

THE EXPRESSION OF THE POLITICAL IN FRENCH CINEMA

THE TECHNIQUES OF REALISM AND FANTASY FOR
THE EXPRESSION OF THE POLITICAL IN FRENCH CINEMA
FROM ITS ORIGINS TO THE NEW WAVE

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between film techniques and politics in French cinema. The first filmmakers established the basic techniques of cinema, using realism to record events, and fantasy to create amusements. Narrative film developed as a combination of these techniques. Cinema of the twenties was closely associated with the European art movements of Dadaism, Surrealism and Expressionism. By the thirties, the political polarisation and the threat of a second World War caused filmmakers to project political opinions and to portray societal problems. Narrative film became an important means of influencing public opinion, although not always in the directions intended. With the New Wave, autobiographical content and a return to early film techniques made narrative film both personal and traditional. The directors solidified the reputation of French cinema as topical, socially relevant, and politically involved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I - THE SILENT ERA OF THE TWENTIES	22
CHAPTER II - CINEMA OF THE THIRTIES -- WAITING FOR WAR	52
CHAPTER III- THE NEW WAVE	98
CONCLUSIONS	132
ENDNOTES	154
BIBLIOGRAPHY	164

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to portray, through the examination of selected French films, the interaction between film technique and politics. Although the basic techniques of realism and fantasy were devised at the beginning of film history by Louis Lumière and Georges Méliès, the potential of film as a political tool was not recognised immediately. As cinema evolved from a minor novelty to a major force in society, its role changed. Filmmakers began to use cinema not only to reflect the world, but to influence and change the way people viewed themselves and their place in that world. The techniques of realism and of fantasy became increasingly associated with film genres, with dramatic themes and with political interests.

I plan to show that the expression of the political in cinema varied with the political climate and with the degree of acceptance granted by the audiences and by the censors. During quiescent periods, cinema reflected mainly social and cultural concerns, while during periods of crisis - war,

depression and civil unrest - cinema revealed the deep political and ideological differences which characterise French society.

In my discussion I include films from the span of years from 1895 to 1970, but I focus on three main areas. I have divided the thesis into three corresponding chapters: Chapter One: The Silent Era of the Twenties; Chapter Two: The Cinema of the Thirties -- Waiting for War; Chapter Three: The New Wave.

I have chosen films that I have seen many times. I consider them good illustrations of how the techniques of realism and fantasy were adapted over the years to become identified with film genres and themes. The first six films I examine form contrasting pairs: two silent films, René Clair's Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie (1928), a social satire and an example of a filmed play, and Dmitri Kirsanov's Ménilmontant (1926), a social drama and an example of transplanted Russian montage; two thirties films, Jean Vigo's Zéro de Conduite (1932), rebellion in the style of fantasy, and Marcel Carné's Le Jour se lève (1939), rebellion in the style of social realism; two pre-war films by Jean Renoir, La Grande Illusion (1937), and La Règle du Jeu (1939), his social and political warnings to his country on the eve of World War II.

I also look at three films of 1959, heralding the New Wave, riding on a decade of insipid American movies following

the McCarthy "Red Scare" and years of Hollywood purges, directed by people who had grown up on the best (and the worst) film the world had to offer: François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard (critics for Cahiers du Cinéma), and Alain Resnais (with his connections to the *nouveau roman* authors, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras). Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959) is Truffaut's award-winning story of a young boy's passage from childhood to adolescence. Truffaut conceded, after initial denials, that the film is significantly autobiographical¹, and it is therefore important for outlining the themes dealt with in his subsequent films. A Bout de souffle (1959) is Godard's gangster film, based on a script borrowed from Truffaut², with an improvised and violent ending. Godard considers it "the sort of film where anything goes"³. Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959) is Resnais' first narrative film, a love story from a scenario written by Duras combined with documentary sequences of the aftermath of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

In order to illustrate specific techniques used by the directors, I have included lengthy excerpts from the scripts of some of the films, since they are not readily accessible for viewing and my discussion of them would otherwise be difficult to follow. While some of the texts from which I have taken the scripts are translations, I know of no reason to question their accuracy. I have also included some of the contemporary criticism. Not all the discussed films

were considered immediate successes, whether artistically (by the critics), commercially (by the public), or politically (by the state or by special interest groups). Subsequently, however, they have all been regarded as classics or as outstanding examples of their genre.

My approach includes an outline of the political climate during which the films appeared, and, wherever possible, the stated intentions of the director, the reception of the film by the public and the censors, the opinions of special interest groups and the assessments of individual critics. I will examine specific techniques of cinema in these films and how their political associations developed through the years to 1968. I propose to demonstrate that cinema evolved through a succession of technical advances and political changes to become a synthesis of techniques, both the realistic and the fantastical.

The first films, depicting unstaged everyday reality, were made in 1895 by a French businessman, Louis Lumière, in order to sell his invention, the moving camera. These very short films in turn inspired a professional magician, George Méliès, who saw the potential for creating magical effects through the filming process.

According to film historian Georges Sadoul, Lumière succeeded in capturing "la nature sur le vif", and his films, in both their subject matter and their technique, constituted the first home movies, "des photographies d'amateurs

animées".⁴ By presenting familiar sights, Lumière allowed his spectators to recognise themselves and their world on the screen. Audiences came to realise, as Sadoul points out, "que le cinéma pouvait être une machine à refaire la vie", and today, Lumière's films are valued for having preserved a vanished era: "L'ensemble des quelque cinquante films qu'il photographia se trouva former, sans intention préconçue, un tableau pittoresque et révélateur de la vie, des plaisirs et des loisirs de la bourgeoisie, à la veille de 1900".⁵

Lumière is also credited with originating various film genres, including the first newsreel, with Le Congrès de la Société française de Photographie, the first comedy, with L'Arroseur arrosé, and the first documentary, with Les Pompiers de Lyon. Truffaut claims that filming La Sortie des Usines Lumière makes Lumière the inventor of neo-realism: "Louis Lumière, comme chacun sait, est l'inventeur du neo-réalisme... cette courte bande, en effet, ne 'démystifie'-t-elle point radicalement le prolétariat ...?".⁶

As an international businessman, Lumière sent teams of photographers around the world to project and to make films, thereby instituting both the travelling repertory cinema, and the travelogue. His cameramen invented new techniques on a regular basis. In Venice, in 1896, the first mobile camera was devised by fixing it to a gondola as it travelled through the Grand Canal. In Moscow, the filming of Le Couronnement du Tzar Nicholas II represented the first coverage of a

foreign ceremony. Although his filming techniques required a selection process, that of the choosing and the framing of his film subjects, Lumière refused to let his methods evolve towards what he considered to be artificial interference with the subjects being filmed, either through direction or performance expectations. He objected to *la mise en scène*. Despite the many new directions taken by his employees and followers, he curtailed their efforts as well as his own experiments with films genres. According to Sadoul:

Louis Lumière se refusa pourtant à laisser évoluer son école vers la mise en scène. Il était l'ennemi de ce procédé qui l'aurait contraint, lui, fabricant de produits photographiques, à devenir directeur de théâtres d'un nouveau genre. Stoppant ainsi le courant qui se créait chez ses employés et disciples, il se contenta d'être le créateur des actualités et du documentaire ...".⁷

Méliès is quoted by Sadoul as claiming to have launched cinema "dans la voie théâtrale spectaculaire et inauguré les grandes pièces à costume et mise en scène importante, les reconstitutions historiques, drames, comédies, opéras, etc."⁸ Sadoul attests that with Méliès, cinema ceased to be "la machine à refaire la vie" and became an art. Méliès the artisan built his own film studio, where he produced and directed his own films, incorporating sometimes as many as one hundred acting roles. He was often the starring actor in his films, for which he wrote the scenarios, designed the sets and chose the costumes. The genre at which he excelled, according to Sadoul, was "la féerie" in which he used all his

magician's techniques, "les trucs"⁹, adapting them to cinema as special effects such as super-imposition, double and triple exposure, fade-outs and black-outs. The other genre Sadoul credits to Méliès are "les actualités reconstituées, mettant en scène, avec des décors et des acteurs, les événements historiques récents".¹⁰ Among these were L'Affaire Dreyfus (1899), and Le Couronnement du Roi Edouard VII (1902), which Méliès reconstructed with extreme care and attention to accurate detail, insisting upon a "'réalisme' de ses mises en scène, qui se retrouve aussi dans certaines parties de ses féeries...".¹¹

The techniques of Lumière and Méliès can be followed through the decades to the New Wave and beyond. Lumière's "actualités" and Méliès' "féeries" represent the two extremes in cinema, but many of their films combine the techniques, the reproductive with the imaginative. Narrative film is just such a compromise, where "a fictional 'reality' is created in order to be recorded".¹²

Lumière uses a primitive form of narrative in his L'Arroseur arrosé, which, although just a few minutes long, is considered to be the first comedy film. It is also, according to Truffaut, the point at which "la mystification commence" and "le règne des téléphones blancs ... s'ouvre (en iris, comme il se doit)".¹³ Cinema learned quickly what the public wanted, and that was, and still is, a story. The documentary became more interesting if it included a dramatic

or a comic twist, as Truffaut claims:

Le cinéma - celui que j'aime - comprit vite la nécessité de raconter une histoire, nécessité encore d'en punaiser quelques images aux entrées des salles: le train de la Ciotat apprend à dérailler, le pêcheur dans la barque s'exerce à chavirer; le cinéma est né avec ses genres bien définis ... Les plus grands cinéastes du monde pratiquèrent et pratiquent tous les genres et savent, de plus, l'art d'émouvoir et d'amuser en une même scène¹⁴

The documentary with a twist is the genre originated by Méliès, with his "actualités reconstituées", the first historical fictions of film. His re-created coronation of Edward VII of England, and his dramatisation of the Dreyfus affair were interpretations of events, and gave specific points of view. The Dreyfus film was considered so partial in its portrayal of a sensitive political issue that it was banned by the censors. Léo Sauvage, in his book L'Affaire Lumière, pays the following tribute to Méliès:

Méliès n'était ni un enregistreur ni un copieur. Il ne poursuivait pas le naturel mais le surnaturel. Il ne trouvait rien d'excitant à reproduire les choses telles que n'importe qui peut les voir, mais cela le passionnait de donner la vie à l'invisible, à l'impossible. La magie propre à la caméra n'est-elle pas de pouvoir créer de toutes pièces une réalité artificielle, de puiser sa logique non dans l'enchaînement des faits mais dans le rythme des images, et, finalement, de faire vrai avec du faux?¹⁵

This is a further indication that the originators of the two technical branches, Lumière of realism, and Méliès of fantasy, were not purists in their approaches to film, although they have become so identified.

The techniques innovated by Lumière remain today as the basic characteristics of realism: filming out-of-doors with

natural light; using actual or historical locations; choosing ordinary people and portraying their everyday activities; having the subjects unaware of the camera; moving people through scenes rather than photographing them within a frame; following the action with the camera; minimizing the intervention of the camera, thereby allowing the viewers to believe that they are watching events which occur in a rational world of straightforward time and recognisable space; filming believable actions in order to portray a known view of the world; being as objective and uncritical as possible to allow the viewer to make his own judgements and interpretations of events.

Techniques introduced by Méliès are still associated with fantasy. Stage magicians' tricks are easily reproduced with the film processes of double exposure, blacking out, super-imposition, stop motion, fast motion, slow motion, fades and dissolves. The subject leaves no doubt that he is performing for an audience and may address the audience directly during the performance. The performer usually remains in the centre of a stage, and the filming is most often done indoors under artificial lights. Or the subject is fantastical, and animated. Centuries of show business artifice are able to be reproduced and preserved on celluloid. The viewers know that they are watching a staged performance and expect to be tricked or entertained in some fashion.

All cinema relies on the properties of vision to convince the viewer that the images are actually moving. The physical structure of film and the manner in which the camera produces the illusion of motion are essentially the same today as at Lumière's first film presentation, which took place in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café, Boulevard des Capucines, Paris, on December 28, 1895. A thin, flexible transparent ribbon of plastic material - now generally cellulose acetate, at one time cellulose nitrate (acetate has a shelf life of 100 or so years; nitrate, 30 years)- provides the base for an emulsion, a layer of light-sensitive silver halide suspended in gelatin, too insubstantial to hold shape on its own. Recorded on the film are a series of still photographs or frames. The transformation of these static images into apparently moving ones depends on simple mechanical and optical principles. Film is moved through a projector from a feed reel to a take-up reel by gear-like teeth or sprockets and by finger-like claws that fit into perforations at the edge of the film. The movement is not continuous, but intermittent. As each frame passes in front of the aperture through which light is projected, it stops for a fraction of a second while a shutter opens. Then the shutter closes to provide an interval of darkness during which the next frame can be brought into position. Generally the film proceeds through the projector at a speed of twenty-four frames a second, although the rate may vary according to

the gauges or size of the film and can be deliberately accelerated or retarded for certain effects.

According to the principle of the persistence of vision, the eye "retains the static image during the period of darkness, so that one image, in effect, is dissolved into the next to provide a continuous view of a static image...".¹⁶ Besides persistence of vision, which explains why we do not see blackness between the frames, there is a second phenomenon, which explains why we see movement, and which George Wead and George Lellis call the acceptance of phenomenal identity.¹⁷ At one time theorists were aware of only persistence of vision, and it was generally accepted that the illusion of movement in films had a physiological basis, caused by the firing of cells on the retina in certain patterns. The acceptance of phenomenal identity allows for the possibility of psychological selection, which gives a more subjective basis to the viewing process through cognition.¹⁸ The perceptual scientists who support the theories of direct sensory mechanism believe that the impression of movement is based on an automatic tendency of the nervous system to react to artificial, flashing stimulations exactly as it would to real, successive stimulations. With either stimulations, perceiving movement would simply be a matter of energy passing between cells. This theory sees perception as passive, "the mere reception of data". The cognitive theories, of which gestalt

psychology presents the best-known example, assume the following:

When the mind receives from the retina the discrete stimulations of flashing images, it interprets them the best way it can. Thus, when you flip the pages of an illustrated magazine past your eyes, your mind interprets it as a chaos of forms. At best, now and then in the chaos, it reacts to some fleeting sensation of one form becoming another. When you confront a movie, where the changes in the separate forms of, say, a walking figure, (head, body, legs, arms) are consistent, your mind fully exercises its awareness of formal integrity. It identifies the successive images as new positions of the same unit and interprets that the best way it can: as movement. Cognitive theories see perception as a positive activity, a grasping by the organism.¹⁹

Thus it can be seen that conflicting interpretations of perception have contributed to the realism-fantasy dichotomy of filmmaking by proposing that responses to the images on the screen are physiological or psychological.

Understanding the place of technology in cinema requires not only a knowledge of science and of the development of machines. There are also questions of economics, aesthetics, ideology and psychology which affect, and are affected by, the technologies of filmmaking. Of the various technological advances incorporated into film, some were quickly accepted, while others were resisted. Two innovations that were not immediately adopted were sound and colour.

The first reaction to sound by French filmmakers was that it was unnecessary and artificial. Realism in sound is highly subjective and custom dictates acceptability. The pre-talkies did not seem any less real to audiences who

spanned the pre- and post-sound eras. The audience that hid under the seats when the train arrived at the station at La Ciotat in Lumière's L'Arrivée d'un train (1896), had no need to be cued by sound. It was financial pressures, mainly the loss of business to Hollywood, that forced the French film industry to incorporate sound.

Early films were often tinted, with colours changing to indicate various moods, or to differentiate between indoor and outdoor settings. All the examined films are black-and-white, except Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie. Clair, employing a technique of realism, deliberately filmed it in sepia to make it historically accurate, as though it had been made in the era it was representing, the 1890's, when all photographs were sepia. Using black-and-white film for serious themes was a convention that even the New Wave directors accepted as a given, although colour film by their time was readily available. Traditionally, black-and-white film has been associated with newsreels, documentaries and newspapers, which deal in facts and information. Whether or not the information is accurate, the long association has the power to convince viewers that the topics dealt with in black-and-white films are more realistic than those presented in colour.

Through experimentation, filmmakers over the years forced a gradual recognition and acceptance of a combination of techniques, which, accompanied by technological advances,

paved the way for the success of the "New Wave" in 1959. The significant feature of the New Wave movement was the skill and ease with which the directors handled narrative film. Their concerns were many and varied, and were expressed by incorporating the new technical advances into their filmmaking, while paying homage to the cinematic traditions of the past. They established a cinema which resolved the realism-fantasy dichotomy by combining the techniques of both, once again demonstrating that narrative cinema is a synthesis of realism and fantasy. They dominated the decade, until "les événements" of 1968 outraged certain elements of French society to the point where it was announced that "all film is political", and a different idea of the role of cinema came to prevail.

Cinema, whose role varied as an art, as a recorder of events, as an instructor, or as an entertainment, was suddenly called upon to perform a single function. The new theorists demanded that all cinema follow their ideas of political relevance.

The expression of political views in films was not a new phenomenon, although it was not an immediate concern. Cinema developed as "the product of science, industry, and art, in that order".²⁰ In France, the energies of the early filmmakers were used to reproduce French novels and plays, or to preserve contemporary events on film. The first cinema was an extension of theatres and music halls or a record of

journalistic reports. Then World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the continuing social and political upheavals of the twentieth century provided the French film industry with new subjects and points of view. While conceding that there has always been a "classically reactionary cinema", American film critic Andrew Sarris claims that the politics of film, which began in the twenties, have been "mostly liberal, anarchistic, and even methodically Marxist", and that "rightists, by and large, have preferred to express their opposition to the alleged redness of movies with the blue pencil of censorship".²¹

Right-wing propagandists did exist, and went to notorious extremes in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. French film historians, Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, revised their book Histoire du Cinéma (1935), so that the 1942 version represented the anti-semitic basis of fascism.²²

Truffaut quotes from the writer Lucien Rébatet, (pseudonym, François Vinneuil), film critic for Je suis partout and author of Les Tribus du Cinéma et du Théâtre (1941):

Sooner or later our soil will have to be cleared of several hundred thousand Jews ... those whose political and financial malfeasance is most obvious -in other words all the Jews working in cinema.²³

Truffaut goes on to defend what was characterised as the "apolitical and escapist cinema of the Occupation" by citing

Roger Régent:

Though among these 220 films shot under such disastrous conditions there are many mediocre ones, at least we can be proud not to have seen a single French producer worthy of that name consent to make so much as one propaganda film in favour of the enemy.²⁴

Truffaut continues with a little propaganda of his own:

It might also be added - for the benefit of those who complain that present-day French cinema pays too little attention to political questions and who compare it to its disadvantage with Italian protest cinema - that it would be well to remember, without pushing the comparison too far, that Italian cinema of 1940-44 was almost entirely pro-Mussolini and fascist, whereas 98 percent of French cinema during the Occupation managed not to be Pétainist.²⁵

He does not identify the 2 percent pro-Pétainist films.

Marxist critics of both cinema and theatre, citing the theories of playwright Bertolt Brecht, have pointed out the futility of making political changes while using the tools of the ruling class. Brecht is an important figure in the development of French cinema, where his writings on theatre were adapted and used by film directors, film critics and film journals. Brecht believed in the Marxist theory that political and social forces determine historical events, and felt that theatre has a definite role to play in shaping those events. He rejected realist theatre, and, presumably, realist cinema, which he claimed promotes the status quo by allowing for "generalisation only to humanist or spiritualist universalities, and not to scientific laws of economic determinism, as delineated by Marx".²⁶ Brecht's theatre is not in the classical mode, consisting of a plot with a

beginning, a middle and an end, nor does it observe the classic unities of time, space and situation. In form, Brechtian theatre is epic, narrative, and episodic. In content it is didactic, anti-establishment, and self-consciously concerned with social problems, especially the exploitation of the poor. Its proclaimed intention is to turn the spectator into an observer of the events on stage, present him with an argument, and force him to make a decision. Its characters are often types who represent societal groups, and not the individuals of "bourgeois theatre" who involve us in their personal predicaments. Brecht's table of differences between "Dramatic Theatre" and "Epic Theatre" was published in 1972 in Cahiers du Cinéma and is referred to by Godard as being the model from which he made his film Tout Va Bien (1972).²⁷ Marxist film critic, Christian Zimmer, has created an index of acceptable films, graded by strict Brechtian standards as to their potential benefit to "The Struggle".²⁸

It is claimed that Brecht's ideas were assimilated by the influential journal of film criticism, Cahiers du Cinéma, until, by the 1970's, Marxism became its sole political orientation, and America, through its film industry, now became its chief antagonist.²⁹ The recently published book, War and Cinema (1984), which first appeared as an article in Cahiers du Cinéma, would seem to verify this contention. The author, Paul Virilio, uses Marxist polemics when he describes

America between 1914 and 1960 as a "military-industrial state". The influence of its cinema he likens to religion, Marx's "opiate of the people". He calls the movie houses its cathedrals, the screens its stained glass windows, and the movie-camera its sun, with weekly screenings representing the resurrection of its gods, the movie stars. The congregating of the audience is interpreted as the forming of "training camps which bonded people together in the face of death agony, teaching them to master the fear of what they did not know ...".³⁰ Virilio's contention is that people who are constantly and deliberately exposed to the violence and death commonly featured in American films become desensitised to the point where they are no longer afraid of death and are turned into willing slaves of the American war machine. This was the new political viewpoint of a journal which in the past had found much to admire about Hollywood.

