

**Chiasso, Cinema Excelsior****18.15****Friday, 9 March 2018****PATERSON****2016**

118 minutes

Directed by **Jim Jarmusch**

Starring: Adam Driver, Golshifteh Farahani and Barry Shabaka Henley

Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson* is a delight: a prose-poem of gentle comic humility and acceptance of life. It is about that rarest of things in art as in life — a completely happy marriage. As so often in the past, Jarmusch shows that he is a film-maker who is intensely American, without being Hollywood. The two are different.

Adam Driver plays a bus driver and unpublished poet called Paterson, who works in Paterson, New Jersey, musingly listening to snatches of his passengers' conversation on his bus and writing verse during his lunch-break. The coincidence of the names has given him a sense of quiet civic pride in his hometown, a sense of identification and ownership, and also a lively sense of cosmic connection and karmic coincidence. Paterson was apparently once in the military, a former existence which is never explicitly discussed, but which has evidently prepared him for a certain act of heroism at a late stage in the movie. As ever with Jarmusch, his towns are not crowded with people exactly: they often seem almost eerily deserted, but individuals can pop out at any time and chat to the protagonist.

The couple has an English bulldog, Marvin, who wheezes in the corner. There is no backstory about how Paterson and Laura got together. Their relationship just appears on screen fully formed. Laura is a stay-at-home wife but she has many artistic interests, and she is cheerfully and confidently aware of her career options. She paints, designs, decorates the house, bakes cupcakes which she sells at the farmer's market and is learning the guitar with a view to being a country singing star.

Paterson himself is very different. Unlike Laura, he has no conception of making a career out of his poetry, or even showing it to anyone other than her. Laura says he should give his poems to the world, but envisages only Xeroxing them to hand out copies.

His poems themselves appear up on screen as wavy handwriting as Paterson thoughtfully writes them in his notebook: homey, folksy, local newspaper verses, perhaps inspired by Paterson's famous poet William Carlos Williams and the short poem which is rightly or wrongly his most well-known: *This Is Just to Say*, about eating the plums, which Paterson actually reads aloud to his wife.

When something terrible happens to Paterson's life work, it is devastating. Paterson and Laura do not have children, and Jarmusch allows us to register this issue indirectly, with a very funny and subtle recurring gag, one of those universe-patterning flourishes that Paterson is always noticing. Laura says one morning that she has had a dream that they had twins, and from that moment on, Paterson is always noticing twins all over town and

Critics' comments:

- Jarmusch's work celebrates difference, small epiphanies and the incidental details that add up to a life. But these free-floating elements are wrestled into such a stage-managed attitude that they might as well come vacuum-packed, with the oxygen sucked out. For all its fine qualities, Paterson feels self-satisfied and self-regarding. Slowly but surely, the gentleness of Jim Jarmusch's lovely film steals up on you. It has an almost miraculous innocence. I can't remember when I last saw a movie whose adult characters had so much simple, unassuming goodness, goodness that breaks everything in the modern culture rulebook by not being ironized and going unpunished. And Adam Driver's face is something to fall in love with. An Easter Island statue reborn as a sensitive, delicate boy. (from *The Guardian*)

- Paterson is an island, refuting the maxim that no man is. He clings to ritual, aims to live undemonstratively and understand what's thrown his way. He wants every day to be a blank page in the same book – one worth filling, but only with the right words. It's an honour to know him, and a serious ache to say goodbye. (from *The Telegraph*)