the forest is in fact the increasingly threatened territory of beasts. Recorded using cameras traps<sup>3</sup>, these figures dispossessed of language, “power of astonishing manifestations<sup>4</sup>”, emerge on the surface of the screen; drowsy or frozen on the lookout; then disappear into the inky night like ghosts.

V. Sheeps, horses, deers, birds, does, wolves, dogs, etc.: the director shows a wild or domestic bestiary, a repertoire that refers to mythologies and religions where the animal is, in its psychopomp function, the guide that accompanies the deceased in the afterlife. Evoking the migration of souls to Hades, the kingdom of the dead in Greek mythology, a voice underlines this role. Further on, a sequence shot suggests it when a black horse slowly crosses a snowy landscape under a shower of snowflakes. A highly symbolic animal endowed with magical powers in certain civilizations or cultures, the horse can lead souls as well as convey death itself. Like this skeleton seen in a painting<sup>5</sup> that shoots arrows from its mount, sowing ruin and desolation around it.

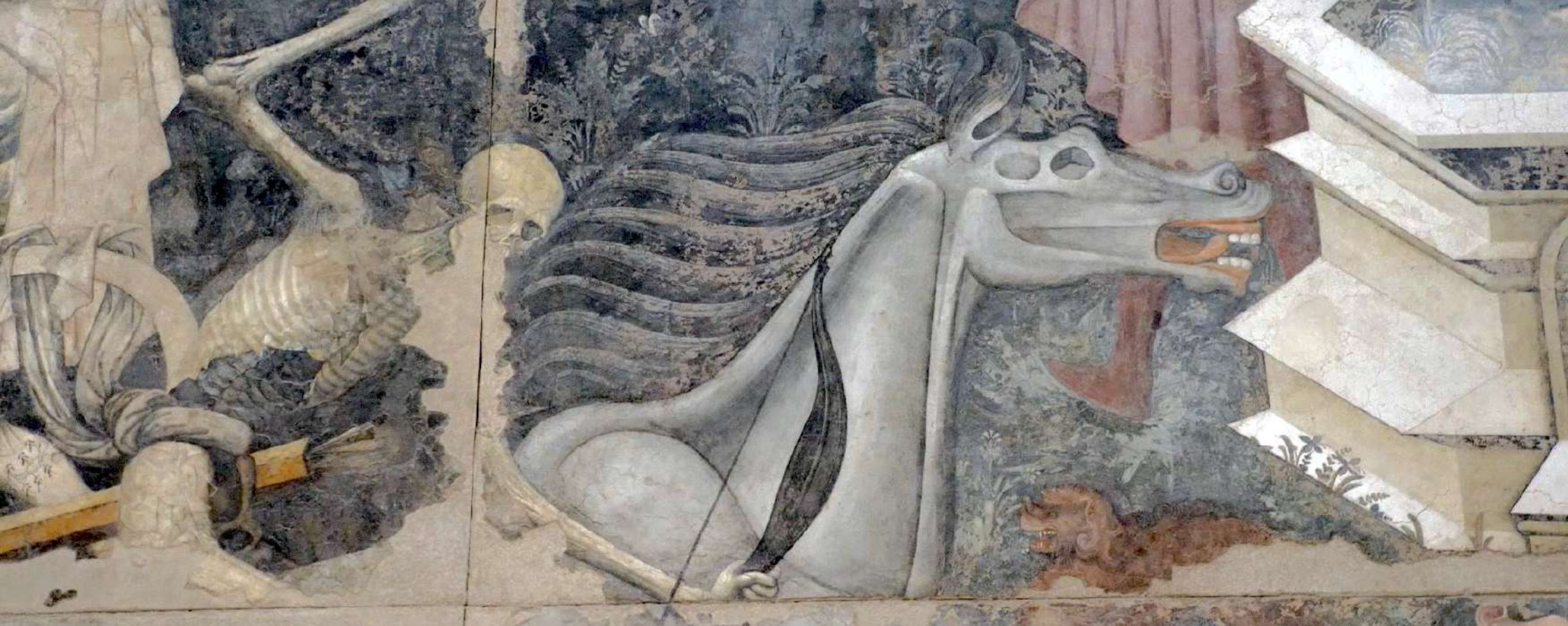
2. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *ibid*.

3. Traps which also trigger video recordings

4. J.C Bailly, *Le parti pris des animaux* [The animals' stance] 2013.

5. From the most ancient to the most contemporary, the history of painting is full of the presence of beasts, sometimes associated with death (Dürer, Basquiat, etc.). The cave frescoes of Paleolithic sites - early moments of painting and even, for some, the origins of art - also reveal them on the walls of caves.





Pushing back the limits of perception, making invisible forces tangible, working against the grain of a clinical and glacial approach to death, such is the insane attempt of *Immemorial*.

A symbolic as well as an aesthetic intercessor, whose distant echo perhaps reveals the dark side of our interiority, the animal is at the crossroads of this research, with its intensities and its flashes as sudden as they are ephemeral. Connecting almost all the fragments of the film, "their dazzling being-there<sup>6</sup>", mediated by the camera's recording without witnesses, clearly attests to a world of sensations and emotions. Thus the intriguing end credits, entirely inhabited by the people of the forest, seem to trace a new path that runs counter to any anthropomorphic idea: that of experimenting, from this community and through cinema, forms of life that would be another way of "being in the world", like "a thought<sup>7</sup>". Without breaking with the common history that has linked us to animals for so long.

Éric Vidal  
Programmer at *Peuple et Culture* Marseille

6. Élisabeth de Fontenay, *Le silence des bêtes, La philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité*, [The silence of the beasts, Philosophy put to the test of animality] 1998.

7. J.C Bailly, *ibid*.



## BÉATRICE KORDON

Upon graduation as a director of photography from La Femis, Béatrice Kordon quickly headed towards directing films that explore and question cinematography. Her films are at the crossroads between the documentary process, experimental cinema, sound creation and fine arts, weaving multiple threads from various materials —video, film, painting, footage...

Her films include « Héros Désarmés » (1997), « Tu crois qu'on peut parler d'autre chose que d'amour » (1999), codirected by Sylvie Ballyot, or « Dithyrambe pour Dionysos » (2007), « Les Insensés » (2014), « Immémorial, Chants de la Grande Nuit » (2024).

Alongside of her own films, she works with other directors on photography or editing, she led directing workshops in several institutions, and started to collaborate in 2018 with the performance arts scene. Since 2013, she works also on wood sculptures and installations.

## CAST AND CREW

A film written and directed by Béatrice Kordon

Assistants director: Valentina Bechi, Emanuela Meloni, Marie Lelardoux, Haris Nikolaïdis

Image: Béatrice Kordon

Sound: Marie Lelardoux, Haris Nikolaïdis, Jonathan Le Fourn

Mixing: Mikaël Barre

Editing: Béatrice Kordon

Color grading: Sébastien Descoins

Original music: Naïssam Jalal

Produced by Gaëlle Jones, Perspective Films

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