Between Marxism and fascism cinema presents a broad range of political opinions. Several long-lived film directors (Renoir, Clément, Godard) have passed through stages in their careers where they made explicit propaganda films, to return in later years to films with more subtle social or political commentary. As already mentioned, cinema arose first in the wake of scientific advances, then expanded as a business enterprise, became established as an art form, and was finally recognised as an ideal method for communicating ideas.

Film criticism followed its own evolutionary path. Its early years were spent in attempts to justify filmmaking as a unique art form distinct from photography, painting, the novel and the theatre. In other words, film aesthetics constituted the first form of film criticism. Subsequently, film reviewers dealt with topics such as the social functioning of the cinema, whether the advent of sound destroyed the visual aspects of the medium, if colour was an improvement over black-and-white film, and what constituted naturalism. In 1948, Alexandre Astruc proclaimed his revolutionary *caméra-stylo* theory. Astruc declared that: "the film-maker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen".³¹ His theory evolved into *auteurism*, in which cinema is considered an art of personal expression where directors should be as highly regarded as the authors of their films as any novelists are of their books, or composers of their music, or painters of their pictures. Theorist André Bazin restates the idea this way: "[It] consists, in short, of choosing the personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference, and then of assuming that it continues and even progresses from one film to the next".³² *La politique des auteurs*, which displaced the criticism concerned with the social effects of cinema, became the major critical guide of the New Wave. It was not until the mid-sixties that the literary critics (semioticians, Freudians, Marxists, and others) turned their

energies towards cinema, which led to a re-evaluation of the entire field of cinematic output. Key concepts such as perception, representation, signification, narrative structure, adaptation, evaluation, identification, figuration and interpretation all required a position to be taken, or a point of view to be adopted. The re-organising of films to fit into such concepts, a sort of cinematic revisionism, gave rise to enormous quantities of publications as each politically and socially oriented group saw and interpreted film according to its own lights. While most groups fell back on predetermined positions, all agreed that films contain messages. What messages the films should contain depended on what the various groups saw as the role of cinema in French society.

How the messages were seen and interpreted involved the viewer as well as the filmmaker and became of great interest to creators and upholders of moral and political standards. The church, the state, and even the film industry itself made rules regarding both the form and the content of film. Hidden agendas are not just the province of post-structuralists, but of vested political interests which, in war and peace, keep censors busy looking for concealed signs of subversion or moral decay. Some themes are more suspect than others, as Marcel Ophuls discovered when he tried to screen his film, Le Chagrin et la Pitié (1969), on television. As Truffaut claims in 1976: "French television

still refuses to show it so as not to chagrin those who had been pitiless".³³ Ophuls' documentary treatment of the painful subject of French collaboration with the Nazis during World War II was considered by the government to be too realistic for the French public.

Since the beginning, realism has been used to portray serious themes: the plight of the poor and betrayed (social documentaries), attempts to change society (Marxist dramas), heroic events and figures from the past (historical and biographical docu-dramas), and human activities both unusual and mundane (newsreels, travelogues, scientific and medical films).

While it is widely held that fantasy is essentially a vehicle for entertainment, many films that appear to be mere concoctions of illusion and imagination offer deep insights into the human condition. Satire, comedy, and even farce carry important messages about an individual, a social or political group, or a country.

Narrative film, with its fictional story line, and its variations and combinations of techniques, is the ideal form in which to examine the expression of the political in French cinema.

CHAPTER I
THE SILENT ERA OF THE TWENTIES

The 1920s were an active and progressive time for French cinema. Ciné-clubs sprang up and serious discussion groups were formed throughout the country. Loyal film enthusiasts encouraged and supported innovative directors. Experimental films flourished and traditional cinema, concerned mainly with adapting French plays and novels to film, extended its boundaries. The camera was no longer stationary, a passive recorder of events, but became a moving and involved participant in the activities it was filming. A combining of the arts - dance with theatre, theatre with film, ballet with cinema - was a part of the new art world. The ease of movement from one art form to another made filmmakers look upon adaptations as challenging.

Turning a popular play into an equally well-received film requires special talent. The stage comedies of Eugène Labiche, which rely heavily on dialogue, did not readily translate to film, especially in the era before sound. Labiche's play Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie (1851), is set during the time of the Second Empire, and is an entertaining portrayal of the foibles of the bourgeoisie. An attempt to

reproduce such a play would have to include the satirising of the bourgeois manners and mores which are particularly associated with that most bourgeois of ceremonies, the wedding. Clair's adaptation includes changing the time to the Belle Epoque (to 1895), using sepia film stock to imitate the photography of the era, replacing the witty dialogue with sequences of clever sight gags to keep the number of intertitles to a minimum, and instilling the entire film with energy and continuous movement. Adopting a cinematic technique from Lumière, Clair eliminates the proscenium arch, and moves the film's activities away from their theatrical setting. The essentially verbal play, once confined to a three-sided stage, is transformed into a chase, which shifts in and out of apartments, carriages and shops, and moves all over Paris.

Movement is the theme of Clair's first film, Paris Qui Dort (1923). In his introduction for the film's release, Clair states his opinions on the nature and function of cinema in society, opinions which contrasted sharply with the contemporary view of cinema as an art:

That cinema was created for the purpose of recording motion is hardly contestable, yet it seems to be forgotten all too often. The most important task facing this generation should be to bring cinema back to its origins. In order to do that, we must strip it of all the false art that is suffocating it. The mistake was in deciding too early that cinema was an art. If it had been treated simply as an industry, art itself would have profited from the arrangement... Above all, cinema must live! Art will come along when it's good and ready... Cinema isn't yet an art because film work is the fruit of a widespread collaboration.

Actors, cameramen, labmen, stagehands, electricians, and especially distributors and producers collaborate in a helpful or harmful way on the director's work... I believe we must stop thinking about art ... and remember what cinema was like when it began, before the unfortunate intrusion of the "art film".³⁴

Clair continues by stating his own intentions and how he has carried them through in his first two films. In Le Fantôme du Moulin-Rouge, he uses a technique originated by Méliès, although he does not acknowledge his predecessor:

I have attempted to realign myself with these origins ... I think that a film should above all be centered on a visual theme. Paris qui dort's theme is the opposition of motion and immobility, and Le Fantôme du Moulin-Rouge is a fantastic story based on superimposition, a marvellous means of expression thanks to which reality melts into dreams.³⁵

He looks upon the Lumière brothers as the source of inspiration for his filmmaking:

If there is an aesthetics of film, it was discovered at the same time as the camera and film in France, by the Lumière brothers. It can be summarized in one word: motion. The exterior motion of objects perceived by the eye, to which we would add today the interior motion of the action. From the union of these two motions can be born that quality of which we hear so much and see so little: rhythm. When the Lumière brothers wanted to demonstrate the capabilities of their marvellous invention, they didn't put a dead landscape or a dialogue between two mutes on their screen; they gave us The Train Arrival, A Cavalry Charge, and that Sprinkler Sprinkled, the father of film comedy. If we hope for cinema's healthy growth, let us respect this forgotten tradition, let us return to this source.³⁶

Clair, in paying homage to the films of Lumière, identifies himself with the realism school of cinema. His film topics, on the other hand, span the entire spectrum of genres, with fantasies, science fiction, dramas, musicals, vaudevilles and

comedies. These necessarily led him into using all the camera techniques associated with Méliès, including superimposition, fast and slow motion, and split screens. Clair's willingness to experiment kept his filmmaking career, which began with Paris Qui Dort in 1923, going right to Les Fêtes Galantes in 1965. Born René Chomette in Paris in 1895, he wanted to be a writer, worked for some time as a newspaper reporter, tried out for an acting role in 1920, changing his name to René Clair for the less serious purpose of being in show business, moved to film directing and never left.

Paris Qui Dort is an imaginative leap into science fiction and wish-fulfilment. It was originally titled Le Rayon diabolique by its distributors, who had hoped to capitalise on the prevailing interest in scientific experiments. However, Clair's title, itself a spoof on trendy contemporary titles such as "Paris qui rit" and "Paris qui s'amuse", prevailed.³⁷

The story takes place in Paris, and opens on the Eiffel Tower, where Albert, the night watchman, awakens to discover that all but a few people in the city seem to be in a state of suspended animation. Five people who arrive from out of town, and Albert, are the only ones unaffected. Finding themselves free to move about unchallenged, they go into all the best stores and restaurants, where they loot and indulge themselves to the point of satiation and boredom. They return to the top of the Eiffel Tower, where they hoard their

stolen goods. As the men begin to fight over the sole woman in the group, a female voice on the radio summons them to an address. There they meet a young woman who introduces them to her scientist uncle, Dr. Crase. The doctor, in the best tradition of the mad scientist, has invented a ray machine, with which he has put the city to sleep. The incensed group all insist that he turn the ray off and return the city to normal, which he grudgingly does. The night watchman, Albert, is smitten by Mlle Crase. The two go off together but Albert finds himself without enough money to buy his new love even a small bouquet of flowers. The pair returns to the ray-machine and re-activates it. However, while they are in the act of searching through the pockets of suspended Parisians for change, Dr. Crase wanders back into his laboratory and turns the machine off again. The young couple are immediately arrested by a re-animated policeman. All the group meet up in a psychiatric ward, but are soon released when the police conclude that they had been temporarily seized by madness. Meanwhile, the ray-machine is destroyed in a quarrel between Dr. Crase and his assistant. Some time later, Albert runs into Mlle Crase at the Eiffel tower. The two take the elevator to the top, where they sit wondering if their adventure was just a dream. Then they notice a ring on the platform left over from the hoard of stolen goods. With the realisation that they have a shared secret, Albert slips the ring on Mlle Crase's finger and they embrace.³⁹ The

obligatory happy ending for a romantic comedy is satisfied, crime has not paid, the source of the mischief, the ray-machine, has been destroyed, and the world is back to normal, with lovers embracing on that man-made romantic symbol of Paris, the Eiffel Tower.

People versus machines is very much a twentieth-century movie theme, derived from nineteenth-century literature, which is filled with examples of both helpful and harmful creations. Emile Zola's Germinal has a man-eating mine, "Le Voreux". Jules Verne's machines are less sinister, but dominate most of his works. Who would Captain Nemo be without his Nautilus, and how could Fogg have circumnavigated the world in eighty days without a number of mechanical conveyances, both fanciful and mundane? Clair's sleep-ray is a worthy successor of these man-and-machine combinations. The science fiction genre has seen man succeed because of his inventions, or succeed despite his inventions. Machines that malfunction, that go mad and need to be brought under control, continue to be popular film topics. Some of the more notable duels in the world of cinema take place between HAL the computer and Keir Dullea in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1969), and between the pleasure machine and Jane Fonda in Roger Vadim's Barbarella (1968). Humankind triumphs as Keir lobotomises HAL, and Jane drives her mechanical partner to exhaustion and collapse.

A further example of the unreliability of machines is

illustrated by their failure when used as the instruments of war. The despair prevalent in the German cinema of the twenties was undoubtedly caused by Germany's 1914-1918 reliance upon and disappointment with her war machines, the tank, the machine-gun, the battleship, and the descendant of the Nautilus, the U-boat. Fantasy of a chilling and disturbing kind characterised the post-war films of a defeated Germany, films such as The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919), Nosferatu (1923), and Metropolis (1926). A similar lapse into despondency and escapism took place in post World War II France with films like La Belle et la Bête (1946), Le Diable au Corps (1947), and Antoine et Antoinette (1947).

The fantasy films of post-World War I France are those of an unconquered people, and reflect the vibrancy of a prosperous country. New ideas in the art community provided film with many opportunities for experiment. Dadaism, a new literary and art movement, which had spread throughout Europe as a result of the disillusionment surrounding World War I, became an important movement in France from 1918 to 1922. Associated with the poetry of its founder, a Hungarian, Tristan Tzara, it was basically a nihilist movement concerned with attacking the conventional ideals of behaviour and aesthetics. Its main adherents in France were André Breton, Louis Aragon, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Man Ray. Duchamp was an artist who won instant fame for his portrait of the Mona Lisa with moustache and goatee.

Clair's Entr'acte (1924) was created as an amusement to fit between the acts of a ballet by Picabia and Erik Satie, but became more famous than the ballet, was released separately in 1926, and appeared regularly in the ciné-club repertoires. The Dadaist scenario, consisting of a series of unrelated and zany activities, was by Picabia, who dashed it off for Clair one night, reportedly on a sheet of writing paper from Maxim's:

During the entr'acte.

- 1st. Boxing between white gloves on black screen.
- 2nd. Chess game between Duchamp and Man Ray. Stream of water directed by Picabia hosing down game.
- 3rd. Juggler and old geezer.
- 4th. Hunter shooting at ostrich egg on stream of water. Dove comes out of egg, comes back to perch on hunter's head; second hunter shooting at it, kills first hunter: he falls, bird flies off.
- 5th. 21 people on their backs showing bottoms of their feet.
- 6th. Ballerina on transparent glass, cinematographed from beneath.
- 7th. Blow up balloons and rubber screens, on which faces and inscriptions will be drawn.
- 8th. A burial: hearse drawn by camel, etc. ³⁹

Clair claimed to have little interest in formal film plots at this early stage in his career. He wrote in the same year (1924): "But you know how much importance to attach to the plot of a film: about as much as you'd attach to the plot of a symphony. All we ask of a plot is that it provide us with subjects and that it retain our attention".⁴⁰

Picabia's Dadaist list of activities is superbly handled by Clair, whose fantasy sequences include most of Picabia's suggestions and then exceed them. The streets of Paris are his major backdrop. The first half of the film includes

balloons with cartoon faces being inflated and deflated, a pivoting and leaping ballerina who changes into a man with a beard and pince-nez and then back into a woman (inspired, no doubt, by Duchamp's moustachioed Mona Lisa), and a pair of sparring boxing gloves, with the superimposed image of the Place de l'Opéra, out of focus, as a locating shot. Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray are shown playing chess on a rooftop terrace and react with exaggerated horror when they discover that their chessboard contains the Place de la Concorde. Next, a stream of water inundates the chess-board, and the players disappear. A superimposed paper boat floats over panning shots of rooftops and the water tries to sweep the Place de la Concorde from the chessboard. Camera shots of rooftops with the superimposed boat grow wilder, with the ballerina jumping higher and at several different camera speeds. Jean Borlin, the ballet's choreographer and lead dancer, appears as a hunter, stands on the edge of a roof terrace and aims at an egg, which keeps moving about.

Borlin is delighted when he hits the egg which turns into a bird that lands on his alpine hat. A second hunter, Picabia, aims at the bird but instead, hits Borlin, who falls to his death from the rooftop. The camera shows mourners coming out a door. As the women walk down the steps, a stream of air indecorously blows up their skirts. The egg dances on, and the sun irises out and in again as we see the interlaced initials E.S. and F.P., those of Erik Satie and

Francis Picabia. A hearse appears, pulled by a camel.

The second half of the film contains a funeral procession, with elegantly dressed mourners leaping along in slow motion after the coach, some in full funeral attire. Again, the streets of Paris figure prominently in the scene, as the procession crosses a busy intersection, enters La Luna, a popular Parisian amusement park, and travels around the central landmark, a scaled-down replica of the Eiffel tower. By now we have imperceptibly progressed from slow motion to normal camera speed. When the camel balks, the hearse comes loose and begins to roll away down the street, and the procession becomes a chase, in the best tradition of cinema. The pedestrians are soon joined by vehicles in hot pursuit, cars, bicyclists, and even an airplane and a riverboat. Trees and houses flash by faster and faster, until everything becomes a whooshing blur. Suddenly, the casket tumbles out of the hearse, the lid pops off, and out jumps Jean Borlin, wearing a magician's outfit. With each wave of his wand, he makes the onlookers disappear, one at a time. Finally nobody is left but Borlin, who smilingly touches himself on the chest with his wand and consequently fades out, leaving nothing but open countryside. Fade out. The end title is presented, printed on a huge sheet of paper held by a couple of assistants who stand just outside the camera's field of vision. Borlin leaps through it, tearing it wide apart, and wags his finger at us, indicating that the

film is not over after all. Then another man, Rolf de Mare, appears and punches Borlin, sending him flying in reverse action of the earlier shot to reconstitute the title and end the film.⁴¹

The reviews of the time were more than favourable. They reveal the fact that cinema was still considered a novelty, and was still avoided by large numbers of French society. A reviewer for Paris-Midi (Dec. 5, 1924) wrote:

Between the two acts of Rélâche, the instantaneist ballet by Francis Picabia, is a short cinematographic intermission, made by René Clair.

Absolute secrecy had been maintained about this essay, which was awaited with impatient curiosity. Its unveiling was stupefying. I believe that last night people who had come to the Ballets Suédois for entirely different reasons discovered cinema there.

The entire audience, even its most intractable members, even those who today wouldn't want to admit they were amused, all of them were nailed to their seats... Its success was brilliant, and the timid protests of the minority were suffocated by enthusiastic bravos... One can only ask all those who are interested in cinema to think over the lessons it contains... With no precise subject, by means of purely cinematic methods, without a word of text, M. René Clair amuses his spectators and even makes them laugh through certain irresistibly funny passages. Isn't that a marvellous effect?"⁴²

In their 1935 Histoire du Cinéma, Bardèche and Brasillach reinforce the positive reception of the Clair's techniques of filmmaking and say of Entr'acte:

It was a great succès de scandale and it miraculously preserves the whole spirit of a now vanished and delightfully crazy period, for this classic of absurdity was in its own way a real classic. In appearance it is merely a sort of dream without a subject and without a plot, in which the most incongruous images freely succeed one another, linked only by haphazard and arbitrary associations...

Here living characters take part in the action

but only as extensions of objects, for they are only regarded as objects themselves; the procession with the hearse becomes a measure in a dance in which they take part and mingle with the objects. Entr'acte is a macabre poem.⁴³

The danse macabre lends itself very well to film, where it is the main technique for motivating the action in Entr'acte and Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie. It is used by Renoir in La Règle du Jeu, when the skeletal figure of Death and his ghostly companions dance on the stage, to the accompaniment of Saint-Saens' "Danse Macabre", while various guests and servants pursue one another in a series of chases around the chateau.⁴⁴ The danse macabre theme in Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie occurs as the actor-participants undertake a chase after an object - a hat - in order to facilitate a ceremony - a wedding. The possession of the hat is necessary for the success of the wedding.

Clair refers to the play as "originally a Labiche vaudeville that depended almost entirely on lots of fast talk interspersed with little songs" and from which he had to make a silent comedy. He credits Labiche with having invented a genre which Clair calls "the vaudeville-nightmare technique".⁴⁵ In the technique, the hero is forced against his will to undertake a series of actions, which take him to places that he ought to avoid, whereby he only succeeds in compounding his perils, becomes the pursued as well as the pursuer, has his hopes raised time and again, only to have them dashed, until he finally arrives at a situation from

which only a miracle, or, to continue the nightmare metaphor, an awakening, can save him. In Fadinard's case, Labiche is the awakener who makes the bad dreams dissolve, and life return to normal. The replacement hat, the solution to Fadinard's problems, was there in his own apartment all the time, and if he had not rushed off on a useless quest, there would have been no nightmare.

The opening shot of the film is both traditional and realistic - an engraved wedding announcement. We read the card which states that Monsieur E. Nonancourt, nursery gardener at Charentonneau, is giving his daughter, Hélène, in marriage to Monsieur Jules Fadinard, the ceremony to take place in nearby Paris. The year is 1895.

There is a dissolve, then we see a closeup of the bridal crown. The camera pulls back to reveal the wedding party, and immediately we are made aware that the film is about the bourgeois concerns of appearances and possessions. Cousin Alice first fusses with the crown and then with Cousin Alex's necktie. Hélène, wearing her bridal gown, enters and greets her cousins. Her father, Nonancourt, enters carrying a pair of new boots. The women occupy themselves with the crown as Cousin Bobin comes in admiring his new gloves. Hélène squirms in her gown as though something is down her back. Nonancourt tries to put on his boots, which are too small. Alex adjusts his clip-on tie. Bobin tears the price tag off his gloves and slowly puts them on. Then the men help

Nonancourt on with his boots, as the scene fades out.

The camera now shifts to an outdoor scene, contemporary with the events in the first scene. It focusses on the dapper and satisfied looking bridegroom, Fadinard, as he drives his carriage through the Bois de Boulogne on his way to his new apartment. Stopping to recover his buggy whip which has become tangled in the trees, he returns to the carriage to find his horse eating a woman's elegant straw hat. An officer rises up from some bushes and shouts at Fadinard. A woman appears beside the officer and the two demand that he immediately replace the chewed up hat. Fadinard laughs, jumps into his carriage and drives off, while the couple jump up and down with rage. They hail a passing cab and set off in hot pursuit. The chase has commenced.

