



Photographs and collages by Franz Rob, including this untitled vintage print (c. 1930), are on view uptown at Ubu.

over the opening credits.) With Sandra Bullock as Nelle Harper Lee, Jeff Daniels as the detective, Daniel Craig as one of the killers, and, scariest of all, Juliet Stevenson as Diana Vreeland.—*Anthony Lane* (10/23/06) (In wide release.)

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

For the role of General Idi Amin Dada, the dictator of Uganda in the nineteen-seventies, Forest Whitaker has transformed himself. The laugh has become enormous, the arms like grappling hooks. This dictator has a terrifying affability: like many sociopaths, he can be intensely empathic. He figures out what people want, but, once you have received his generosity, he believes you belong to him forever. Whitaker goes all the way into Amin's childlike flights of fantasy and egotistical visions, and, as he speaks, one eye opens wide and the other droops malevolently—even his vision is schizoid. James McAvoy is the cocky young Scottish doctor who becomes the general's physician and confidant. Flattered by the great man's interest in him, he refuses to notice the purges and the slaughter going on in the country. Kevin Macdonald, who earlier made documentaries ("One Day in September" and "Touching the Void"), concentrates on the relationship of the two men, and makes something tense and alive out of it. With Gillian Anderson. Shot in Uganda.—*D.D.* (10/2/06) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

LITTLE CHILDREN

A disappointed young mother (Kate Winslet) who has given up graduate school for a lousy marriage in the suburbs starts an affair with a former golden-boy college jock (Patrick Wilson), who is also married but stranded in adulthood. There's an element of garden-variety suspense in Todd Field's new movie, which he adapted with Tom Perrotta from Perrotta's novel—will the lovers run away together? But the movie is about a lot more. In a community devoted to the protection of children, a convicted sex offender (Jackie Earle Haley) shows up. The consternation he creates is so extreme that it seems the filmmakers

might be suggesting a metaphor for the indeterminate but all-encompassing threat of terrorism; at the least, they are suggesting that both men and women are transferring their sexual frustrations and fears onto a pervert. The filmmakers' tone veers between a slightly mischievous irony and the most generous sympathy. The sex scenes are brief, naked, heated, startling. In all, it's a beautifully crafted piece of work that leaves you saddened by the mistakes that decent people make but also hopeful about the possibilities of renewal. With Noah Emmerich as a hysterical ex-cop and Jennifer Connelly as a loving wife more interested in her baby son than in her handsome but hapless husband.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)

MARIE ANTOINETTE

If you want your movies to feel like watered silk—lustrous, precious, and thinner than skin—then Sofia Coppola's latest venture is for you. Kirsten Dunst, who even at her ditziest gives off a whiff of the narcoleptic, stars as Marie Antoinette, betrothed as an Austrian teen-ager to the clueless Dauphin of France (Jason Schwartzman). The sexual allure of her husband is on a par with the pink blancmanges on the dinner table, which is bad news for the royal succession but good for Coppola, who is left free to concentrate on desserts, hair styles, footwear, and other essentials of life. The result is less a character study than a pre-Revolutionary style catalogue, unembarrassed in its rage for the superficial. Somewhere beneath the frippery, there is a whisper of political threat: if the Queen really *was* as prodigal and heedless as this, no wonder the mobs were on the march. Toward the end, Coppola does indeed show Versailles under siege, but the onslaught is far too paltry, and too late, to hold any terrors. The cast is a mixed salad: Rip Torn as the randy old King, Asia Argento as his mistress, Judy Davis as a court harpy, and Marianne Faithfull, no less, as the mother of Marie Antoinette.—*A.L.* (10/23/06) (In wide release.)

OLD JOY

Patience is rewarded in Kelly Reichardt's slight but emotionally gripping short feature, based on a story by Jonathan Raymond. Two friends who have grown apart, Mark (Daniel London), a taciturn expecting father, and Kurt (the singer/songwriter Will Oldham), a perpetual stoner, go on a camping trip in search of hot springs in the woods outside Portland, Oregon. Although the seemingly endless shots of roads, cars, and trees become tedious, the lovely Yo La Tengo score and Oldham's performance as a man stubbornly resigned to his slacker life style underscore the poignancy of the moment when he reaches out to his friend who has left him behind.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinema Village and Film Forum.)

THE QUEEN

The new Stephen Frears film considers the deadlock, both grieving and comical, that followed the death of the Princess of Wales, in 1997. On the one hand, the Queen (Helen Mirren), believing it to be a private matter, stays and broods in Scotland with the Duke of Edinburgh (James Cromwell) and Prince Charles (Alex Jennings). On the other hand, Tony Blair (Michael Sheen), sensing a thirst for public mourning and thus a unique political opportunity, urges Her Majesty to return to London and face down the mob. And so she does; the crux of the drama comes when Mirren turns to the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and, with one smile, quashes any prospect of rebellion. The script, by Peter Morgan, relies largely on well-grounded speculation, and sticklers for accuracy will find the whole thing straying beyond belief; but, thanks to the careful performances, you subscribe all too readily to the movie's suggestion of a divided land—of a Britain caught between the trustworthy stiffness of tradition and a liberalism that is open not just to emotional honesty but to the coarseness of modern excess. With Helen McCrory as a distinctly unceremonious Cherie Blair.—*A.L.* (10/9/06) (In wide release.)