

The Diving Bell and The Butterfly (Schnabel, 2007)

The film is set in the upper-middle classes of French society which affects the ways in which Jean-Do's marriage to his wife and his relationship with his 'mistress' is represented. In reality it was the 'mistress' (Florence Ben Sadoun whose name is changed to Ines in the film) who was devoted to Jean-Do in the hospital not his wife. The director felt that a devoted wife suited the upper, middle-class French social context more.

Social

Historical

Production

Political/Cultural

Institution

Despite the availability of digital technology and processing, Kaminsky largely opted for traditional photochemical and in-camera techniques. He argued that digital filmmaking 'can easily start to look too manipulated, and it can detract from the story. It doesn't look organic. You could never make this movie digitally. You would have a totally different sense or aesthetic, and people just wouldn't respond to it the same way they respond with film'.

The film was originally to be produced by Universal Studios, the screenplay was in English and Johnny Depp was slated to play Jean-Do. Universal dropped the project and Pathe took up the rights. Schnabel insisted on changing the screenplay into French and even learnt French himself because he believed the richness of the language would work better. Candidates may point to the scene in which Jean-Do and his father resolve their relationship as a particularly poignant and emotionally powerful use of dialogue.

By altering the story, it makes the mistress seem like an even worse person than the label already connotes

want to demonstrate the dishonesty and loyalty in a negative light

makes it seem like the wife is his emotional carer and gives him stability and structure as if she had to be there

He has openly had a mistress - French are very strict and conservative this 'adultery' is wrong.

Bourgeoisie - grow up in mixed schools / no class divides

Start from the same place

wealth is really well-earned
Grow in wealth (not born into it)

False - not representative of the true betrayal of Bauby to his wife
Before the stroke Bauby had a typical life of the upper-middle class - large house, expensive car and a well-paid job
Women are largely sexualized in the film (portrayed as beauty)

The ways in which the film departs from the 'real' story for dramatic purpose can be an interesting area to explore. The switching of the wife and the mistress in the role of carer is most significant but there are changes to the actual events and even the number of children that Bauby had. The historical legal battles of rights and royalties between Bauby's family and the book's publishers can provide useful contextualisation too.

authentic use of lighting, weather, setting

adapted book into screenplay

Produced by 'pathe' and 'France 3 cinema'

Written by Ronald Harwood

originally going to star Johnny Depp - as a Universal Studios film

Schnabel insisted it should be in French

actually filmed in the same hospital
Berck, France is where it was filmed

name meaning Diving Bell - being trapped in his body in the sea, tanning.

Butterfly - others around see his spirit still alive as a butterfly / has similar senses