Several comic scenes serve to illustrate Clair's talents of combining mime, farce and fantasy. A good example is next scene, which opens in the couple's new apartment, where the preoccupation with possessions becomes more obvious. The servant admits Hélène's uncle, Vézinet, who hands over his wedding present. Fadinard enters and proceeds to show his prospective uncle around the over-decorated apartment which is stacked with wedding gifts. The old man gestures to indicate that he is somewhat deaf and then displays an ear trumpet into which Fadinard shouts comments about the displayed gifts. Meanwhile, out in the street, the

pursuing officer recognises Fadinard's carriage. Fadinard has just settled Vézinet down with a family album when the couple storms into the room, demanding restitution. Pointing at the old man absorbed in the album, Fadinard holds his fingers to his lips.

There follows an exaggerated pantomime by Fadinard to prevent the angry officer from disturbing the still oblivious Vézinet. We see Fadinard silently lift the woman's left hand, on which there is a wedding ring. He then examines the officer's hands, which are ringless, brushes some powder off his tunic, removes a long hair from the officer's shoulder, which he compares with the woman's hair, smiles knowingly, and wags a finger at them in mock scandal. The officer explodes with fury and tries to smash a chair, the first of his many attempts to destroy Fadinard's possessions. While they struggle, Vézinet sits unaware looking through the album. Outside, the wedding party has arrived to pick up Fadinard, and as they enter the apartment, he pushes the angry couple into the bedroom. He intercepts Héliène as she heads towards the bedroom to get at the troublesome pin down her back and ushers them all out, promising to be just a few more moments. He frees the furious couple, and, as the officer begins kicking the furniture, he wads some paper into the sleeping Vézinet's ear trumpet. The officer rages, the woman swoons, and an intertitle appears, declaring, in the officer's words, that Madame is a married woman who

cannot possibly go home without her hat. The officer exhorts Fadinard to find a replacement, and the chase for hat begins.

The rest of the plot consists of Fadinard's attempts to find a replacement hat, which has become a symbol of the woman's unsullied virtue. While the increasingly impatient officer and his lady friend wait in Fadinard's apartment, the harried bridegroom attends the two required ceremonies, socialises at the reception, and continues the search for a suitable Italian straw hat. The fear with which he visualises the acts of violence done to his belongings by the officer, Lieutenant Tavernier, continues to spur him on his quest.

The members of the wedding party continue to have problems with their possessions as well. At the wedding ceremony, Nonancourt rubs his aching feet inside their pinching boots, Vézinet examines his non-functioning ear trumpet, Bobin loses a glove and hides his bare hand in shame behind his back, and Alex is nudged by Cousin Alice, who gestures that his tie has fallen off. The nudge shifts everyone along the bench, domino style, until the very fat man at the end lands on the floor. While everybody in the hall has seen Alice's gestures, and all the men reach for their ties, Alex remains mystified. Finally, Alice grabs him, shakes him, yells at him, and replaces his tie.

The sight gags concerning the possessions of the wedding party are continued at the reception. The guests have been

celebrating with wine and have become somewhat more relaxed. Bobin has overcome his embarrassment and is singing, and Aunt Jane is being kind to Cousin Alex, much to Alice's irritation. When she glowers at him, he reaches for his tie, and is amazed and relieved to find it in place. As he removes his hands, however, it falls into his lap. The guests proceed to the next room where the dance begins, and the scene fades out to allow a check on Tavernier.

A cut back to the dance presents us with the most famous sequences of the film. As the couples swirl about to the music a small child interrupts the pianist, and while she stops to berate the interrupter, deaf Uncle Vézinet continues to dance. The music restarts, and as the other couples resume their dancing, Fadinard's servant enters. He makes ominous faces at Fadinard, who, in his imagination, sees all his possessions flying out the window, and his furniture walking out the door and into the street where men in evening dress dismantle it and rush off with it at accelerated speed. The vision so disturbs the new groom that he dashes out, glancing at a milliner's card, which bears the name and address of the purchaser of an Italian straw hat. We read what amounts to one of film's earliest in-jokes, something for which the New Wave became so famous, for the address is "3, avenue Chomette", René Chomette being René Clair's real name.

Eventually, a hat is found and the chase is ended. The

denouement shows the wedding party being exonerated and released from the police station, the bride forgiving Fadinard, the father acting mollified, and the servant collecting the wedding gifts back from the guests, who disperse as the scene fades out. Several rounds of the guests and their possessions show restored calm.

The film was not intended as a condemnation of the bourgeoisie, but has been interpreted as such by various film critics. It met with a mixed and not overly enthusiastic reception, but time improved its reviews.

By 1935, Bardèche and Brasillach look back on it as a period piece, also appreciated for its artistry. They point out that Clair's filmmaking "seems to spring from dance and the ballet". They write positively about Clair's works, and interpret Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie as the product of a magician, in the tradition of Méliès and his prestidigitation:

The whole atmosphere of the Russian Ballet, not merely that of Parade and of the Mariés de la Tour Eiffel⁴⁶, must be remembered in connection with his films. Though his work had been known before the war, Diaghilev was now supreme. René Clair, coming into a world enraptured by the dance, worked at first for the Swedish Ballets. Though he was willing to make use of actors and actresses, it is probable that he still considered them merely as objects; this is something he learned from the Russians, and he manipulated the strings of his enchanting puppets in his compositions [in which] the principle remained that of the dance of the objects in Entr'acte.

With The Italian Straw Hat ... the ballet motif appeared again, informed the entire picture and became the very center and reason for its existence. The mischievous puppetmaster drew upon his property box for each character, giving a shirt front to one, a single

glove to another, a paper cap⁴⁷ to Paul Olivier, his uniform to the captain. At the end of the film there is a delightful measure during which these objects take back their independence and, in turn, the glove, the paper cap and the hat reappear and then disappear before our very eyes. The director was pulling his puppets apart... Having chosen ... Labiche's farce, René Clair set to work to bring it to life. Those mechanical gifts which served him in creating the burlesque machinery of Entr'acte were now applied to the situations of a farce... There can be no pleasure more intense or more exquisite... than that provided by this Ballet Russe of the French bourgeoisie.⁴⁸

If the Russian ballet and Diaghilev were the inspirations for Clair's Chapeau de Paille, then Russian montage and Eisenstein were the inspirations for Kirsanov's Ménilmontant, (1926). While Clair's nightmare-farce has few inter-titles, Kirsanov's social drama has none. We make an enormous leap from watching the amusing social problems of the nineteenth-century Paris bourgeoisie to involving ourselves in the sufferings of the early twentieth-century Paris underclass. The smooth scene shifts of Clair contrast sharply with the sudden cuts and heavy editing that characterise the style of Kirsanov. The jump cuts move the action along so quickly that the audience must work hard to understand what is happening. As in Chapeau de Paille, there are dream and fantasy sequences, but in Ménilmontant, they are neither pre-signalled nor easily interpreted. The nightmares of Kirsanov's characters are so much a part of their daily lives that there is no obvious separation. And unlike Fadinard, the working poor of Ménilmontant do not awake from their nightmares. There is no rescue, no

improvement, no classical concerns with climax and denouement, simply an open ending implying a continuation of their cycle of misery.

Classified with the French narrative avant-garde of the twenties, Kirsanov is considered more than just a "slice-of-life" realist. His films were credited as being the precursors of French "poetic realism" and Italian "neo-realism".⁴⁹ The Russian immigrant acquired his reputation from having directed just two avant-garde films,⁵⁰ but despite their somewhat primitive quality (or perhaps, because of it), they had an powerful appeal for the enthusiasts of the new phenomenon, the ciné-club.

With the growth of ciné-clubs in the twenties came the idea of specialised cinemas, with repertoires of films. In 1924, Jean Tedesco, looking for a permanent location for avant-garde film screenings, learned that Jacques Copeau's famous Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier was for rent. Apparently Copeau was willing to give Tedesco a year's lease, and then renew it when the first year proved a disaster. Tedesco had seen Kirsanov's first film, L'Ironie du destin (1924), and was impressed by the actress Sibirskaya (the director's wife), the Paris locale (with almost no interiors), and the total lack of inter-titles (which may have been the first such French film).⁵¹ When the Paris distributors rejected Kirsanov's second film, Tedesco moved quickly to acquire and present it for the opening of his second season in January,

1926. Originally Les Cents Pas, its name was changed to Ménilmontant after the area of Paris where it was filmed. It was an immediate hit, helped assure the success of Tedesco's Vieux-Colombier cinema and became a regular on the ciné-club and specialised film circuit.

The story is mysteriously vague in many places, and like Kirsanov's first film, has no inter-titles. It concerns two young girls, who, after their parents are violently and inexplicably murdered, leave their village and go to live in a poor working-class area of Paris, Ménilmontant. They work for a while in the flower market, but the older sister soon turns to prostitution and the younger sister falls in love, becomes pregnant and is abandoned by the young man, who then takes up with the older sister. One evening as the younger sister sits with her baby on a bench by the Seine, she is on the point of jumping in. The kindness of an old man who shares a piece of bread with her prevents her from suicide. On another evening she encounters her sister on the street, and the two become reconciled. Minutes later, a few blocks away, the same young man who betrayed and abandoned the younger sister is brutally murdered.⁹² It is a circular tale of murder, treachery, abandonment, coincidence and revenge.

The realistic setting was chosen by Kirsanov, who shot most of the film himself during the winter of 1924-1925. Dark alleys, narrow cobbled streets, seedy hotels, deserted bridges and parks along the Seine at night, all underline the

poverty and misery of the girls' lives.

The film is only thirty-five minutes long, but includes a number of styles and techniques. There is the pure melodrama of the starving young girl and her baby being saved from a watery grave by the old man who wordlessly places part of his meagre supper on the bench between them. There is the unsentimental business of the older sister encountering a client on the street and leaving her sister behind to go off with him. The murder of the parents is a sudden, ghastly, and shocking montage of faces, hands, torsos, a struggle, a striking hatchet, bleeding bodies, a dropped hatchet, and a fleeing man. It appears to be a crime of passion but there are no explanations and no continuity, for we never see the murderer again. The unity of the film is provided by the relationship of the sisters.

Ménilmontant begins with a murder scene. The opening shot is a close-up of a window covered with a lace curtain, which, as we watch, suddenly twitches. Next is a medium shot where we can see that the window is on a door. A man rips aside the curtain and gestures frantically as we glimpse a woman with a second man behind her. The third shot is a close-up of a turning doorknob, followed by a quick close-up through the window of the woman's face as a hand yanks her hair from behind. In shot four the door opens and the first man struggles out, yelling, followed by the woman. Next, in less than a minute, a montage of some thirty shots presents

the actual killings, followed by the escape of the murderer.

The camera shifts to a park where the two sisters, dressed in short white dresses, are playing. They run unsuspectingly up to a group of workers standing in a circle and looking down at what are obviously the bodies of the parents. The camera records a series of close-ups of Sibirskaya's face and as she stares, she registers shock, incomprehension, awareness and then horror. She turns and flees.

Richard Abel, in his book French Cinema, queries whether the two girls have been dressed to imitate the Gish sisters.²³ If so, they have become genuine orphans of the storm, as the next scene opens in the village graveyard. The camera focusses on the two girls, then on a cross and a wreath on each of the two graves, next on a low chain-link fence and then once more on the girls, superimposing their faces. Panning around the cemetery, the camera then follows the girls' departure. They are appropriately dressed in black, and depart hand-in-hand down a tree-lined lane. The technique of lap dissolves, which in less tragic circumstances could be considered comic, gives the ambiguous effect of seeming to hold the sisters back for a few seconds and then to push them on their way. No matter what techniques he uses, however, Kirsanov injects no comedy into his film.

The shift in locale to Paris is indicated by a series of

rapid tracking shots of fast-moving cars. It contrasts sharply with the rural setting that the girls have left behind, or have been pushed out of, depending upon one's interpretation of the purpose of Kirsanov's editing techniques. Next the camera focusses on a market with flower girls, and a close-up reveals the presence of the sisters, French Eliza Doolittles, among them.

Sibirskaya encounters a young man in a park, and after several meetings he professes to love her and takes her to a rundown local hotel. The camera work emphasises her hesitation as they walk down a dark, rain-drenched street and as they pause in the doorway of the hotel. As they enter the hotel room, the camera focusses over the man's shoulder on Sibirskaya's face. The man turns towards her but she pushes him away. He persists and she allows him to kiss her before she goes to look out the window. The man is next seen in bed and Sibirskaya is standing by the door. After a dissolve she has moved across the room and kisses him on the head. A scene follows which is the equivalent of "meanwhile, back at the ranch" and is meant to be simultaneous with the unviewed seduction scene in the hotel room. We see Sibirskaya's sister in bed asleep and a slow montage of shots beginning with a clock, a book she had been reading, a prowling cat on the stairs, feet walking along an alley, and car tires passing by; then a series of multiple superimpositions blur them all together along with the naked torso of a woman

projected from several different angles. The sister turns over in her sleep, ending the dream-montage, and the camera pans to the other side of the bed to indicate Sibirskaya's empty pillow. Meanwhile, back in the hotel room, another dissolve has moved Sibirskaya to the door and she leaves. The sequence of events is disjointed compared to the smooth scene shifts by Clair, but the intention is clear, and explains the subsequent presence of Sibirskaya's infant. Her immediate reaction is shame, as Sibirskaya pauses on the Pont Neuf on her way home and gazes into the water while memories of her childhood fill the screen. She walks down the steps towards the water, stops, and then turns and goes back up. She rejects suicide.

Her young man is next seen in the company of her sister who has left the flower market and her lodgings with Sibirskaya and has become a prostitute. Sibirskaya now has a baby and again comes close to drowning herself one night as she walks with the baby along the river bank. The young man is seen sitting on a bench by the river, but there is no encounter between them. As he gets up to leave, Sibirskaya and her baby dissolve in and sit next to the spot where he was sitting. The spot is quickly filled by the old man who recognises her hunger and shares his bread with her.

We next see the young man entering the same hotel but with a different woman. Also in the hotel that night is another unfamiliar woman who appears in a series of montage

shots: first we see a hand full of coins, then the woman at a street-level window, then stealthy hands among the wine bottles and rubbish on the table, and then the woman drinking from one of the bottles. She seems to be starving.

Outside, Sibirskaya is sheltering under a bridge with her baby when she sees her sister come along, looking well-dressed and prosperous. The sister paces about on the muddy cobblestones in her high-heeled shoes as Sibirskaya rushes out and holds the baby up to her. The sister is surprised but obviously delighted. Just then the young man appears around a far corner and witnesses the reconciliation as the sisters embrace and go off together with the baby.

As the young man continues walking up the alley the camera cuts to the starving woman who is creeping along up an intersecting alley. They meet and begin to struggle. A man appears and helps the woman. The young man tries to escape through a nearby door that slams shut. There is an fast montage of shots that resemble the brutal opening scene, as the woman picks up a cobblestone and bashes the young man on the head. The movement recalls the hatchet being swung in the first murder. The two then drag the the young man's body around a corner, and the sequence ends.

The final shots show gaslights and night views of bridges. The camera sweeps over some hands making flowers and then pans to blackness, and Kirsanov's gruesome tale ends.⁵⁴

The use of montage was very much a part of Russian filmmaking, and had its supporters and detractors. V. S. Perkins, in his book Film as Film states that:

Montage on the Russian pattern was designed to demonstrate an attitude rather than to show an event; as a result it constantly isolated objects and actions from the background which made them significant, and forced them to take on a significance of the author's own creation.⁵⁵

Montage, or editing, had evolved from being the essential source of "film art" to becoming extremely suspect. According to Bazin, "the dictum that cinema began as an art with montage has been temporarily productive but its virtues are exhausted".⁵⁶ Bazin held a hostile view of montage, because he felt that it imposed a single meaning on a phenomenon. It was the opposite of reality, which he considered ambiguous, and films, he believed, should respect that ambiguity:

Natural objects are surrounded with a fringe of meanings liable to touch off various moods, emotions, runs of inarticulate thoughts ... A film shot does not come into its own unless it incorporates raw material with its multiple meanings or ... the anonymous state of reality.⁵⁷

Montage of the Russian school, according to Bazin, "suppresses the multiple meanings in order to impose a single view of an amorphous reality". Viewers are forced to accept the significance attached to an event, such as the anti-capitalist montage in Pudovkin's The End of St Petersburg, and are prevented from finding any meaning other than the one dictated by the cutting. Montage is denounced by Bazin as

"essentially and by its very nature opposed to the expression of ambiguity". Perkins goes on to paraphrase Bazin:

At the same time, [montage] favoured the lazy or stupid spectator, and encouraged him in his defects. Constantly drawing attention to its own significance, the montage film presupposed the docility of the viewer and relieved him of the responsibility of making connections between, and drawing conclusions from, the events presented. He would gain nothing by scrutinizing the images since the montage sequence would make sense only in the terms dictated by the director.³⁸

A quotation from Eisenstein concerning the same nature and use of montage presents it as a positive quality:

The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along that selfsame road that the author travelled in creating the image.³⁹

Kirsanov's Ménilmontant can readily be interpreted as a political film condemning the exploitation of the working class and the society which forces them to live in such abject conditions. The portrayal of the Parisian slums is realistic enough to incite revolution, underlined by the fictional story of innocence betrayed. However, the complex and ambiguous film does not impose "a single view of an amorphous reality", nor does it favour "the lazy or the stupid spectator" who has been relieved of "the responsibility of making connections between, and drawing conclusions from, the events presented".⁴⁰ The connection of montage with Eisenstein's The Battleship Potemkin (1925) and October (1927) meant that every film which used montage was politically labelled, even if it did not deal with epic

events such as revolution. Kirsanov's solution to ensure the girls' future is to destroy the individual malefactor, not to attack the society that produced such exploiters.

While Kirsanov's story itself is common and sordid enough, the telling of it is worthy of a *nouveau roman* author, with nameless people, unspecified times and settings, actions beginning in medias res, cyclical events, and no indicators of whether a sequence is imagined or real, fantasy or fact. The audience is required to interpret what is happening. The deliberate obscurity of Kirsanov's story was far ahead of its time. As for the camera work, his mastery of the *montage* technique was the equal of his fantasy sequences and of his use of symbolism. Surrounding his story of betrayal, abandonment and reconciliation are two murder scenes, acts of vengeance that frame the main story concerning the relationship of the two girls. The opening murders send the young and naive sisters out into the hard cruel world on their own. They become separated through the exploitive actions of the young man which makes the final murder seem somehow justified, although corruption of the innocent is not usually a capital offense.

While not the hero on the grand scale that Vigo would become in the thirties to the directors of the New Wave, Kirsanov was a well-respected member of the *avant-garde* movement of the twenties. His early films provided a basis for the innovative directors of the following decades. He

disappointed his fans by turning to commercial filmmaking but he continued, according to Sadoul, "à introduire certaines recherches", among them Franco de Port, La Plus Belle Fille du Monde, and L'Avion de minuit.⁴¹

However, the advent of sound meant great changes in the world of cinema, and Hollywood, with its greater emphasis on pleasing the public, seized the initiative. The world itself was changing and the political groups which were forming and expanding were interested in more than the aesthetic values or amusement capacities of film.

CHAPTER II

CINEMA OF THE THIRTIES -- WAITING FOR WAR

The French film industry of the early thirties was forced to come to terms with the newest technological advance, sound. While talking films were appreciated by film audiences, many directors and critics were not easily persuaded that the inclusion of sound was an improvement. It was primarily the Russian school, for whom the silent cinema was virtually a complete instrument, who felt that "at the very most sound would be able to play only a subordinate and complementary role: as a counterpoint to the image".⁴² For them, cinema had become an art in its own right, totally distinct from the theatre, its visual qualities overshadowing dialogue, which was such a necessary component in most plays. Techniques developed in films such as Ménilmontant and Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie had made the use of inter-titles unnecessary or minimal. To incorporate sound into film meant a possible return to the days when cinema consisted mainly of the photographing of stage plays, with a re-introduction of verbal content into what had become a primarily visual art form.

