



The Duchess of Malfi

Film script by Alice de Sousa

(Inspired by John Webster's stage play of the same title)

The Screen Writer's Vision

My screenplay is inspired by John Webster's (1580-1634), magnificent stage play **The Duchess of Malfi**; which is his greatest tragedy and one of the most extraordinary theatre plays ever written in the English language. John Webster was an English playwright and a predecessor of William Shakespeare. Webster's plays have over many centuries been acclaimed for their richness of language, imagery and verse; and for the incomparable psychological depth of his characters.

Surprisingly, ***The Duchess of Malfi*** has never been filmed.

The Duchess of Malfi has fascinated me for twenty years! From the outset I saw the film in images: strong, vibrant, fast edited and modern, design driven visual content. Greenaway's *'The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover'* seemed to me to deliver the grotesque and yet elegant; contemporary and yet timeless world which these characters could inhabit.

My film script will be respectful of Webster's masterpiece but it will also be unapologetically current and accessible to a multi-generational/cultural and international film audience.

The Duchess of Malfi provides thrilling filmic possibilities for great acting, beautiful language, breathtaking settings and high quality cinema with a gripping story line. At its epicentre, there is a heart rending love story which collides with unforgiving force with a revenge plot; these amalgamate to provide an intensely psychological, often morally shocking tale of Machiavellian corruption, incest, madness and uncontrollable carnal passion.

The writing style of the dialogue will reflect the language of the period and yet it will sound as modern and relevant as Baz Luhrmann's exciting film of *'Romeo & Juliet'* or Tarantino's work. ***The Duchess of Malfi*** will resemble the cinematic qualities achieved by *Shakespeare in Love*; *Interview with the Vampire*; and *Sleepy Hollow*. However, it will also dare to show the hard hitting violence and sexual content which is necessary for a truthful bringing to life of these ancient characters, before a contemporary world and an international film audience.

The editing of the movie will be fast to support the modern, design driven look and pace of movie.

The sound track will similarly be eclectic and draw on the sounds of contemporary bands such as *Massive Attack* and the *Chemical Brothers* but also be influenced by composers like Hans Zimmer, Michael Kamen and Ennio Morricone.

The settings will be breathtakingly beautifully and will involve the ancient and wonderfully restored castles of Luxembourg; the exquisite gardens of England; the rugged, sea cliffs of the Scottish coast; and the post-industrial decline of the metal and shipping industries of both Luxembourg and the UK.

Nature in all its magnificence will provide an ever present and judging force: the stars, the moon, the sun, the birds, the rain, the winds and fire will drive, move and provoke our emotional and intellectual responses to this extraordinary story.

The costumes will be inspired by the Jacobean fashion but will be modern and *haute couture* in their design and look. It is intended to have the costumes realised by a well established fashion house or perhaps by an exciting up and coming British designer.

The Duchess of Malfi film will, through an entirely modern, innovative and deeply psychological re-working of a much loved theatre classic, attract a multi-generational/cultural and international audience to this timeless story. It will in particular, because of its look and feel, reach out to young people who may not be familiar with this great British literary masterpiece.

I am fully convinced that ***The Duchess of Malfi*** will attract UK/US actors of considerable industry stature as they will be inescapably drawn to its characters and to a project which puts for the first time on film, one of the greatest pieces of British literature. The producers are intent on attaching actors of the highest quality and those who would have demonstrated that they possess the artistic skill and sensibilities desirable to achieve the sophisticated style, drama and pace deemed essential for our modern retelling of this greatly enduring story.

The Duchess of Malfi is timeless and universal and therefore, it will psychologically provoke and challenge; emotionally move and engage its audience irrespective of their age, class, gender or cultural background.