



# Éric Rohmer: A Biography

By Antoine de Baecque, Noël Herpe

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The director of twenty-five films, including *My Night at Maud's* (1969), which was nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award, and the editor in chief of *Cahiers du cinéma* from 1957 to 1963, Éric Rohmer set the terms by which people watched, made, and thought about cinema for decades. Such brilliance does not develop in a vacuum, and Rohmer cultivated a fascinating network of friends, colleagues, and industry contacts that kept his outlook sharp and propelled his work forward. Despite his privacy, he cared deeply about politics, religion, culture, and fostering a public appreciation of the medium he loved.

This exhaustive biography uses personal archives and interviews to enrich our knowledge of Rohmer's public achievements and lesser known interests and relations. The filmmaker kept in close communication with his contemporaries and competitors: François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and Jacques Rivette. He held a paradoxical fascination with royalist politics, the fate of the environment, Catholicism, classical music, and the French nightclub scene, and his films were regularly featured at New York and Los Angeles film festivals. Despite an austere approach to life, Rohmer had a voracious appetite for art, culture, and intellectual debate captured vividly in this definitive volume.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe achieve in this scrupulously researched volume the paradoxical feat of delivering the definitive biography of a pseudonymous subject. *Eric Rohmer* will interest film historians, theorists of film, enthusiasts of French cinema, and film directors both aspiring and established, for whom Rohmer's low-budget modus operandi remains one of the miracles of modern film production. This, the first biography of Rohmer (né Maurice Schérer), is likely also to be the last. (Derek Schilling, Johns Hopkins University)

Rohmer was sensitive, very well educated, and at home with literature, music, painting and theater; the biography shows a happy life lived in such culture. It shows how this flows easily into his films, how they operate as experiments in feeling and perception. The book makes one hungry to see them all over again. (Dudley Andrew, Yale University)

One of the most distinguished filmmakers of the French new wave.... [de Baecque and Herpe] pull off the high-wire act of appealing to both film scholars and lay readers with a combination of comprehensive research and engaging storytelling. The book will foster a renewed appreciation of a complex artist and the remarkable body of work he left behind. (*Publishers Weekly (starred review)*)

An essential and ceaselessly enjoyable work of scholarship.... The most valuable gift afforded by this biography is the sheer joy of moving through the exacting, meticulous accounts of each stage of Rohmer's life and career, painstakingly researched and written as if the authors were striving for the same arresting attention to detail, subtlety, humor, and philosophical weight of his films. (Dan Sullivan *Film Comment*)

Biography of the year for cineasts. (*Booklist (starred review)*)

Compulsively readable, this volume is a model of scholarship and style that no serious cinephile's library should be without. (*Library Journal (starred review)*)

[A] superb new biography. (Richard Brody *The New Yorker*)

An intimate, anecdote-filled look at a legend. (Allen Pierleoni *The Sacramento Bee*)

Deeply researched and thoroughly enjoyable. (James Campbell *The Wall Street Journal*)

Comprehensive and definitive.... An utterly enthralling read. (Christopher Schobert *The Film Stage*)

An entertaining new biography. (Pascal Blum *Tages-Anzeiger*)

Excellent... definitive.... [A] wonderful book. (Gerald Peary *The Arts Fuse*)

A rich and thorough study. (Chris Fujiwara *Cineaste*)

The definitive overview of the director's life. (*MidCenturyCinema*)

A thorough study of a great director. Highly recommended. (*Choice*)

No doubt [de Baecque and Herpe's] enthralling biography will remain the ultimate text on the life and legacy of Eric Rohmer, just like Rohmer will live on as one of the ultimate figures of cinema. (*Film International*)

#### About the Author

Antoine de Baecque is a professor of the history of cinema at the University of Nanterre. He has published biographies of François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard and was editor in chief of *Cahiers du cinema*.

Noël Herpe is a senior lecturer at the Université de Paris VIII. He has published works on René Clair and Sacha Guitry, as well as a book of interviews with Éric Rohmer about his text *Le Celluloïd et le Marbre*.

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#### Donna Solano:

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