V. F. Perkins, in his book Film as Film, claims that:

"The champions of montage and the image have never known what to do about sound. Most resisted it initially; a few - like Arnheim - continue to despise it ...".⁶³ Perkins quotes from Rudolph Arnheim's book, Film as Art, where Arnheim refers to sound as a "radical aesthetic impoverishment", and claims that image and sound were "separate and complete structural forms".⁶⁴ He was unable to reconcile the two, and declares:

The unity which exists in real life between the body and the voice of a person would be valid in a work of art only if there existed between the two components a kinship much more intrinsic than their belonging together biologically.⁶⁵

Theorist Ernest Lindgren, according to Perkins, was more accommodating, agreeing to accept sound, if kept strictly in its place. A quotation from Lindgren's book, The Art of the Film, states his position:

... even with sound, the film remains primarily a visual art, and the major problem of technique with which film-makers should be preoccupied today is that of finding a style which will combine the best elements of the silent film with the particular attributes of sound.⁶⁶

Perkins claims that Bazin "echoed the content of orthodox theory" when he wrote in Qu'est-ce que le Cinéma that:

It is true that the talkie rang the death knell for a particular aesthetic of the cinematographic language, but only for one which carried it furthest away from its realist vocation.⁶⁷

Perkins contends that if we see film as Bazin does, as a method of capturing reality rather than as a visual art, the difficulty is resolved and the film-as-art theorists can be

rebutted:

The movie is seen to absorb natural or biological unities into its formal structure. The silent cinema is thus revealed as an incomplete medium: "reality minus one of its elements" [to quote Bazin]. It becomes easy to answer Arnheim even at his most perverse: "Psychologically, a stop of the dialogue is not perceived as an interruption of the auditory action, the way the disappearance of the image from the screen would interrupt the visual performance." This is very true and for a simple "biological" reason: we are all able to keep quiet, but have not yet learned to make ourselves invisible.⁶⁸

Financial considerations, through the loss of business to Hollywood imports, forced the industry to convert to sound. By mid-decade, the new technology was firmly established.

The early thirties were still a time for criticising the institutions of France without portraying the despair and hopelessness that came later in the decade with the anti-war and film noir movies of Renoir and Carné. Jean Vigo established his reputation with four films, three of which are "frequently referred to as great works of cinema".⁶⁹

The son of an anarchist who died under mysterious circumstances in prison, Vigo retained respect for his father and continued to associate with his father's friends, an indication that he did not repudiate his father's views. Zéro de Conduite (1933) is a story of rebellion against authority in a boy's school in France with an ending that could easily be called anarchic in both form and content. The promising young director died in 1934, at the age of

thirty-one leaving a small but impressive legacy of truly remarkable films. Boarding school, not as common in France as in England, provided Vigo with a setting to examine authority and its uses and abuses. P. E. Salès Gomès, in his book Jean Vigo, claims that Zéro de Conduite is the "fruit d'une double expérience: celle du collège de Millau (ou [Vigo] passa quatre ans) et du lycée Chartres, et celle (à travers son père, l'anarchiste Almereyda, qui y fut incarcéré) de la prison d'enfants de la Petite-Roquette".⁷⁰ Vigo was so affected by the memories aroused during the filming that he is quoted as saying: "Ce film, c'est tellement de ma vie de gosse que je hâte de faire autre chose."⁷¹

Vigo's film title, Zéro de Conduite, refers to the mark given in French schools for comportment, in this case, a zero. Four of the students are constantly running into conflict with the school authorities and as a result, are constantly receiving zero for conduct. They decide that a show of rebellion is necessary. Since the rebels are children, their defiance of authority takes place almost entirely as fantasy.

Vigo's film brings us the world of childhood, with its customs, manners and rituals. The narrative style allows for no introspection, no psychological portraits, no background and no explanations of the events. The camera reveals a world where time and space defy the logic so

necessary for the functioning of an adult. It is a world seen through the eyes of children, where realism and fantasy have not yet been separated. The action is non-stop, the transitions usually made before one scene ends and the next begins, so that the cutting is sudden and obvious. The plot consists of the planning and carrying out of a revolt by four boys against the authorities in their school, so that the need for secrecy is responsible for many of the abrupt scene endings.

The influence of the surrealist movement is evident in the film. Surrealism was the successor of the dadaist movement in the arts, and was founded by André Breton in Paris in 1924. Derived from the French poets, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Apollinaire, and influenced by Freudianism, it dominated the art world in the 1920s and 1930s. As a political movement, it advocates freedom from reason and convention. As a film technique, it is useful in scenes which portray flights of imagination or dream fantasies, and is ideal for children's films.

The separation of the child's world from the adult world is made obvious in the first scene. The film begins in the compartment of a moving train containing a man and a boy. By changing the camera angles and shooting from each of the four sides of the compartment, Vigo effectively separates the man from the boy. The camera technique tells us that they are not acquainted.⁷² The boy, Caussat, is

joined by a second boy, Bruel, and this time Vigo connects them by using the same camera angle from the same direction. The camera technique indicates that the boys know each another. They undertake a series of sight gags, Caussat pretending to pull off his thumb, Bruel demonstrating his skill with a bilboquet, Caussat playing a toy trumpet, Bruel blowing up balloons and pretending that they are breasts, which the two boys lewdly fondle, and Caussat sticking feathers in his hair, pretending to be an Indian. Then they pull out cigars, and start to smoke. Through most of the sequence the man's feet can be seen, but he is not part of the boys' private world. A cut to the man indicates that he is asleep, but, in keeping with their play fantasies, one of the boys dramatically announces that the man is dead.⁷³ When the train jolts to a halt all the items of play vanish, including the cigar smoke, and the man slides to the floor. Their trip ended, the boys exit into the world of adults.

In the next scene, as the boys join other students and teachers on the train platform, it becomes obvious that they are returning to school. Their attempt to continue with the fantasy that the man in their compartment is dead comes to an end when he appears and introduces himself as their new teacher, M. Huguet. The camera introduces us to another teacher, using a low angle to look up at him as though from a small boy's perspective, and Caussat assists with the identification of the prefect, Parrain, whom the boys call

Pête-Sec.

The action moves from the public station platform to the school dormitory. In the daytime it runs by the rules of the school authorities, but at night it becomes part of the boys' fantasy world where everything is still possible. The first night includes a sleep-walking scene where the boys heed the old wives' tale of not waking the walker for fear of killing him.

The following morning Pête-Sec tries to wake the boys but must be helped by the assistant principal, whose appearance causes instant obedience. The boys dress, line up and march off to classes in just a few unrealistically short seconds. The cutting from the unreal to the straightforward continues throughout the film as the students plan their revolt against the school authorities, who are always on the lookout for disorderly conduct.

The behaviour of the authorities consists of spying on the boys, of appearing suddenly to glare about and assess "zéro de conduite" for alleged misdemeanors. Imagination and creativity are subordinated to school authority as the constantly prying disciplinarians seek out and punish any non-conformists. The new teacher, Huguet, is associated more with the boys than with the authoritarians. In his classes the boys act naturally; order is reimposed by the spying activities of Bec-de-Gaz or Pête-Sec. The Principal, seen as a product of the boys' imagination, is portrayed as

a dwarf with a high voice, but he exerts even greater power than his prefect and his vice-principal. The final scene is a masterpiece of surrealist fantasy, with the authorities on the stage interspersed with obvious dummies, and the boys running rampant, carrying the black flag of the Anarchists.⁷⁴

Anarchism has a long history, beginning in ancient Greece, and means "having no government". Anarchists believed in the natural goodness of man, but felt that institutions, particularly government, make men corrupt. The anarchist movement attracted interest in late nineteenth-century Europe, when a group of Russian militants, led by Mikhail Bakunin, tried to influence the first International (1868) into adopting anarchist doctrines. Bakunin ran into conflict with Karl Marx, who had him expelled from the International in 1871. The violent overthrow of governments and other institutions was one of Bakunin's policies. However, with the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1918, the anarchist movement there was suppressed, and it gradually disappeared as a world political movement.

Vigo's father had been an anarchist who was found hanged in prison, reputedly with a pair of bootlaces which had been brought to him by his young son. The young Vigo's personal tragedy turns the inclusion of the Anarchist flag in the film into a powerful political statement. Seen as a

potentially dangerous film, with its violent defiance of authority, Zéro de Conduite was banned by the censors from 1933 until 1945.⁷⁵

Political events in France in the thirties became characterised by increasing instability. According to historian Peter Calvocoressi, the "spectacular collapse of France as a fighting force in 1940 was preceded by the collapse of the Republic itself ... for although the symptoms of political and social disintegration were apparent and discussed, their full import did not become clear until the catastrophe of 1940 tore away the veil of illusion and showed that the Third Republic was no longer there".⁷⁶ Filmmakers of the era like Carné and Renoir portrayed the disintegration, their films sending out their unheeded warnings.

During the decade, political institutions declined and anti-legislative forces increased, encouraged by the elements in society who were still unreconciled to the revolution of 1789 and by the modern brand of fascists who looked with favour on Hitler's seizure of power in Germany.⁷⁷ There was "one significant but abortive attempt to arrest the drift of governmental incapacity",⁷⁸ that of the Popular Front. Of this movement and time, Renoir declared: "Il fut un moment où les Français crurent vraiment qu'ils allaient s'aimer les uns les autres".⁷⁹ Elected in May 1935 with the hope, after the riots of 1934, of

regaining respect for parliament through social and economic reforms, the Popular Front, led by the Socialist, Léon Blum, was a coalition extending from Communists to Radicals. However, their plans for new social reforms had to compete for funds with domestic requests for national rearmament, and with external demands by the Spanish government, also a Popular Front, for help in its civil war (1936-39). Rather than risk a civil war in France, Blum refused to help Spain. Nevertheless, his government was ousted in June 1937, as Calvocoressi states, "by the Senate which did not agree with the Prime Minister's reforms and what they would cost the more prosperous sections of the bourgeoisie".⁸⁰ With the collapse of the Popular Front there followed attempts to establish a second Front, this time with a Radical prime minister and Blum as his deputy, but the Socialists soon left and it became obvious that France had become ungovernable. The opposition gathered in the streets to shout: "Better Hitler than Blum".⁸¹

The new political forces did appreciate the power of the image combined with the power of speech. The new technology was perfect for the purposes of the new ideology, fascism packaged as National Socialism. Hitler and Mussolini quickly exploited a medium which could bring their faces as well as their messages to millions of people. The propaganda values were recognised by Germany in its glorification of the Third Reich. Leni Riefenstahl's

filming of the Nuremberg Rally, Triumph of the Will (1934), and her coverage of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Olympische Spiele 1936, are frightening reminders today of a Germany which was building the myth of Aryan supremacy. Even more terrifying are the films churned out by the Ministry of Propaganda under Joseph Goebbels, the most infamous being the grotesque attacks on the Jewish people who had been chosen by Hitler as the scapegoats for all Germany's ills.

The rise of fascism in France and the role played by French intellectuals are discussed by Alice Yaeger Kaplan in her book, Reproductions of Banality (1986). Kaplan defends writing a book about fascism in France, considering that fascism was never an established political power there, giving two reasons. Her first is sociological, an enquiry as to which groups have shown high levels of interest in fascism, and why it is that France "continues to be haunted by its unresolved, partially acknowledged flirtations with fascism at various junctures in the past". Her second is a theorist's reason, a curiosity about "the important role that France has come to play in theoretical work about fascism in general", and how French fascism differs from the Italian and German varieties.⁸²

Kaplan theorises that the strength of the French bourgeoisie, which did not collapse during the depression of the thirties, played a major role in limiting the attraction of fascism to a relatively small group of malcontents and

opportunists, mainly of the petite-bourgeoisie and the lumpen-proletariat. So while bourgeois interests were opposed to Blum and his Democratic Socialism, neither were they attracted to Hitler and his National Socialism.

In her chapter on film, Kaplan discusses the fascism of the authors of Histoire du Cinéma, Brasillach and Bardèche, and uses two versions of their book, the 1935 edition and the nazified 1943 edition to illustrate their increasing involvement in fascist politics. As well as the revisionism concerning Chaplin, which I mention in my introduction, the 1943 edition interprets Renoir's La Grande Illusion as a pro-war film :

Jean Renoir became a communist, but he fought in the war. When he judges this war, and the fraternity of arms, he calls them 'the grand illusion'. But when he describes it, he describes it just as it was, with an admirable honesty and sang-froid. ...Jean Renoir's war ... is the place of friendship, of youth, and perhaps of regret. Political opinions don't alter this fact in the least. If France has had her war film, she owes it to a man who, before returning to his errors, did not want to transgress the truth of his youth.⁸³

Renoir himself, of course, considers La Grande Illusion to be an anti-war film, possibly an irrelevant point for critical theories which give small weight to authors' opinions. The illusion of the war, the "Grande Illusion" of the title, is the hypothesis that it would be the last war, and the cynical response to this likelihood is contained in the last lines of dialogue between Maréchal and Rosenthal:

Maréchal: "Il faut bien qu'on finisse cette putain de guerre... en espérant que c'est la dernière."

Rosenthal: "Ah, tu te fais des illusions! Allez! revenons à la réalité ..."⁸⁴

The most obvious interpretation is that the two escapees are already aware that "The Great War" would not turn out to be "The War to End All Wars".

Pacifism was just one of the topics dealt with by the left-wing cinema of the thirties, its anti-establishment bias portraying various aspects of the Class Struggle. Renoir's Le Crime de M. Lange (1935) epitomises the Struggle, not only with its subject matter, but also with its means of production and distribution, and through its camera techniques. The film was executed by a team largely composed of members of the leftist cultural Groupe Octobre and was deeply inspired by Popular Front consciousness. Its narrative centred on a workers' co-operative formed to take over a bankrupt publishing company run by the deceitful and slippery capitalist Batala. The techniques that Renoir uses to differentiate his villain from his hero are analysed by Elizabeth Grottle Strebel in her article "Political polarisation and French cinema, 1934-39":

... this readily accessible dialectical narrative is a parallel dialectic of Renoir's cinematic language ... [where] fragmentive editing and use of Hollywood decoupage classique⁸⁵ defines the world of Batala, whereas long takes, a highly mobile camera that tracks and pans, and depth of field photography produces a sense of organic binding that characterises the artist/proletarian alliance sparked by Lange.⁸⁶

Lange is the hero who, through his talent as a writer, creates best-sellers, and through his skills as an

organiser, forms the workers into a successful co-operative, thereby saving the publishing company. His crime is to kill (accidentally) the villain Batala who comes back to reclaim the now flourishing business which he had abandoned. The film portrays the classic Marxist tale of the dishonest capitalist who attempts to reap the rewards gained by the sweat of the workers' brows.

Strebel claims that right-wing cinema and its influence during the pre-war era have been neglected compared to the interest shown in the left-wing cinema of the time. She believes that this neglect was due to "the traditional popularity of left-wing topics" and the fact that "the political parties of the French Right had neither the resources, nor the organisation nor, most importantly, the insight to produce their own films at this time".⁸⁷ The large film companies, Pathé and Gaumont, which had dominated the production market up to their collapse in 1934-35, were no longer bringing out their escapist films which carefully avoided topics of social relevance, and the market became filled by many small production companies.⁸⁸ Some of these carried on the conservative ideology of Pathe and Gaumont, but few of their business records survived.

Strebel considers the weekly cinema trade journals of the era to be better than the rightist press as sources of information concerning the views of the conservative vested interests of the film industry, and quotes widely from them.

Their main concern seems to be the social legislation enacted by the Popular Front government in 1936, the Collective Contract for cinema workers and technicians, which advocated a 40-hour week and salary increases, and which was seen as a first step in nationalising the film industry. Accordingly, the Producers' Association denounced the 40-hour week as "militating against the free flow of artistic creativity ... One would never think of regulating the maximum number of hours that a writer, painter, sculptor or composer could exercise his profession".⁸⁹ It was the first time the film industry had expressed its concern about "artistic integrity" or had used the argument that cinema was an art, rather than a business. Salary increases were opposed on the grounds that cinema prices would have to go up and would drive away customers from an already depressed industry. These fears proved groundless as cinema showed "a marked upturn from its nadir of 1935".⁹⁰

As for concern about nationalisation, Pierre Taittinger, founder of the proto-fascist group "La Jeunesse Patriote" declares that:

Cinema propaganda should never be put in the service of governments ... but in the service of a national ideal. France is collapsing from doubt, indifference and weakness in the face of countries which are resolute, impregnated with a powerful national mystique. It is high time to regenerate her if we don't want her to die and to give her faith in herself. The cinema, better than any other means of propaganda, can help us.⁹¹

Such forthright domestic opinions were echoed in equally

outspoken foreign positions, and both were determined by what Strebél sees as two factors - "deep-seated anti-Bolshevism, and a desire to maximise economic self-interest, which led to a flirtation with fascist Germany and Italy".⁹²

Italy was a prime market for French films. The sanctions imposed by the League of Nations after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 were considered unfair interference, and were denounced by the right-wing journal, L'Action Cinématographique (Apr. 10, 1936):

The censors have just banned a remarkable Italian film: 'The Truth about Italy', and one which shows the renaissance of our Latin sister, impoverished by the war, under the inspiration of its leader Mussolini. In effect, this banning is due to sanctions which have been applied to the cinema since 18 November 1935 and not because of the film's political nature. At the same time, films from the U.S.S.R. are polluting the country ... and we are losing ten million francs in business with Italy! Down with the sanctions!⁹³

Germany, too, was a country favoured for the exchange of films. When Leni Riefenstahl came to Expo '37 in Paris for the screening of her film Triumph of the Will at Germany's cinema pavilion, French film industry officials were delighted to act as hosts. While Riefenstahl was touring Pathé studios, accompanied by an entourage of admirers and officials, the workers on the set burst into a chorus of the "Internationale". Anger and embarrassment among the officials was publicly expressed, in La Critique Cinématographique:

To think that a guest, a foreigner, most especially a woman, be subject to such an affront

from a handful of rowdies, is inexcusable and unworthy of French manners."⁹⁴

However, when French financial interests were at stake, as occurred in early 1937, the reaction was quite different. The German consulate, in this instance, intervened to prevent French films (including La Grande Illusion) from being shown in Yugoslavia, and caused the same La Critique Cinématographique to proclaim its anti-German outrage: "this must not pass without a word or two against this arbitrary intervention of the German authorities from whom we expect more 'fair play'".⁹⁵

French experimental cinema of the thirties continued as the alternative to commercial cinema and showed greater awareness of the gathering political storm. The works of directors Marcel Carné and Jean Renoir display innovative techniques for portraying realism and fantasy in an increasingly politicised world. The two major political concerns of the thirties, the threat of war, and the rise of fascism, became increasingly reflected in the cinema.

Carné is referred to by Leslie Halliwell thus: "Certainly the most brilliant of French directors 1937-45; his career later suffered a semi-eclipse." This somewhat limited assessment is offset by the tribute accorded to him: "For creating, almost single-handedly, the images of French film noir in the thirties [and for] Les Enfants du Paradis (1944)".⁹⁶

Renoir remains a veritable giant of the film world, his

career extending from 1924 until his death in 1979 at the age of eighty-five. Son of the artist, Auguste Renoir, he was encouraged in his career by his family, and even followed by them, for his brother, Pierre Renoir, was an actor, (he plays Louis XVI in La Marseillaise), and his nephew, Claude Renoir, a cinematographer. He also acted in some of his own films, and has a particularly important role as Octave in La Règle du Jeu (1939). He was a prolific and skilful writer, his works full of opinions, fascinating stories, and the background material for his films. His involvement in politics was not a constant nor a consuming interest in his life, but he was a French patriot. He made La Vie est à Nous (1935) for the French communist party, and La Marseillaise (1938), through public subscription, for his country. With those two films, Renoir claims "d'avoir vécu dans l'esprit exaltant du Front Populaire. Il fut un moment où les Français crurent vraiment qu'ils allaient s'aimer les uns les autres. On se sentait porté par une vague de générosité".⁹⁷ He was not convinced that his films were effective in influencing society, however, since he notes that "La Grande Illusion, malgré son succès, n'a pas arrêté la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale".⁹⁸

As the decade progressed the French Left and the French Right were forced to re-examine their traditional positions on pacifism and militarism. With the rise of fascism, the French Left was evolving from a pacifist and pro-German

stance to a more militaristic anti-German position, whereas, with the election of the Popular Front government, the French Right was losing its pro-military attitude and looking with favour on Germany's anti-Bolshevism.⁹⁹

This re-evaluation was reflected by the popularity of Renoir's La Grande Illusion, which broke box office records not just in Paris, but in the provinces, and took all the cinematographic prizes for 1937.¹⁰⁰ The strong pacifist message (despite the interpretation by Bardèche and Brasillach) is carried in each level of society which Renoir represents in the film. The Boeldieu-Rauffenstein relationship demonstrates that the two aristocrats from enemy countries have more in common than with their own nationals. Boeldieu's own men are aware of this and do not include him in their escape plans. Maréchal is capable of filling the role of husband to the widowed German peasant, their mutual needs overcoming their national differences. It is nationalism, however, which eventually destroys the relationships, forcing Rauffenstein to shoot Boeldieu, who has chosen the role of creating a diversion in order to let Maréchal and Rosenthal escape. (His own sense of honour will not allow him to go back on his promise to Rauffenstein that he would not try to escape.) Nationalism also causes Maréchal to leave the German woman, for his first duty is to his country, to fight the war, and to evade his German pursuers.

Apparently, attending the screenings of the film was rather overwhelming, since a number of movie theatres were turned into imitations of the German fortress prison of the film, and were "guarded by larger than life cardboard figures of Prussian soldiers, through which spectators had to pass to enter the theatre".¹⁰¹

Another pacifist film of the same year was Abel Gance's J'Accuse, a remake of his 1918 film of the same title. The story begins in 1918 and continues to an unspecified time in the 1940s. As a new world war appears imminent, the hero calls up the nine million dead from World War I, who rise eerily from their tombs at Douaument. Strebel suggests that the film, with its dramatic baroque effects, was too frightening for the public, since it did not do well at the box-office.¹⁰²

Because La Grande Illusion and J'Accuse are well-known today they give the impression that an overwhelming pacifist viewpoint existed in France at the time. Strebel points out that the opposite was true: "Between 1937 and 1939, there was a whole spate of traditionally conservative militarist films which quantitatively far outnumber the pacifist films, and although they have long been forgotten, did extremely well at the box office when released".¹⁰³

An example of the conservative-militarist genre is Le Double Crime sur la Ligne Maginot (1937), which was made in co-operation with the French Army and contains footage of

the Maginot fortifications. The plot concerns a Captain Bruchot, who, after a brilliant career in World War I, marries a German woman, begins to drink heavily and neglect his duties, and is relegated to a colonial outpost. There, alcoholic and ailing, he is accused of murdering the camp commandant. Suspecting a fellow officer, Bruchot lays a trap and catches the real criminal, who turns out to be a German spy with false papers, and brother to Bruchot's German wife. Bruchot, a sadder but wiser man, renounces his wife, recovers his national pride, and is last seen marching off with his military unit.¹⁰⁴

The anti-German, pro-military genre included a sequence of patriotic spy thrillers, known as the Captain Benoit series. The first film in the series, Deuxième Bureau (1935), portrays Captain Benoit acquiring the plans for a new German airplane. The German counter-espionage agency sends the beautiful Erna Flieder to seduce the Captain and recover the plans. However, the two spies fall in love, and the beautiful Erna, won over to the French cause, helps the Captain to escape, and dies in his place. The successful combination of German agents, stolen plans and beautiful women was continued for several more films, and the formula was repeated by other producers and directors.¹⁰⁵ This policy continued until 1938, when suddenly the "Société des Films Véga" brought out films which showed co-operation between France and Germany against a shadowy enemy easily

interpreted as the Soviet Union. The French Right was realigning itself in the face of the inevitable. In the 1938 sequel, Le Capitaine Bengoit, the intrepid Captain saves the life of an obvious German, Prince Joachim, who, after buying some French hydroplanes for his obviously friendly nation, is set upon by foreign spies who are obviously Russian. The changing attitude is seen in Le Révolté (1938), where an anarchist, whom the Right would ordinarily dismiss as an unredeemable traitor, joins the navy, becomes rehabilitated and is deemed to be "worthy of his new profession and the flag under which he serves".¹⁰⁶ While his rehabilitation is attributed to the "love of a good woman" and not some sudden unexplained burst of patriotism, the interpreted message is that a former enemy of the state can change. Cinema was reflecting the political shift in opinion as to who constituted the enemies of France, both inside and outside the country.

Such films were not intended to rouse the populace to nationalistic fervour, but instead, seemed to reinforce the "Maginot Line" mentality that the French populace was safe, and that no overt action was necessary. Renoir's La Marseillaise (1938) was as stirring as any patriotic film of the Right, with modern France being the intended parallel to the beleaguered France of the Revolution. The film ends with the gallant contingent of volunteers from Marseille marching off to prevent the incursion onto French territory

of foreign (German) armies. The Rightist response, from Rébatet/Vinneuil in Action Française (April 29, 1938), was that the director's subject was treasonable: "Henceforth, in speaking of a political film by M. Jean Renoir if I have to praise 'the artist', I will remember to recall in every line that in a true French state 'the citizen' would be liable to imprisonment in a concentration camp."¹⁰⁷

It was not until the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 that the film industry responded to the crisis, and a large number of anti-German propaganda films appeared, but, as pointed out by Strebel, "by then it was too late".¹⁰⁸

By 1939, the country was almost completely resigned to war. Its inevitability is illustrated in Renoir's brilliant portrayal of an effete and out-dated aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie, whose members continue to play their nineteenth century games with no awareness or concern for the problems of the twentieth century. They are anachronisms whose world is about to explode into World War II, wiping them away. Those who ignore the events of the thirties will be eliminated with the same ruthlessness as the guests at La Colinière.

The characters in La Règle du Jeu (1939) are types as well as individuals. The Marquis, Robert de la Chesnaye, is Jewish, an aristocrat, a married man with the requisite mistress, a dilettante and a collector of mechanical toys. His wife, Christine, is Austrian (her late father was a

music conductor in Vienna), beautiful and bored. Jurieu is the romantic lead, in love with Christine, a man of action and a transgressor of rules. Jackie, Christine's cousin, is a school girl in love with Jurieu. Octave is friend to all, a social parasite who professes love for Christine, but who makes advances to her maid, Lisette. Lisette is married to Robert's gamekeeper, Schumacher, who is jealous and violent. Marceau is a poacher and womaniser who is introduced into the servants' quarters and immediately involves himself with Lisette.

The large number of guests and hangers-on represent various social and political groups. All serious French satires include a military person, in this case, the General, who is of the old school, concentrates on the hunting, and despises the gossip concerning his host and hostess. The capitalist is La Bruyère, an enlightened factory owner who espouses all the latest technological and management advances, while his wife is involved in health and inoculation programs for the workers' families, a contemporary Lady Bountiful.

The pivotal character in the film is Octave, friend of the three major characters, Jurieu, Robert and Christine, and pursuer of the maid, Lisette. He is played by Renoir, who can therefore direct the film from both inside and out. His actions develop the plot and are directly responsible for the tragic ending. He has all the best lines. He

reiterates the film's title while attempting to console Jurieu, who has flown the Atlantic solo only to discover that the woman for whom he acted did not bother to attend his triumphant arrival:

Jurieu: But if I made this flight, if I crossed the Atlantic... it was because of her... only because of her...
 Octave: You forget that she is a woman of the world... and that particular world, it has rules - very stiff ones.¹⁰⁹

He persuades Robert to invite Jurieu to La Colinière in return for ridding Robert of his unwanted mistress:

Robert: You, you! ... If you could get me out of it!
 Octave: It's extremely simple. She's bursting with desire to get married. We're going to marry her off. ... In return you must do me a favour ... I would like you to invite André Jurieu ... I say, old boy, perhaps one could steer Geneviève towards André.¹¹⁰

His pursuit of Lisette arouses Schumacher's jealousy, and causes Robert to remark to him: "You know, you're not an idiot, you're a poet, a dangerous poet".¹¹¹

While bidding farewell to Christine, who is wearing Lisette's coat and hood, he is seen by Schumacher, who goes to get his gun, assuming that Octave is kissing Lisette. Meanwhile, Jurieu appears and Octave tells him that Christine is waiting in the greenhouse to go off with him, lending him his coat:

Octave: Yes, yes, she's waiting for you ... Get going... You mustn't catch cold! ... (Octave takes off his coat and passes it to Jurieu).¹¹²

As the two romantic lovers leave to seek a future together, Schumacher concludes that his wife is running off with Octave, and shoots the disguised Jurieu. Schumacher does

not play by the game rules defined by the Marquis and his guests. His job is to shoot poachers.

It is Robert, and not Octave/Renoir, who directs the final scene:

Robert: Gentlemen, there has been a deplorable accident, that's all ... My keeper Schumacher thought he saw a poacher, and he fired, since that is his duty ... Chance had it that André Jurieu should be the victim.¹¹³

The last words of the film come from the General, after a cynical guest remarks:

Saint-Aubin: A new definition of the word ACCIDENT.
General, sharply: No, no, no, no, no! La Chesnaye does not lack class, and that is a rare thing, these days, my dear Saint-Aubin, believe me, that is a rare thing!¹¹⁴

The film premiered in Paris on July 7, 1939, and was not a success:

Renoir's representation of the current climate of unease in French society was more than the public could take, and they greeted it with howls of derision and disgust. The right wing attacked the film and it was cut to 90, then to 85 minutes, in an effort to mollify public reaction, but in vain. After three weeks [it] was withdrawn, and, finally, in October, banned by the government as "demoralising".¹¹⁵

It was, of course, blacklisted by the Germans during the war for its sympathetic portrayal of Jews, along with La Grande Illusion.¹¹⁶

Renoir does not want his audience to dislike the societal group in the film and has denied criticising them. At the London Film Festival in 1967, which opened with his film, La Marseillaise, Renoir gave a Celebrity Lecture at the Academy Cinema. In his lecture, he took the opportunity to explain and defend his intentions in La Règle du Jeu. He

stated: "People thought that, in writing La Règle du Jeu, I was criticising society, but not at all. I wish I could live in such a society -that would be wonderful".¹¹⁷ He claimed that many authors, himself included, tell the same story over and over again, but with different settings and different characters. He declared that his preoccupation, his re-told story, is with the meeting - how to meet and how to belong. His intention in La Règle du Jeu was to demonstrate what would happen if an outsider were introduced into a specific milieu. The aviator and the poacher are both outsiders, and Renoir considered the greatest problem of the film to be the narrative technique of how to introduce the two into new, and potentially hostile, environments - Jurieu into the world of the haute bourgeoisie and Marceau into that of the servants. Renoir was confident that the film would please the audience, but was forced to concede failure:

Well, I was very wrong. Starting with the first show it was a kind of riot in the theatre. I even saw one gentleman who was trying to light a newspaper to set fire to the theatre and prevent them from showing such a piece of trash. And I came to the conclusion that the film was at least a very controversial one. That hurt me very deeply - I was so surprised. I didn't shoot [La Règle du Jeu] with the idea of being a revolutionary. It was a big surprise and a bad one.¹¹⁸

The director's intention of presenting a non-political film was misinterpreted by the film world. This was hardly surprising, given the political times, and the fact that he had already directed a number of explicitly political films,

including La Vie est à Nous 1935, Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (1935), an adaptation of Gorky's novel, Les Bas Fonds (1936), La Grande Illusion (1937), and La Marseillaise (1938). Christian Zimmer includes La Règle du Jeu in his list of 150 political films, but omits La Grande Illusion, which was "désignée par Goebbels comme 'l'ennemi cinématographique No. 1'".¹¹⁹ The Marxist view, then, is that the former film portrays aspects of the class struggle, or fulfils some Marxist criteria in order to be classed as political, while the latter does not.

Characterised as Bazin's favourite war-time film¹²⁰, Le Jour se lève (1939) has been written about and analysed at great length, including by Bazin himself. Marcel Carné and his adapter/script-writer, Jacques Prévert, collaborated to make many celebrated films.¹²¹ Considered a prime example of film noir, Le Jour se lève fits Halliwell's definition as a "moody, downbeat character melodrama of the late thirties". Bazin analyses it as an example of "poetic realism", and its protagonist as "a hero of the sprawling metropolis, a suburban, working-class Thebes, where the gods take the form of the blind but equally transcendent imperatives of society".¹²² Poetic realism is a variation of social realism.

The social realism portrayed in Carné's film, by simply reproducing reality, had limitations as a Marxist aesthetic. Marxist artists were attempting to turn non-politicised

spectators into aware, class-conscious, political beings, and to that purpose they needed to shock their viewers out of their apathy. This required "rearranging the picture of real life which was placed before them in order to disclose its contradictions ...", according to Russell Campbell, in his book Cinema Strikes Back. He goes on to clarify the differences and similarities between social realism and montage:

Montage was, then, an attempt to broach the limitations, both political and aesthetic, of social realism; but in contrast with the dominant movement of modern art in the capitalist world toward ever greater distortion and abstraction, it held fast to the principle of accurate representation of the 'real' world. Ultimately it was a continuation, rather than the abandonment, of a tradition. Montage was social realism's compromise with the twentieth century ... Pursued rigorously, montage had proved it could give shape to the construction of bold and stunning works of political art. Yet because it was a compromise it was unstable. There was always the possibility of older elements in the social realist tradition re-emerging to undermine the new.¹²³

Social realism was inherited from the writers and artists of the nineteenth century, among them Zola and Courbet, who were among the first to portray the lives of ordinary people. Politically, social realism is associated with Liberal-Democrats and Socialists, who were more likely to be interested in the problems of the working class.¹²⁴ It is not to be confused with socialist realism, the film style advocated by Stalin, which can be summed up as portraying the glory of working towards the Soviet goals of international socialism. The plot for a socialist-realist

love story was often described by the old political joke of girl-loves-boy, boy-loves-tractor, since the Stalinist films pushed the message that socialist goals are more important than the desires of the individual.

Historically, social realism became fashionable when the bourgeoisie, having first deposed the kings and princes from the stage, and replaced the classical tragedies with their own bourgeois concerns, considered the working class as worthy to be on the stage as well as in the audience. The social class portrayed in social realism is the working class, but, because their problems are conceived in the light of bourgeois concerns, and presented through the auspices of capitalist production and distribution methods, Marxists do not consider them to be realistic portrayals of the proletariat. "Kitchen sink" realism, in other words, is not a precursor of the anticipated Marxist Revolution, but another attempt to delay it.

Le Jour se lève's plot is a tragic love story where boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy avenges loss of girl. The originality is in the camera work and the handling of the flashback sequences. The camera portrays a process of alienation which becomes so complete that François continues to live only through his memories. When they are ended, he dies.

The opening shot, seen before the credits, outlines the action. The audience reads the message, white letters on a

black screen: "A murder has been committed ...As he sits alone, shut inside a small room, a man tries to reconstruct the events that led to his becoming a murderer ...". This printed information, displayed in complete silence, was added after the film had been released, since the main action of the film occurs as a series of flashbacks, and it was considered necessary to ensure that the audience was aware of the breaks in time continuity. To aid in the delineation between current reality and earlier events, a musical theme is introduced as the opening credits roll. This specific background music is the audio device used to alert the audience to the beginning of each flashback.

The second and third shots are street scenes, orienting the audience as to the time (late afternoon, late winter, little traffic), place (focus on a tall, narrow, apartment building in an urban working class area, cobbled streets, horses and carts, tram-lines), and atmosphere (normal and calm with people bicycling or walking by).

The fourth shot localises the action. It is a steep, high-angled shot up the apartment stairwell. The camera follows a blind man who is slowly climbing the stairs while holding the bannister and using his white cane, and then moves ahead, rising up the stairs to the top floor where it focusses on a door. The normality of the setting is about to be shattered.

From inside comes a muffled noise followed by a

gunshot. Two men's voices are heard. Voice one: "See where it's got you now?" Voice two: "And you?" A wounded man emerges from the apartment, tumbles down the stairs, and land at the feet of the bewildered blind man, who calls for help. Blindness is one of the themes in the film.

The camera moves outdoors once again, to show a man leading two policemen towards the apartment building, where a small crowd has gathered. Rumours abound as everyone gapes towards the door, where Carné has now placed the camera, giving a revealing close-up of curious faces.

The camera moves back inside where the blind man continues to mutter confusedly, while the two policemen question the concierge and his wife, both unhelpful in identifying the dead man. The body has been stretched out on some newspapers on a bed in the concierge's room. The policemen hesitatingly decide to investigate further and slowly work their way up the staircase with an increasing crowd of spectators, including the tenants, eagerly following their progress. The camera moves to the top of the stairwell, to look down on the watchers and the policemen.

Their knock and demands are responded to by the second of the two men's voices heard earlier. He calls from inside the apartment to be left alone. A series of verbal exchanges ends with the man firing three times out through the door, sending the policemen and the tenants dashing for

cover.

The camera moves into the apartment and focusses on the man's back as he stands facing the door, motionless and tense, gun in hand.

It moves back out onto the landing, where an old man in the apartment next door puts his head out to investigate the noise. He looks down the stairwell and then at his neighbour's door, which opens. The man with the gun comes out (we finally see his face), and, believing himself to be alone, looks down the stairwell, as the old man asks, with some anxiety: "What's the matter, François?". The man with the gun has now been identified by name.

The following series of shots further increase our knowledge of François. He returns to his room without showing any aggression, or indeed, even acknowledging his neighbour, who withdraws. He locks his door, and moves around his room, which has a sloping attic roof, a window, a large wardrobe, a bed and night table, a larger table, and a mantelpiece with a mirror above it. He puts down his gun, and, with the camera tracking behind him, looks at himself in the mirror, picks up and examines a brooch on the mantelpiece, grins at a one-eared teddy bear sitting there while at the same time hiding one of his own ears, picks up and opens a package, removing a tie, which he admires and hangs in the wardrobe, paces about, and then comes to rest against the wardrobe.

The camera then shows the police activity, with increasing numbers of policemen and spectators and the accompanying noise of horns, bells and sirens. We learn through the interrogation by a police sergeant that the concierge's wife and the old man, Monsieur Gerbois, consider François to be the nicest man in the neighbourhood. The police sergeant is not impressed, however. Confusion is still evident while the police clear the stairs. As the tenants are sorted out, the camera alternates between the interior shots of François, smoking and pacing in his room, the exterior shots of the milling crowd in the square below the building and the moving in of police snipers on the roof opposite François' window. It is now dark, and François unthinkingly turns on his light. A flurry of police bullets breaks the window, shatters the mirror, knocks the teddy bear off the mantelpiece, and finally, smashes the light bulb, returning the room to darkness.

François, who has been immobile during the firing, makes his way to the window, where the camera alternates between close-ups of François' face as seen from outside the window, and long-shots of the crowd as seen from François' point of view. Alienated and isolated, staring down at the crowd, François withdraws into his world of memories.

The camera moves in for a big close-up of François as he whispers: "And yet it seems like only yesterday ... do

you remember...".¹²⁵ There is a long, slow dissolve, with a change in the music, the double signals that the flashback is beginning.

The actual breaks in time between the present and the past are done in slow dissolves, rather than ordinary wipes. Bazin claims that the latter technique is used "in particular in newsreels", while the long dissolves he likens to the physiological state of dreaming: "The eye stares, the pupil dilates, the image of objects on the retina is blurred. The lack of voluntary attention prevents the lens from focussing".¹²⁶ The transition marks the difference between the present reality of a man who becomes a murderer, and who, as he waits for the dawn with its inevitable police attack, re-enters a former reality of his life.

There are three breaks in the continuity, three flashbacks to François' earlier life. In the first flashback, we encounter Françoise, the girl of flowers and light who captures François' heart, and are introduced to the villain, Valentin, tormentor and trainer of performing dogs. We also meet Clara, woman of the world, who sees an opportunity to escape from her life with Valentin by becoming involved with François. There is a power struggle between the two men over the two women. Although they both prefer the unworldly Françoise, François moves in with Clara, as he waits for Françoise's infatuation with Valentin to end. Valentin's bragging about his success with

Françoise causes the stolid François to resort to murder.

Le Jour se lève was released the same year as Renoir's La Règle du Jeu, in 1939. Both considered masterpieces, they are studies in contrasts. Carné's factory worker, François, kills to avenge the honour of the woman he has loved and lost, is trapped by the police, and, after recalling the events leading up to his act of revenge, commits suicide. Renoir's playboy, Jurieu, flies solo across the Atlantic to win the love of a woman, eventually succeeds, but, just before leaving to enjoy his new-found happiness, is killed through mistaken identity. Each man is portrayed as an idealistic victim, who, having broken the rules of his society, must now pay with his life. Romantic tragedies, the films carry strong messages of social discord.

Social groups were often criticised in French cinema, with the bourgeoisie, in particular, open to attack. They make up the entire cast of characters in Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie, are represented by the dissolute and amoral Valentin in Le Jour se lève, and appear as the jailors and disciplinarians of the young school boys in Zéro de Conduite.

Renoir's pre-war films were considered critical of the aristocracy. His portrayal of the leisure activities of the guests at La Colinière in La Règle du Jeu was seen as an attack on their useless and frenetic lives. His details of

the alimentary pursuits of an already overfed Louis XVI in Marseillaise (1938) gave the impression that he was criticising an uncaring and greedy monarch. His characterisations of Boeldieu and Rauffenstein in La Grande Illusion (1937) were interpreted as condemnations of a vanishing world where class relationships were more binding than ties of nationalism. Boeldieu's universalism presented a danger to his men in their plans to escape. Boeldieu's death was considered an admission that the new Europe would have no place in it for his outmoded ideals.

Renoir's technique for dealing with intolerable subjects such as war was to distance his audiences from the immediate problem by making thinly-veiled parallels with past events. Another distancing technique occurs in André Malraux's Espoir (1939), based on his novel on the Spanish Civil War. The film deals with the same issues which plagued France, but they were remote enough so that they could be looked at objectively. There was, however, only time for one viewing of Espoir before the declaration of war, and Sadoul dismisses its influence as minor: "Les épisodes, où ses héros soliloquent sur la 'condition humaine', sonnent faux et sont médiocrement interprétés. Cet essai cinématographique d'un écrivain devait rester sans lendemain et eut peu d'influence".¹²⁷ Sadoul was mainly criticising the documentary format which has none of the stirring drama of Renoir's realistically portrayed fictions.

Renoir, in his book Ma Vie et Mes Films, presents his ideas on the uses of reality in cinema, in the first instance contrasting external authenticity with acting talent. Using the example of a nameless actor required to play the role of a fisherman, and Charlie Chaplin in the role of a sailor, he concludes that no matter how carefully the actor has prepared himself for the role, by wearing a fisherman's clothing, living with real fishermen, acquiring the proper appearance and speech, even if all the exterior touches are present: "notre acteur, s'il manque de génie, aura l'air d'un cabotin"; whereas, when watching Chaplin with his baggy pants and derby hat, "au bout de quelques minutes sur l'écran, nous admettrions la fantaisie du costume et serions convaincus d'avoir un vrai matelot devant les yeux".¹²⁸

As for his own use of realism and fantasy, he continues by defining his view of cinema as an inseparable combination of the two:

Cette question de la vérité extérieure ou intérieure, c'est toute l'histoire du spectacle... Au début de ma vie cinématographique, je n'étais intéressé que par l'artificiel. Puis,... j'ai eu ma période de réalisme absolu. Maintenant je crois qu'il est impossible de séparer le réalisme de la transposition, autant sur la scène que sur l'écran.¹²⁹

Although this is his general belief about the portrayal of reality, the specific reference is to his difficulties with Nana (1926), where, in spite of the fact that the costumes were deliberately understated as compared to the

historically correct fashions of the era, they caused a scandal: "les robes de Nana effrayèrent le public presque autant que la personnalité de l'actrice [Catherine Hessling]".¹³⁰ Renoir concludes that the public sometimes finds reality unacceptable, and is much happier with a modified version.

In La Grande Illusion, Renoir claims that he was "encore très occupé de réalisme", again primarily with the costuming. He insisted on authenticity to the extent of giving his own World War I pilot's tunic, which he had saved after his demobilisation, to Gabin to wear in the film. He allowed himself greater liberties in Stroheim's German uniform, because he was concerned with balance. He explains:

Je n'hésitai pas à renforcer certains points d'une manière fantaisiste afin d'en augmenter l'effet, par exemple, l'uniforme de Stroheim. Son rôle, insignifiant au départ, avait été décuplé à son usage car je craignais que, vis-à-vis de la masse que lui opposaient Gabin et Fresnay, son personnage ne manquât de poids. En art comme dans la vie tout est une question d'équilibre... C'est pourquoi je pris à l'égard de l'uniforme de Stroheim des libertés peu compatibles avec mes théories réalistes du moment. Sa tenue est authentique, mais d'une richesse flamboyante inconnue chez un commandant de camp de prisonniers pendant la grande guerre. J'avais besoin de cette richesse théâtrale pour contrebalancer la grandeur de la simplicité des Français. La Grande Illusion, malgré ses apparences rigoureusement réalistes, offre des exemples de stylisation qui nous ramènent vers la fantaisie. Ces ouvertures vers l'illusion, je les dois en grande partie à Stroheim. Je lui en suis profondément reconnaissant. Je suis incapable de réussir un bon spectacle si je ne le laisse plus ou moins envahir par la féerie.¹³¹

While Renoir credits Stroheim for providing the film's

illusionary aspects, he acknowledges a debt of reality to Gabin, whom he credits with acquiring the funding for the proposed film:

L'histoire de mes démarches pour trouver la finance de la Grande Illusion pourrait faire le sujet d'un film. J'en ai tréballé le manuscrit pendant trois ans, visitant les bureaux de tous les producteurs français ou étrangers, conventionnels ou d'avant-garde. Sans l'intervention de Jean Gabin, aucun d'eux ne se serait risqué dans l'aventure. Il m'accompagna dans quantités de démarches. Il se trouva finalement un financier qui, impressionné par la confiance solide de Jean Gabin, accepta de produire le film.¹³²

The plot of the film is roughly based on Renoir's own war experiences and those he heard from General Pinsard. As Adjutant Pinsard in 1915, the General had saved Renoir's life by intercepting a German airplane in hot pursuit of Renoir who was on a mission in his hopelessly out-maneuvred observer plane. Some eighteen years later they met while Renoir was making his film Toni (1934) and dined together on a frequent basis. It was during those dinners that the General set the foundations for La Grande Illusion. Renoir recounts:

Il avait été abattu sept fois par les Allemands. Les sept fois, il s'était arrangé pour atterrir sain et sauf. Les sept fois, il avait réussi à s'évader. L'histoire de ses évasions me sembla un bon tremplin pour un film d'aventures. Je pris note des détails qui me semblaient les plus typiques et rangeai ces feuillets dans mes cartons, avec l'intention d'en faire un film.¹³³

Renoir relates a story containing a coincidence worthy of the aphorism "truth is stranger than fiction". It concerns Carl Koch, the friend that he had hired to

authenticate the German aspects of La Grande Illusion. Koch had been an artillery captain in the German army during World War 1, and in 1916, had commanded an anti-aircraft battery on a section of the war front near Rheims. He was explaining to Renoir that he had not had a particularly bad war, except for "les attaques incessantes des avions de l'escadrille française d'en face". Renoir had served as a pilot in a reconnaissance squadron that had been based in the same area at the same time. He recalled that his squadron had been "le point de mire d'une batterie allemande qui lui causait bien des ennuis". Although they had been on opposite sides, they concluded that: "Nous avons donc fait la guerre ensemble. Ce sont des choses qui rapprochent".¹³⁴

With this anecdote, Renoir creates a scenario of what potentially could have been a post-war reunion between his characters Boeldieu and Rauffenstein. As Renoir acknowledges about Koch: "Nous avons combattu dans deux camps opposés, mais ça, c'est un détail. En y réfléchissant, c'est mieux que cela. C'est une preuve de plus à l'actif de ma théorie de la division du monde en frontières horizontales et non plus en chambres fermées par des frontières verticales".¹³⁵ Plainly, Renoir's sympathies in his film are with the representatives of the old order, Boeldieu and Rauffenstein, and not with the new forces in society, represented by Maréchal and Rosenthal. He thus reveals his own universalist, rather than nationalistic,

view of the world.

The term "universalist" as used by the Nazis in their jargon, was a euphemism for Jewish. However, in the case of Renoir, internationally acknowledged director, it meant that he refused to stay on in France after the invasion and the German Occupation. He went to America, where he continued his career, making films such as Swamp Water (1944) and The Southerner (1945) for North American audiences.¹³⁶ Other prominent directors who left France were Duvivier, Clair, Feyder, and Ophuls, along with other film notables such as Jean Gabin, Michèle Morgan, Jean-Pierre Aumont, and Marcel Dalio.

A brief overview of wartime and post-war cinema reveals some interesting anomalies.

Many French directors did not leave, but stayed on to cope with the new state of affairs. Carné continued his career with Les Visiteurs du soir (1942) and the highly acclaimed Les Enfants du Paradis (1944). Abel Gance and Marcel Pagnol, too, remained and continued to work. While to some extent there were greater restrictions on directors in the way of materials and topics, there was also a noticeable decrease in competition. Foreign films were excluded and French filmmakers who were Jewish or leftist

had departed, some to prison camps, others abroad. Some Jews in the film industry worked under false names, but only in minor capacities such as costuming or music.¹³⁷

Truffaut reports that during the war there was a significant increase in new young directors who would never have reached their positions under the old system, which in no way reflects badly on the directors, but on the closed system: "... one suddenly saw some twenty-five new filmmakers promoted to the rank of directors ... new directors whom nobody ever thought of labelling the 'new wave' even if that was what it was."¹³⁸ Truffaut lists the new directors, some of whom are H.-G. Clouzot, Jean Grémillon, Jacques Becker, and Robert Bresson.

At first, Truffaut claims, the cinemas were a refuge, both physical and psychological, for people during the Occupation. However, once the authorities began checking identity cards at the exits in order to gain new recruits for "French Workers in Germany", this ceased to be the case.¹³⁹ French cinema did stay active, nonetheless, since homes were unheated, dance halls were closed, and everything was subject to the "blackout", which, as Truffaut points out, did not deter Allied bombing.¹⁴⁰ Another of Truffaut's memories concerns seeing films where names in the credits had been blacked-out, names of Jews in the film industry erased by the new regime.

The War and the Occupation effectively isolated France,

protecting her cinema against foreign competition and providing captive audiences, which apparently ushered in a new era of prosperity for the film industry, and prompted Bazin to observe in L'Echo des Etudiants in 1943 that: "I am, perhaps, going to scandalize some readers by saying that of all French artistic activities since the war, the cinema is the only one making progress."¹⁴¹

Liberation brought its share of problems to the French film industry. Truffaut noted that the situation of an interesting and ambitious French cinema that had renewed itself by opening up to young and new talents was being made very difficult by the Blum-Byrne agreements within the framework of the Marshall Plan, which allowed for the importation of a great number of American films.¹⁴²

While the agreement was entered into by the French government in order to provide France with recovery aid on a scale at least equal to the amount that the Marshall Plan provided to the defeated Axis powers of the war, the film industry felt betrayed. Aid for the devastated and starving populace of the country came in a package deal which would destroy their monopoly on cinema in France. The "Committee for the Defense of French Cinema" held protests to limit the number of American films allowed into France, while the film industry unions began to insist on strict adherence to rules concerning directors and film crew numbers.¹⁴³ As well, the newly established war-time directors were determined to

limit opportunities for any new post-war directors - twenty-five had made their debut between 1940-44, whereas only seven new names were added between 1945 and 1959.¹⁴⁴

The major event of the era from 1945-59 was the advent, under the auspices of André Bazin, of what Truffaut considered to be a better informed and more responsible criticism: "We believe that criticism is indispensable to the development and future of the cinema ... One would think that like the intangible shadows on the screen, this unusual art has no past, leaves no traces, has no depth. It is more than time to invent a criticism in relief."¹⁴⁵

Post-war France applied its own harsh criticism to the film critic and historian Brasillach, who was executed in 1945 as a collaborator. Bardèche continued to write his film criticism, characterised by Kaplan as "passionate anti-Nuremberg invective", concerning the Allied documentation of the liberation of the concentration camps: "They photographed them, they filmed them, they published them, they made them known by a gargantuan publicity campaign, like for some new brand of pen. ... our most sincere compliments to the technicians, mostly Jewish, who orchestrated this program...".¹⁴⁶ The basis of his criticism falls into the realism - fantasy controversy, realism portraying truth, and fantasy implying trickery. For Bardèche, the spontaneity portrayed by Riefenstahl of the Nuremberg rallies made them true, while the amassed

evidence of the Holocaust presented at the Nuremberg trials was staged and therefore suspect. The preservation of the camps as memorial museums he found even more duplicitous, referring to them as "reconstituted torture chambers in places where they never existed ... like for a film set."¹⁴⁷ Politics defined realism in film; film no longer could be trusted to portray the truth.

In keeping with the air of unreality which seems to characterise a nation's cinema after military defeat, noted in Germany's film output after World War I, French cinema continued to turn out escapist films. Cocteau's La Belle et la Bête (1946), with René Clément as technical advisor, was a prime example. Clément, the director responsible for La Bataille du rail (1945), the Communist-backed documentary of sabotage by French railroad workers against the Germans, was helping with the filming of a surrealist fairy tale.

An interesting phenomenon was the reassessment of pre-war films which had been unfavourably received at their first release, films such as La Règle du Jeu and Espoir. The political climate had become temperate enough to allow for more objective appraisals of formerly explosive themes.

Generally, French cinema seemed to avoid political controversies and involvements through the fifties until the "Nouvelle Vague" of 1959 brought it world wide acclaim, and opened a new era of intense film activity.

CHAPTER III
THE NEW WAVE

Credit for the expression "The New Wave" is given to Françoise Giroud who used it in L'Express in 1958 to refer to the new and youthful movement that was making itself known in French cinema. The phrase quickly entered into general usage. It became a versatile catch phrase which, according to James Monaco, was applied "not only to film, but to any cultural phenomenon that was seen to be new or rebellious" and it soon "degenerated into a synonym for 'Avant Garde'".¹⁴⁸

Monaco claims that the group's common characteristic is their basic attitude towards film - they considered it a way to understand the world and its politics, its psychology, its structure and its language. The New Wave became, as Monaco states, "an integral part of the intellectual structure of French life of the 1960s and 1970s".¹⁴⁹

In an interview with Cahiers du Cinéma in 1962, Truffaut declared that encountering the cultural politics behind the production of films was an eye-opening experience for him and his colleagues. Producers in France, it seems, had no interest in keeping down film costs, since they were paid a percentage of the eventual total production costs of a film.

Therefore, the offer by the New Wave directors to make four films for the price of one, with the increased odds of at least one of them being a success, was not an incentive for French producers of that time. Whether or not a film did well at the box-office was of secondary importance.¹⁵⁰ The New Wave, then, was immediately thrust into combat with the established power structures of the film industry.

That production methods needed changing was obvious to the New Wave directors. Their solution was to combine the positions of director and producer so that there would be no conflict of interest. The combined role fitted the ideals of *la politique des auteurs*.

These ideals assume, according to Bazin, that "the *auteur* is a subject to himself; whatever the scenario, he always tells the same story, or, ... has the same attitudes and passes the same moral judgements on the action and on the characters".¹⁵¹

Many of the New Wave directors, notably François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, began their film careers as contributors to the prestigious journal of film criticism and theory, Cahiers du Cinéma. The journal subscribed almost exclusively to the critical ideals associated with *la politique des auteurs* as early as 1955, and this viewpoint was reflected in its reviews. Jacques Rivette's definition of an *auteur* is someone who speaks in

the first person,¹⁵² which makes criticism by its advocates very subjective, and filmmaking very personal, and often autobiographical. The custom resulted in the practice of identifying and referring to a film by prefacing it with the name of its director, rather than the name of its star, studio, producer or genre.

Although he concedes that *la politique des auteurs* is valuable in defending the creativity of artists in the particularly vulnerable world of cinema, Bazin takes issue with several of its assumptions. One is the use of a single critical method of examining films to the exclusion of others. Bazin also feels that by praising the *auteur*, the films become of secondary importance. As well, he claims that it denies, as has occasionally happened, the possibility of a genius making a bad film or of a mediocre director making a superb one. Nonetheless, *la politique des auteurs* was used almost exclusively as the form of criticism in Cahiers and was applied by the critics-turned-directors to their own film careers.

The New Wave contingent from Cahiers du Cinéma made their first feature films in 1958-59.¹⁵³ Their almost overnight switch from being critics to becoming the targets of criticism caused further changes in their attitudes. Art-for-art's-sake now had to be tempered with financial considerations involving shooting schedules, budgeting, meeting payrolls, distributing films, and all the risks and

concerns involved in new capital ventures. Money, not art, appeared to be the primary consideration of cultural politics in the film industry.

International politics were of concern to the new directors who had grown up during World War II and had emerged only to face the new menace of global nuclear war. The Peace Movement with its "ban-the-Bomb" message attracted a significant following in the 1960s, and is one of the themes in Resnais' Hiroshima Mon Amour.

The post-war era witnessed an increase in the demand by colonial states for self-determination. The money and effort required to fight colonial wars could no longer be easily found nor justified in an already depleted European economy. The British Empire divested itself of an increasingly troublesome India in 1948. France escaped from its involvement in Indochina in 1954, after the catastrophe at Dien Bien Phu, where its modern forces were surrounded and defeated by the peasant guerrillas of Ho Chi Minh. It bequeathed to the Americans, who were already involved in paying 80 percent of the war costs at that time, the nightmare of Viet Nam.

Through the medium of television, the world watched as America tore itself apart in the 1960s, alienating its youth, destroying a president, and leaving its own nation with deep and permanent divisions. The damage inflicted on the people and country of Viet Nam remains one of the world's horrors.

America, after signing peace treaties with the leaders of the same peasant army which had driven out superior French forces almost twenty years earlier, eventually escaped from the conflict, withdrawing her troops in January 1973, and abandoning her Vietnamese allies. Many years went by before the Viet Nam War was specifically dealt with in American films, although Robert Altman's M*A*S*H (1970), thinly disguised as a Korean War film, was a contemporary denunciation of the madness that was taking place in the Far East.

With Dien Bien Phu, France did not end her involvement in colonial wars. Algerian demands for independence led to major conflict with the French colonists. The Algerian military and civilian revolt in 1958 caused such a crisis in France that it brought about change in the government and the political system. The country gave Charles De Gaulle, considered the only man powerful enough to resolve the crisis, extraordinary powers. He was made premier, with power to rule by decree for six months. During that time, a new constitution, which strengthened the presidency, was drawn up.

In January 1959, De Gaulle was inaugurated as the President of the new Fifth Republic. He immediately announced his decision to allow Algerian self-determination. The next few years saw the rise of the O.A.S., the terrorist organisation backed by the colonists. Reports of atrocities,

where excesses on one side were followed by reprisals from the other, began to filter out of Algeria. The resulting polarisation brought France to the brink of civil war. Finally, in 1962, agreement was reached for Algerian independence, and with the handing over of power, the O.A.S. collapsed.

Unlike the American involvement in Viet Nam, the Algerian war received little international public exposure. The comprehensive and open television coverage provided by the competing American television networks was not available in Algeria. The newspaper reports did not have the same impact as the eye-witness techniques of film, nor the instantaneity of television. Godard's film, Le Petit Soldat (1960), was concerned with the Algerian War, but was banned by the government until 1963, the year after the war ended. James Monaco, in his book The New Wave, suggests that this was ironical, and perhaps fortunate for Godard, given his later political leanings.¹⁵⁴ Godard's hero, Bruno Forestier, is a assassin for an anti-FLN organization. The FLN, le Front de Libération Nationale, would be the side that the Leftists, and certainly the Marxists, would favour, yet the central sequence of the film consists of Bruno being tortured by the FLN. Godard is even-handed in his casting, since he balances Bruno by having him fall in love, as best he can, with a woman who works for a Leftist organisation. As Monaco claims: "She seems only slightly more idealistically

motivated than Forestier, who is a political assassin mainly because he enjoys the role of 'secret agent'. The materials of the film may be superficially political, but the tone of it is still existential ...".¹⁵⁵ Godard is quoted as saying that Le Petit Soldat "is not politically oriented in a particular way", which seems fairly obvious, and continues: "The way I approached it was to say to myself: people complain that the Nouvelle Vague only shows people in bed, I'm going to show some who are in politics and don't have time to go to bed with each other".¹⁵⁶ This acknowledgement is an indicator for Monaco that the impetus for making the film was reactive rather than active. He also finds it "rather disturbing" that Godard, at the age of thirty, had no particular viewpoint about the Algerian situation.¹⁵⁷

Resnais' Muriel (1962) did provide a viewpoint on the Algerian War, but lacked the impact of Hiroshima Mon Amour. The first film to deal comprehensively with the eight-year-long (1954-1962) Algerian War of Independence was not French, but a joint Italian-Algerian production, The Battle of Algiers (1965), a pseudo-documentary directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. The award-winning film portrays the ordeals suffered by both sides in the Algerian struggle for self-determination. Its realistic style includes no actual war footage, but the use of black-and-white film effectively imitates war documentaries. It is a successor of Méliès' *actualités reconstituées*, where the events are reconstructed.

With or without disclaimers, they give the impression to the viewer of witnessing the original incidents. The apparently balanced presentation in Pontecorvo's film possesses the necessary drama for it to be an effective piece of anti-colonial propaganda, even though the war had been brought to a conclusion three years earlier. The power of the film rests in its believable portrayals of the opposing forces, and the perceived need for the audiences to choose a side. Who could choose the arrogant, swaggering French paratroopers over the legitimate occupants of the country? Andrew Sarris underlines the power that the film exerted during a screening at the Lincoln Centre, for a "black-tie, stuffed-shirt audience". He describes them as cheering the demolition of "a café-full of unbilled French men, women, and children by a revolutionary bomb squad".¹⁵⁸ He condemns Pontecorvo for his message that the end justifies the means, that the bombing be indiscriminate, since the revolution must be ruthless. He claims that "The Battle of Algiers reeked of Realpolitik as it went about convincing its chosen audience of the revolutionary doctrine (endorsed by Lenin) that the good guys were always entitled to blow up the bad guys".¹⁵⁹

Political violence became an increasing problem in France. The antagonism to what many groups saw as one-man rule could not be channelled into the traditional forms of political opposition. The exceptional powers granted to De Gaulle to deal with the Algerian war allowed him to decide

many other controversial problems without considering his opponents. His decisions in turn placated or infuriated vested political interests. After insisting on parity with the United States in NATO, he withdrew French troops from the organisation in 1966, and demanded the removal of all NATO bases from French soil by 1967. He supported the European Common Market, but objected to the entry of his wartime ally and host, Great Britain, while at the same time seeking and promoting closer ties with his wartime enemy, West Germany. He continued to support France's nuclear arms program, including the testing of bombs in the Pacific. In opposition to American attempts to isolate China, he established diplomatic relations with the Chinese Communist government in 1964. Most of the above positions, especially the anti-American measures, met with some degree of support from the French Left. However, the patriarchal attitude and power that De Gaulle's presidency wielded was cause for increasing resentment.

The decade of the sixties was one of student protest and unrest. Being an idealistic group, student activists were against war, nuclear weapons, racial discrimination, and capitalism's unabashed pursuit of money and personal advancement. They were for "banning-the-Bomb", ending the war in Viet Nam, free love, minority rights, communal living, and a variety of leftist-inspired ideas. Student marches against government policies occurred in America, in Germany,

and finally, in France. In May, 1968, student demonstrations, objecting to the political and educational systems, brought about such vicious government reprisals that the workers and the farmers joined with the students and staged giant sympathy strikes. The artistic and intellectual communities were equally outraged, and their members took to the barricades. The government's first response to the united reaction was to go into seclusion. De Gaulle disappeared for several days while rumours abounded as to his whereabouts. When he returned, he dissolved the National Assembly, and called elections for the next month. In June, the Gaullists were voted back with a huge victory, and the strikes ended.

The intellectual community was not so easily mollified by the democratic display of support for De Gaulle. According to Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, in their book Film Theory: An Introduction, recent thinking about cinema was formed after *les événements* of May 1968.¹⁴⁰ The two-pronged argument of the incensed Marxists of the time was that: (1) film must be thought of in political terms, and (2) theory was indispensable to the political task. They followed with the declaration that "critics and filmmakers, as indeed all other artists and intellectuals", must submit their practices to the "political challenge of whether they furthered or obstructed progressive social change". One questionable notion of this pronouncement is the equating of

the critic with the artist. That theorists could make a claim on creativity equal to that of the artist, whether painter or composer, novelist or filmmaker, has become a major controversy of the modern art world. The most presumptuous aspect of the statement, however, is that a single political group could take over the role of defining what constitutes art. Stalin's socialist realism is one obvious result of such a policy. The other recent example of a mono-cultural ideology was imposed upon the French during the Nazi Occupation, but was now forgotten, or dismissed as irrelevant. That the country was no longer at war did not deter the Marxists of the art world. They were not at peace.

A group calling itself *les Etats généraux du cinéma* was established in Paris in 1968, made up of filmmakers, technicians and critics.¹⁴¹ The name, *Etats généraux*, derives from the historical assembly consisting of representatives of the three estates, the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. Originally considered the King's council, it was called or dismissed at his pleasure and according to his needs. With each estate having only one vote, it was easily out-manoeuvred by most kings since its inception in 1302. Its significance to the May '68 group is that it had successfully defied Louis XVI, acquired voting rights for individual deputies, formed the first *Assemblée nationale*, and, accordingly, is credited with starting the Revolution in 1789.

Les Etats généraux du cinéma provided an institutional platform for two questions which dominated the Marxist theorists of the film world. The first question asked how mainstream cinema contributes to maintaining the existing social structure. The second question was concerned with the appropriate form that an oppositional cinema should take in order to break the ideological hold of the mainstream and transform film from a commodity into an instrument of social change.¹⁶² These became of major concern to Godard, who dropped out of filmmaking for a time to ponder his new cinematic approach.

The political stage for the cinema of the 1960s was set for the filmmakers. The exposing of social and economic problems in the world has long been a practice of the art community. The New Wave used film for portraying the 1960s concerns of alienation, family break-down, patriarchal institutions, and aspects of the event which had so recently dominated Europe, World War II.

While the very sensitive topic of collaboration with the Nazis is held up to scrutiny in Marcel Ophuls' Le Chagrin et la Pitié (1969), the same issue is dealt with in Alain Resnais' Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959), but with a different emphasis and intention. Ophuls' four and one-half hour documentary uses interviews as its main narrative device. It focusses on the city of Clermont-Ferrand, both during the time it was under Vichy rule (1940-1942), and under the

German occupation (1942-44), and again twenty-five years later. The interviewees include the prominent political figures Pierre Mendès France, Albert Speer, and Sir Anthony Eden, as well as communist peasants who hid refugees from the Gestapo for the underground, and unapologetic members of the land-owning classes who fraternised openly with the Nazi occupiers. Truffaut claims that: "Le Chagrin et la Pitié ... despite the fact that French television still refuses to show it so as not to chagrin the pitiless - is the film that describes with the greatest exactitude and good faith the spectrum of French behaviour in the 1940-45 period".¹⁴³ The "chagrin" and the "pitié" of Ophüls' film is not just that so many people ignored the laws of human decency, but that the transgressors suffered no retribution, not even in the form of guilt.

In Resnais' love story, set in Hiroshima some fourteen years after the war, everyone is still suffering from the after-effects. The entire city of Hiroshima, target of the first A-bomb dropped in August, 1945, is portrayed as a victim, as is the French woman who has come to Hiroshima to act in a film about peace. Through a series of flashbacks, she reveals the suffering and subsequent madness that she underwent when her head was shaved on Liberation Day (August 12, 1944) at Nevers, France, for having "consorted" with a German soldier. Retribution for the helpless young girl who had dared to love an enemy soldier was swift and pitiless.

Resnais effectively combines the fictional love story with documentaries to show the inner as well as the outward effects of war, the private agony of individuals and the public destruction of a city and its inhabitants. The opening love scene is intercut with clips from both the museum of Hiroshima where the horrors of the aftermath of the A-bomb are preserved in pictures, and from the hospital where the burned and mutilated victims of radioactivity are still being treated. The alternating between the explicit lovemaking scene which reveals the naked intertwining bodies of the two lovers, and the clinical and objective documentaries which portray the obscenities of war, was meant to provide a shocking contrast for the pre-1960s audiences. The passion of sex and the obscenities of war are deliberately juxtaposed to confront audiences with the hypocrisy attendant upon finding the lovemaking, which has both a pleasurable and a creative dimension, equally as offensive as looking at the maimed bodies of the post-war casualties. The Peace Movement of the 1960s juxtaposed the same contrasting ideas in their slogan, "Make Love, Not War".

The opening shots of the lovemaking are rather subdued by today's standards, appearing somewhat blurry and out of focus, since they were intended by the author of the scenario, Duras, to imitate the aftereffects of a nuclear explosion. She makes this clear in her notes:

... apparaissent, peu à peu, deux épaules nues.
On ne voit que ces deux épaules, elles sont coupées du

corps à la hauteur de la tête et des hanches. Ces deux épaules s'étreignent et elles sont comme trempées de cendres, de pluie, de rosée ou de sueur, comme on veut. Le principal c'est qu'on ait le sentiment que cette rosée, cette transpiration, à été déposée par [le "champignon" de BIKINI], à mesure de son éloignement, à mesure de son évaporation. Il devrait en résulter un sentiment très violent, très contradictoire, de fraîcheur et de désir.¹⁶⁴

The original script opened the film with an atomic bomb blast, the universally recognised mushroom shape spreading out to fill the screen and to create the impression of engulfing the audience. Resnais eliminated the mushroom cloud scene entirely, since he felt that nothing could follow the enormity of such a event. The film footage of the explosion referred to in Duras' script is not, of course, from the original blast, nor is it American. It is a testimonial to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, a French atomic bomb test in the Pacific Ocean on the island atoll of Bikini, part of the French government's nuclear weapons policy, carried out with the full support of President De Gaulle.

As well as dealing with the themes of love and war, the film looks at racial tolerance. In Duras' notes on the opening scene, she indicates that the shoulders belong to two people of different skin colour:

Les deux épaules étreintes sont de différente couleur, l'une est sombre et l'autre est claire. La musique de Fusco accompagne cette étreinte presque choquante. La différenciation des deux mains respectives devrait être très marquée... Une main de femme, reste posée sur l'épaule jaune ...¹⁶⁵

Despite Duras' intentions, for a first-time viewer the black-

and-white film and the blurriness of the opening shots do not highlight the "etreuse presque choquante", so that racial differences are not evident until later.

The opening dialogue is in the form of an argument, but without raised voices or anger. "Lui" declares, in a monotone, "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima. Rien.", and "Elle" responds in an equally flat voice: "J'ai tout vu. Tout... Ainsi l'hôpital, je l'ai vu. J'en suis sûre. L'hôpital existe à Hiroshima. Comment aurais-je pu éviter de le voir?"¹⁶⁶

The film then switches into the documentary format with the camera focussing on the hospital, on its corridors, stairs, patients, examining rooms, but without the presence of the woman. We are not, the script makes clear, seeing through her eyes. While the man's voice drones on, "Tu n'as pas vu d'hôpital à Hiroshima. Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima.", the camera shifts location to the museum, where we are shown, under blinding light, pieces of evidence from the bombardment, scale models, mutilated iron, skin, burned hair, wax models, the real along with the reconstructed. Resnais brought back from Japan a large number of documents and film footage of the hospital, the museum and the city streets of Hiroshima. In his book The Film Narratives of Alain Resnais, Freddy Sweet points out that the film was originally conceived as a documentary.¹⁶⁷

Resnais was already known for his powerful

documentaries, which include Nuit et Brouillard (1955), a short film on the German concentration camps. Sweet describes that film as "a lyrical collage that accompanies a visual nightmare of archival footage of the liberation and of concentration camps and images of the camps overrun by weeds ten years after the war".¹⁶⁸ Sarris considers Nuit et Brouillard as "the only film on the Nazi era to have truly transcended its subject without betraying it".¹⁶⁹ Bernard Pingaud is quoted as saying: "Hiroshima devait être un documentaire sur les effets de la bombe atomique".¹⁷⁰ Sweet claims that although Resnais worked closely with Duras on the scenario, the initial documentary design was never abandoned, and this led to some of the problems of disproportion in the film.

As the camera alternates between the lovers and the documentary evidence of death and destruction in Hiroshima, we see a progression in time, beginning with clips taken immediately after the explosion, August 6, 1945. We are made aware of the important fact that the city is recovering from total disaster. The shots which show the gradual repairing of the damaged city are interspersed with newsreels of angry anti-nuclear demonstrators, bus loads of Japanese tourists arriving in Peace Square, commercialisation of the event by shops selling souvenir models of the Palace of Industry (the only building that survived the bomb), streets and suburbs being built, plants flourishing, and a general return to

health and prosperity.

Although they locate themselves geographically, and we later learn that they are both happily married with children, that he is an architect and she is an actress, and that they both have had previous affairs, the film's two protagonists never do give their names. Not using names is a common technique of the French writers of the *nouveau roman*. In her script for *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Duras intends the audience to identify the woman as representing the West, and the man as the East, their roles expanding to exceed those of individuals. They come to exemplify their respective cities. She becomes NEVERS and He becomes HIROSHIMA.

Techniques used by Resnais to move his narrative back and forth in time include the flashback. The film's second scene opens some hours later to the noise of constant street movement. The woman is standing on the balcony of her hotel room, watching the sleeping man. As his hand twitches, she visualises another hand. The second hand is revealed as belonging to a dying German soldier. The body of the dying German appears in the same prone position as the body of the sleeping Japanese, and then vanishes as the Japanese awakens and smiles at the woman who is temporarily immobilised by her memory. His political orientation is established when he tells her what he does:

Lui: De l'architecture. Et aussi de la politique.

Elle: Ah, c'est pour ça que tu parles si bien le français?

Lui: C'est pour ça. Pour lire la Révolution française.

Such a response identifies him with the Left, as Duras reminds us in her script: "Ne pas oublier que seul un homme de gauche peut dire ce qu'il vient de dire. Que la chose sera immédiatement prise ainsi par le spectateur. Surtout après son propos sur Hiroshima".¹⁷¹

Further conversation reveals that the woman has nearly finished her film and is returning to France the next day.

The next scene opens in Hiroshima's Peace Square, with signs of the film sets being dismantled. Again, names are not used, so that we never learn the title of the film in which the French woman played. We are made aware, through the multi-lingual signs e.g. - NEVER ANOTHER HIROSHIMA - that it is an anti-war film. She is sleeping on the set, dressed in a nurse's uniform, while the activities of the city go on around her. He is passing by, stops, and watches her sleeping. She awakens, and the documentary aspect of filmmaking and city activities changes once more into the love story, with the author's notation indicating that the personal story always dominates the necessarily demonstrative Hiroshima story. The conversation between the lovers continues, while, in the background, there is activity - large photographs of the bombing, of Einstein, sounds of shouting and singing, all preparations for a parade for peace, with posters and bands and marching protesters. He leads her away and they disappear into the crowd.

Eventually, in the neutral setting of an Americanised

café, with him asking and her responding to his questions about Nevers, almost an psychoanalyst-patient interchange, she reveals her past. She describes her long bout of madness when she was locked in a cellar in Nevers. The camera focusses on her bleeding hands as she scrapes at the cellar walls in her madness, and then shifts to her hands today lying quietly on the table. She talks of the family disgrace of having a daughter who was a collaborator who had her head shaved. Her father, a druggist, had to close his business. Her mother, who had spent the Occupation in Vichy France, returned to deal with the shame and madness. Now that the entire Nevers story has been revealed we are given to understand that she has undergone a cathartic healing, and that with the healing process, there is a forgetting, not only for her but for him.

The last scene begins with a knock at her hotel room door. He enters, declaring, "Impossible de ne pas venir". She responds, "Je t'oublierai! Je t'oublie déjà! Regarde, comme je t'oublie! Regarde-moi!" The significance of the last scene for her is that he has become the city in which she has found liberation from her past, the love that she found with the Japanese in Hiroshima obliterating the memory of the pain and suffering that she had endured in Nevers. For him there is the realisation that suffering from war is universal, and that someone who had spent the war in a place other than Hiroshima was nonetheless able to feel the pain

and grief of what happened in Hiroshima.

Some fairly obvious observations can be made concerning the love story. To make his audience care about his messages, Resnais has to make them care about the two people he has chosen to illustrate those messages. They are two attractive, responsible adults, both married and employed in respectable careers in their own societies. At a time when many countries possess the ability to destroy the world, human similarities, not differences, are emphasised. The film is not concerned with the potential problems of a racially mixed marriage, so the couple are given spouses with whom they are happy, and to whom they intend to return, eventually. Their mutual attraction, their sharing of war-time suffering, their growing involvement with one another, their ability to help one another to heal the past, these are the human qualities that Resnais stresses to create empathy in the audience. To care about the world, one must care about the people in it.

Resnais' camera work is distinctly realistic. The flashback scenes do not distort the images. They are clear remembrances by the woman whose memories are triggered by similar situations which she encounters with her lover in Hiroshima. Resnais varies his camera angles and his focus. In Peace Square we see the two lovers locate one another, conduct a conversation all the while activities are going on around them, with the accompanying noises, and then vanish

into the crowd, becoming part of it. The love scenes include both clear and blurred focus, accompanied by correspondingly clear or muted sound.

The imaginative juxtapositioning of love and war, past and present, east and west carry the important messages of the need for tolerance and peace. The fictional love story set in the present evokes the memories from the past. Just as the aftereffects from the A-bomb have become less evident in the streets of Hiroshima, but still exist in the hospitals and the museums, so the aftereffects of the European war are outwardly indiscernible in the woman. However, we are made aware, through the use of flashbacks, of the enormous internal damage that war causes. The technique emphasises the parallel between the two lovers of the French woman. The hospital scenes are the equivalent of medical documentaries, the museum scenes are war documentaries and the street scenes are newsreels of current events. The film, with its balanced juxtapositions of documentaries and the personal love story, the real with the fictional, was an overwhelming success. Resnais and Duras made their messages clear.

The expression of messages through filmmaking was made easier by technological advances. The new hand-held cameras, which are light and easy to use, and relatively cheap, allowed for the increased expansion of small filmmaking operations. With an estimate in Cahiers du Cinéma that two-thirds of the populace who went to the cinema in the early

sixties attended on a weekly basis, there appeared to be a large and sophisticated market for the new filmmakers. Almost half the audience for film was young, under twenty-five, and urban. This represented a shift from the days when cinema was considered a family entertainment, and was widely attended, both in urban and rural areas. Films made by young directors for young audiences could be expected to include more anti-establishment themes.

The protest movement of the 1960s, which had as its basis the belief that authority and its institutions were not to be trusted, was not without precedent. Truffaut's Les Quatre Cents Coups is an update of the childhood rebellion theme portrayed in Vigo's Zéro de Conduite. Vigo's criticism begins with the unfair treatment children are subjected to in the boarding-school system, a fairly narrow target. He uses the boys' own weapons against the unjust practices and repressive regulations. These include giving rude nick-names to the hated authority figures. The final scene, however, shows the entire spectrum of repressive elements in society, all sitting on the stage at the convocation - representatives of the Church, the government and the family - the priest, the mayor and the parents, as well as the teachers and administrators. The disruption of the ceremonies and the resultant overthrowing of authority take place within a surrealist world of revenge and triumph. Truffaut uses a realistic approach to his subject, and must therefore come to

a realistic, and pessimistic, conclusion. His child is alone at the end, with escape as his only means of coping with life. Truffaut targets other institutions that fail children - the family and the courts, as well as the school system. The story is significantly autobiographical, with many of the incidents drawn from his own life and just slightly modified.

Young Antoine Doinel is in trouble from the opening scene, where the blame for note-passing in school, as everyone is aware, always falls on the least guilty. Our sympathies are instantly engaged by the familiar circumstances. As the story continues, we witness Antoine in conflict with his family, again with the school authorities, and finally, with the law. The final flight towards the sea is Antoine's attempt to escape, not from evil, but from a series of restrictions, misunderstandings and coldness. The indifference to the child as an individual is well portrayed. The mother, in particular, is shown to be so wrapped up in her own concerns that she refuses to deal with Antoine's problems herself. Finally, when he is caught stealing a typewriter, Antoine's parents turn him over to the authorities and institutions that an increasingly impersonal society has developed in order to deal with children who run into conflict. The famous last shot of the film, with Antoine's face revealing the vulnerability of a child who feels abandoned and unwanted, provides a bleak picture for the future.

Monaco, in the chapter entitled "The Antoine Doinel Cycle" of his book, The New Wave, discusses Truffaut's intentions for Les Quatre Cents Coups. Apparently, it was meant to be part of a trilogy on the theme of childhood, along with Les Mistons (1958), Truffaut's twenty-five minute short film on adolescent love. Monaco praises Truffaut's portrayal of children, who appear cold and objective, with "a Darwinian talent for survival in a hostile world".¹⁷² In an interview for the New Yorker in February, 1960, Truffaut states: "Most films about children make the adult serious, and the child frivolous. Quite the other way around".¹⁷³

Truffaut never continued with his trilogy although Monaco claims that it could be considered complete with the addition of L'Enfant sauvage. The same theme of a child struggling to find his place in an alien environment is examined in this 1969 film. Truffaut, however, takes Les Quatre Cents Coups in a different direction, proceeding chronologically instead of thematically with a number of sequels. As early as 1956, according to Monaco, Truffaut had prepared a plot for a film portraying Antoine Doinel several years later, "after a couple of reform schools and a stretch in the army".¹⁷⁴ Although he made several attempts, Truffaut never did complete the film. The scenario was taken over by Godard, and provided the outline for his gangster film, A Bout de souffle, where the hero, originally intended to be Doinel, is ignominiously gunned down by the police.

Truffaut, by this time, had different plans. He moves the real Antoine Doinel from his place on the margin heading for a dead end and pushes him into the main stream of French society.

Antoine Doinel becomes the hero of a tetralogy, beginning with Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959), followed by L'Amour à vingt ans (1962), Baisers volés (1968), and Domicile conjugal (1970), and then appears in a fifth sequel, with L'Amour en fuite (1979). The continuing series presents the life and times of a young man growing up in France in the sixties and seventies, what Monaco refers to as an "éducation sentimentale".¹⁷⁵

The importance of Les Quatre Cents Coups is that it portrays Truffaut's early attitudes towards society. The hopelessness in the film is not repeated in later films. No longer treated as a social misfit himself, and given the opportunity to work in the world of cinema through the care and understanding of his mentor, Bazin, Truffaut sets about to achieve the rehabilitation of Antoine in the sequels.

One of the technological improvements in filmmaking included a new colour tone system. The topics that Truffaut deals with in his first three films would seem to require black-and-white, to portray the increasingly dismal prospects of Antoine in Les Quatre Cents Coups, to pay tribute to American gangster movies, film noir style, in Tirez sur le Pianiste, and to study the long, complicated and changing

relationships in Jules et Jim. However, the last four films concerning Antoine Doinel, films that portray Antoine's re-integration into society, are celebrations in colour, with the attendant warmth, humour and optimism which Truffaut applies to Antoine's continuing life story.

Truffaut returns to black-and-white in L'Enfant sauvage (1969), where he deals with the actual events surrounding the discovery and training of an child found living wild in the forest of Aveyron in the 18th century.

In this film, which Monaco considers the ideal completion of the childhood theme trilogy, Truffaut plays the "man of science", Dr. Itard, who sets about with his "civilising" of the enfant sauvage. The question arises as to what rights we have in the treatment and training of children - which is a concern in Les Quatre Cents Coups and Zéro de Conduite.

The education process, even if applied with the best of intentions, can destroy independence and make a person less free. Truffaut's wild boy of the forest tries to return to his old life only to realise that he no longer belongs there. He discovers that his veneer of civilisation has made him incapable of functioning in his old environment, and he must now return to the prison of dependence which characterises his new life.

One analysis of the film considers it autobiographical, with the wild child representing the young Truffaut, and Dr.

Itard as André Bazin, the man who "civilises" the delinquent boy. Anne Gillain, in her article "The script of delinquency: François Truffaut's Les 400 coups (1959)", contends that "all of Truffaut's films offer a complex variation on the same hidden and repressed scenario of childhood", which she calls "the script of delinquency".¹⁷⁶ She quotes Truffaut as claiming that: "A man is formed between seven and sixteen ... later he will relive all his life what he has acquired between those two ages".¹⁷⁷ Gillain believes that this comment can be applied to Truffaut's films, but, in order to understand Truffaut's use of autobiography, "one must discard the facile notion of a direct transposition from life to films. ... If the director's youth informs his stories ... each film replays [it] in a different vein, on a different tone. ... In Les 400 coups, this script unravels for the first time the figural and narrative patterns for the films to come".¹⁷⁸

Truffaut's child-adult relationship shows an increasing trust and dependence between the child and the man in L'Enfant sauvage. Truffaut's uncritical acceptance in the film that the doctor had the right to use whatever methods he could find to "reach" the child would seem fitting tribute to the man who saved him from a hopeless future.

Truffaut tampers with reality in his *actualité reconstituée*. The child, named Victor, runs away more than once and never comes back of his own accord. He is returned

to the doctor by the authorities, and while, according to Dr. Itard's diary, Victor was glad to be reunited with the woman cook, his reaction to the doctor was more ambiguous. Victor lived another twenty years or so, but never progressed and did not learn to speak. Truffaut's suppression of these facts lends weight to the film being a tribute to his mentor, Bazin. As well, as Renoir was quoted as saying, sometimes people are happier with a modified form of reality.

Truffaut's ending is more optimistic than the actual events indicated. He shows a more confident outlook for the future than the one he leaves in Les Quatre Cents Coups, implying that even very alienated children can be rehabilitated. His own life would seem to bear this out.

Godard began his career being classed with the other Nouvelle Vague directors, Rivette, Rohmer, Truffaut and Chabrol.

A Bout de souffle is his acknowledgment of the American gangster film replete with an anti-hero, Michel Poiccard, played by Jean-Paul Belmondo, who acts and talks like Humphrey Bogart, and comes to a sticky end through the betrayal of a woman. The script was written by Truffaut who recalls that: "... a month after the premiere of Les 400 coups, he asked me to lend him the scenario of A bout de souffle ... It was a story I had written several years earlier".¹⁷⁹ Godard replaces Truffaut's opening quotation from Stendahl with a dedication to an American film company

which specialised in "low budget Westerns and horror films, and crime series like Gun Crazy".¹⁸⁰ Taking total responsibility for the dialogue and script, Godard altered a number of scenes, but his major change was the ending. In Truffaut's ending the hero lives, but Godard's ending, with an important deletion, was accepted by Truffaut, who explains:

Jean-Luc chose a violent end because he was by nature sadder than I. He was in the depths of despair when he made the film. He needed to film death, and he had need of that particular ending. I asked him to cut only one phrase which was absolutely horrible. At the end, when the police are shooting at him one of them said to his companion: "Quick, in the spine!" I told him, "You can't leave that in." I was very vehement about it. He deleted the phrase.¹⁸¹

Godard, in a post-1968 interview, claims that the film is about money, the problem of cashing a cheque through the capitalist banking system. Since the banks are closed over the holiday weekend, the two lovers must stay in Paris, where they are in danger from the police. With such a complicated banking system, Godard contends, love does not have a chance.¹⁸²

The inclusion of current political events in the film are coincidental with the plot. As Michel and Patricia interact in Patricia's room, the radio broadcasts that Eisenhower is coming to Paris to pay tribute to the newly inaugurated De Gaulle. This political meeting is seen as an international parallel of the affair between the American Patricia and the French Michel.¹⁸³ Later in the film, the

Presidential motorcade provides the reason for the presence of so many policemen, not all of whom could possibly be hunting for Michel. There is constant movement from the political to the private, and back to the political, a device used in Hiroshima Mon Amour.

What the critics saw in the early Godard was his elliptical cutting style, rather than his political concerns. The Michel/Belmondo character expresses the opinion that the world is made up of two kinds of people, those who are loyal and unafraid, even to the point of death, and les lâches, who betray those they profess to love. With his dying words he denounces the girl as belonging to the group of betrayers, claiming: "Tu es dégueulasse".

Godard became involved with the politics of the image, which was expressed through his obsession with advertising, and with his absorption in the problem of the relation between sound and image. In 1966, beginning with Masculin/Féminin, he made a series of explicitly political films which ended with his withdrawal from the traditional cinema after "les événements".

He reveals his affinity for the cinema of Lumière, specifically the unrehearsed, home-movie aspect of film in an interview in 1972. He claims: "As for me, I've been aware after fifteen years of cinema, that the real 'political' film that I'd like to end up with would be a film about me which would show to my wife and daughter what I am, in other words

a home-movie - home-movies represent the popular base of the cinema."¹⁸⁴

Of the three New Wave filmmakers discussed, Resnais deals most directly with actual political and sociological events. His experience with making documentaries prepared him for presenting clear opinions in his narrative films. Hiroshima Mon Amour directly condemns nuclear war with its amassed evidence of burned and deformed people, but the film offers hope for the future by portraying former enemies capable of loving one another. In Muriel (1962), Resnais expresses, through the technique of using a disembodied narrator of events, very deep concerns over the injustices occurring in Algeria. He also deals with the Spanish Civil War, in La Guerre est Finie (1966), and examines the events that caused the 1934 riots in France, in Stavisky (1974). He looks at operant behaviour in psychology in Mon Oncle d'Amérique (1980). His filmmaking has always been considered controversial, but he leaves a legacy of powerful and interesting films, dealing with topical and universal problems.

Truffaut's films span a variety of topics and concerns. His popular series, begun with the actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, in Les Quatre Cents Coups, takes the young man through marriage, divorce, and affairs, is a portrayal of life in France in the sixties and seventies. L'Enfant sauvage is a universally acknowledged masterpiece, and fulfills the

requirements specified by la politique des auteurs, that an auteur continue to tell the same story, although the different endings would indicate a changing attitude towards society.

Godard, despite his disenchantment with the cinematic world, is still making films. His radical cutting methods and his experiments with collage, ellipses and camera tricks, are all directed towards his fascination with the portrayal of the image. His political radicalism is matched by his radical film techniques, but he attracts large audiences of people with varying political views.

Truffaut experiments with a broad spectrum of film genres, all with strong narrative forms. Although he uses many of the realist's techniques, he is a true heir of the first manipulator of film, Méliès. A Truffaut film is an entertainment. Story lines are important, character development, or non-development, is dealt with, there are beginnings, middles and endings to his films, things progress, and get better. The unhappy Antoine Doinel of Les Quatre Cents Coups is not abandoned by the director, as he was by his family, but is rescued and integrated into French society through the semi-autobiographical Jean-Pierre Léaud series.

Resnais is a master of the documentary who saw the advantage of attaching a narrative to a political or social opinion. The combination results in a powerful and

persuasive vehicle for his points of view. In Hiroshima Mon Amour he advocates tolerance by portraying the results of intolerance. His messages reach large audiences who find his stunning photographic style combined with realistic dramatisation to be irresistible.

The appeal of the New Wave directors was in their energy and diversity. The public could find a style, a topic, or a viewpoint that brought them to the cinema on a regular basis. The availability of a large variety of films was an incentive to attend the cinema frequently. The encroaching power of television witnessed a decrease in film audiences but the appeal of films by the New Wave directors continues.

CONCLUSIONS

The interaction between film technique and politics can be analysed over the span of years with reference to the examined films.

Filming outdoors is a basic technique of realism listed in the introduction. Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie has both outdoor and indoor scenes. The park where Fadinard's horse chews up the straw hat, and the streets of Paris where the chase for the hat takes place are used to good advantage by Clair to destroy the notion of the physically confining aspects of the original play. The movement in the film is not freely engaged in, however, but dictated by the customs and ceremonies that constrict the lives of the bourgeoisie. The characters can be seen as entrapped by their own life styles. Ménilmontant also features the streets of Paris, but they are portrayed as cold, dark and dangerous places. Their inhabitants are not in the streets voluntarily, but through necessity, as outcasts of society. Poverty drives the sisters into the streets to make their living. The young man is there to prey on the outcasts, and the older woman and her helper, to prey on those who prey on others. Paris streets are also featured in Les Quatre Cents Coups as

Antoine's milieu of freedom, his escape from being shut up in apartments and schools. As a child, he is happiest outdoors, with his friends, away from the authority figures who dominate his life indoors. Eventually, he seeks even broader spaces in his flight to the sea. Realism begins with the opening shot as the camera portrays the Eiffel Tower, the symbol of Paris, which is also used by Clair as his locating shot in Paris Qui Dort. Godard's couple in A Bout de Souffle roam the streets of Paris, but, as in Ménilmontant, they are places of danger. Michel eventually dies in the streets at the hands of the police. From a political point of view, the streets present a danger to Kirsanov's and Godard's marginals in society, a refuge for Truffaut's children, and a mere passageway in the endless chase after possessions for Clair's bourgeoisie.

Interiors, the artificial locales with their artificial lighting preferred by Méliès, assume the characteristics of prisons in a number of films. The overstuffed apartments in Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie are economic as well as physical prisons for the bourgeoisie, who spend their lives acquiring possessions and worrying about their safety. Zéro de Conduite, filmed mostly indoors, contrasts the restrictions of the school atmosphere with the freedom the boys enjoy on their walk in the village with Huguet. The teacher seems to possess magical properties that liberate the boys from the constant surveillance to which they are

subjected at their school. Truffaut pays tribute to Vigo's magic scene in Les Quatre Cents Coups, where he uses the same aerial camera angle and captures the same spontaneous flooding of the street by the released schoolboys. There is no magical teacher for Antoine in Les Quatre Cents Coups, however, and it is not until the film sequels that he experiences a measure of freedom in his life. L'Enfant sauvage has a teacher, Dr. Itard, who performs the magic of saving a child from incarceration in an institution by teaching him the rudiments of civilisation. If one accepts the autobiographical interpretation, the teacher is Bazin who saves Truffaut from a similar fate. Freedom for Victor is gained through education, and, for Truffaut, through the world of cinema. Contrarily, in the tradition of the noble savage, Victor can be seen as losing his freedom for the bonds of civilisation. The quest for freedom motivates the action in La Grande Illusion. The film features an actual fortress prison in which World War I prisoners-of-war are portrayed plotting their escape. Although it was considered a pacifist film, patriotism rather than pacifism would seem to motivate such behaviour. The film's message is more subtle, and certainly confused the right-wing critics of the era. Renoir wanted to show how patriotism, in the form of French nationalism, drives apart those who have the most in common with one another, and makes unlikely allies. In other words, nationalism makes strange bedfellows. The French

nationals Maréchal and Rosenthal have no common areas of interest with Boeldieu, yet he eventually gives his life to gain their freedom. The final scene is outdoors, as Maréchal and Rosenthal head towards the border, pursued by enemy troops. The crossing of an invisible line, the national boundary between Germany and Switzerland, saves the Frenchmen from certain death from the German patrol.

Indoor and outdoor scenes provide contrasts in Hiroshima Mon Amour between the private love story and the public street scenes. In the film, the anti-nuclear politics of Japan are very visible and widely supported, while the French woman's madness, which ran its course in a dark cellar, is revealed indoors and at night. Nuclear war, by 1959, could be openly attacked, whereas the involvement of the French woman with the enemy soldier, even many years later, was still considered a shameful secret. François, in Le Jour se lève, loses his freedom when he breaks society's law and kills. The film's imagery depicts him as a bear driven into his den. The simple, gruff and inarticulate worker is goaded by the evil and taunting Valentin into committing murder. The result of this act is to isolate François in his apartment, which becomes his tomb. Blindness to his real situation, emphasised by the imagery of the blind man, is portrayed as a major reason for François' tragic end. Self-deception and blindness towards political events affect the guests at La Colinière in La Règle du Jeu. Unconcerned with

the changing world about them, they are caught up in their own amusements and preoccupations. However, the arrival of World War II will devastate the self-absorbed members of the group in the same way that the film's imagery shows them slaughtering the birds and animals in the famous hunting sequence of the film. They are inextricably carried along the path of destruction in their *danse macabre*. The *danse macabre* of the bourgeoisie in Un Chapeau de Paille shows the characters similarly linked together in their social pursuits and preoccupations. Their fate, however, is not death, but a continuous chase after possessions.

Technological advances were incorporated, some quickly, others with hesitation. Political factions saw the benefits of voice combined with pictures for propaganda purposes. Black-and-white film was chosen over colour for a number of reasons, even after reliable coloured film was available. Many small production companies found black-and-white film to be cheaper than coloured film. Lindsay Anderson, while making If..., his 1968 update of Vigo's Zéro de Conduite, ran out of money part way through the film and had to finish it in black-and-white. He reportedly was amused to read the critics who saw deep political significance in his necessary money-saving technique.¹⁸⁵

Truffaut used black-and-white film for Les Quatre Cents Coups, Tirez Sur Le Pianiste and Jules et Jim, then made a number of colour films before returning to black-and-white in

L'Enfant sauvage (1969). Godard used black-and-white for À Bout de souffle, but experimented with primary colours in Pierrot le Fou, recalling the former techniques of tinting to portray emotions.

Camera movement and focus have been analysed as to which is more natural and thus, more real. Ciné-vérité repudiates any aspect of artifice and even shows the camera and crew in action. Such realism is a reminder of the *mise en abîme* so favoured by the *nouveau roman* authors. Duras uses the technique in her script for Hiroshima Mon Amour, where the actress in Resnais' pacifist film set in Hiroshima plays the role of an actress in a pacifist film set in Hiroshima, thereby duplicating the role, the theme and the setting. The duplication of a film within a film gives strong emphasis to the message of pacifism. Truffaut plays with this technique in La Nuit Américaine (1973), which is a film about the making of a film. The realism consists of including the audience in the filming sessions along with Truffaut, who plays the role of the film director in a film whose theme revolves about the problems attendant with the directing of a film. The question is raised as to whether life in a film is more realistic than life outside film, a distinction which Truffaut blurs. Filmmaking is portrayed as Truffaut's reality and his life.

Truffaut credits the idea of a director appearing in his own film as one borrowed from his hero, Alfred Hitchcock.

Hitchcock's roles in his films, however, are usually just cameo appearances. Renoir's role in La Règle du Jeu, on the other hand, is an important one, portraying him as the manipulative and scheming Octave within the film, while his role of director makes him the overall manipulator. It has been suggested that the title indicates Renoir's power over the film events, "La Règle du Je" being a jeu de mots, as it were, for the director, the one who ultimately makes the playing rules.

Political differences became closely associated with camera techniques. Sarris notes Bazin's preference for the depth-of-focus technique, which is used by Renoir in La Grande Illusion, rather than for cross-cutting, which sometimes made the following of a conversation in a movie the equivalent of watching a tennis match, with the camera moving back and forth between verbal combatants. The cross-cutting technique was advocated by Marxist aesthetics, since it gave the impression of a dialectic process taking place, rather than just an ordinary conversation. Sarris claims that Bazin "revolutionized film aesthetics by suggesting that deep focus was more 'democratic' than cross-cutting" with the result that "a whole generation grew up with the revisionist credo that montage was manipulative".¹⁰⁶ The consequence of using such techniques, Sarris points out, is that "a filmmaker could preach liberation in his content, and yet practice repression in his form".¹⁰⁷ It was to avoid such political

schizophrenia that Marxist aesthetics advocated the use of montage, which features discontinuity and heterogeneity, "in the hope of breaking the ideological chains of bourgeois society".¹⁸⁸

Montage is associated with the disruption of time-and-space continuity. It uses functional rather than realistic stage settings, performance-acting rather than Stanislavsky-style naturalism, and is "in general, an attempt to incorporate the stuff of life itself, and not some counterfeit of it, within the artistic context".¹⁸⁹ It lends itself very well to Ménilmontant where the lives of the two sisters are shattered more than once, and to Zéro de Conduite where the children fantasise about defying adult authority, in Hiroshima Mon Amour where the juxtaposition of the love and war scenes are used to shock complacent viewers, and in A Bout de souffle where the murder of the policeman is suggested rather than portrayed. Le Jour se lève has breaks in time-and-space continuity without resorting to the radical cutting techniques of the other four films - there are no sudden montage sequences in François' reflections on his past.

Along with techniques, movie genres are identified with politics. Audiences became accustomed to the infinite variety of themes and plots associated with love stories, thrillers, Westerns, war films, dramas, and their combinations. The pre-war spy thrillers presented a fairly

predictable formula until the changing international political scene required a corresponding change in the national identity of friends and foes portrayed on the screen.

Genres of films came to use specific techniques. Gangster films modelled after the American variety, Truffaut's Tirez sur le pianiste and Godard's A Bout de souffle, are highly stylised. The heroes do not find personal happiness, nor are they particularly heroic. Variations in genres are revealing as to the current political atmosphere of the country. Manners-and-mores films can be more biting in their satire at politically unsettled times. The original intention of the play, Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie, was a gentle mocking of the bourgeois conventions surrounding a wedding. Clair's adaptation, made in the prosperous era of the twenties, is not a violent denunciation of the middle class, but adopts the same mocking tone as in the play. Clair intends us to become emotionally involved in the action of the plot, to share in Fadinard's triumphs and set-backs in his pursuit of the elusive hat, to sympathise with the father-in-law over his boots, to recognize how ludicrous the situation is, but to want, nevertheless, a denouement where harmony is restored. He gives us this restoration and follows the classic requirement that a comedy end with a wedding.

Renoir's La Règle du Jeu, by contrast, ends with a

death, the classical theatre's requirement for a tragedy. Renoir does not mock his characters, and claims that they were good people. Authors' intentions are not always recognised in stressful times, and the film, presented as an end-of-an era piece, was interpreted by many as a condemnation of all French society, from the nobility to the working class. The film uses a contemporary theme and an uncompromising and realistic treatment, along with formal and stylized traditions from French Romantic theatre. Renoir pays tribute to Mozart and to the classic romantic comedies of Beaumarchais, Marivaux and Musset as being major influences for his film. In a post-war interview, Alain Resnais acknowledges that La Règle du Jeu had a reputation as a "film maudit", and that nobody had ever understood why. The answer might be as simple as the mixing of traditions, signalling that the film was a romantic comedy, and then tricking the audience by turning it into tragedy.

Carné's treatment of unrequited love in Le Jour se lève uses a framing device so that audiences are made aware of the murder before they are introduced to the romantic aspects of the film. There is no ambiguity about François' fate. Whether or not it was justified, it was understood by the audience to be inevitable. Godard's A Bout de souffle also has unrequited love end with death, but the audience is not required to feel sympathy for the victim. Godard's style does not allow identification with the Belmondo character.

The mixed modes, which include camera tricks such as fast motion, and reverse motion, ellipses and unconnected scenes, bring an ending which is not a shock, nor even upsetting. Godard's interview with Tom Milne in 1972 best explains his original intentions for A Bout de souffle:

A bout de souffle was the sort of film where anything goes: that was what it was all about. Anything people did could be integrated in the film. As a matter of fact, this was my starting point. I said to myself: we already had Bresson, we have just had Hiroshima, a certain kind of cinema has just drawn to a close, maybe ended, so let's add the finishing touch, let's show that anything goes. What I wanted was to take a conventional story and remake, but differently, everything the cinema had done. I also wanted to give the feeling that the techniques of filmmaking had just been discovered or experienced for the first time. The iris-in showed that one could return to cinema's sources; the dissolve appeared, just once, as though it had just been invented.¹⁹⁰

Godard's motivation for making A Bout de souffle was to experiment both with film technique and with genre variation.

People die for love in Godard films, as we see Belmondo again, in Pierrot le Fou (1966), fail in his relationship with a woman, wrap himself in dynamite, and blow himself up. It is Truffaut, with La Sirène du Mississippi (1969), who finally provides happiness for Belmondo with Catherine Deneuve, considered at the time to be the "World's Most Beautiful Woman". Love does not come easily for Belmondo, however, since he discovers that his bogus mail-order bride, Deneuve, has probably killed the real mail-order bride, and is trying to poison him. When she realises that he is aware of her plans, that he is complying by taking the poison but

wants her to hurry because he is suffering, she changes her tactics, decides such love is to be cherished, and they go off together to start a new life.

Since the bourgeoisie make up the majority of audiences at the cinema, the popularity of anti-bourgeois films such as those made by Godard were seen as signs of bourgeois self-hatred. Tolerance for self-criticism was not endless, however, since Renoir's La Règle du Jeu, appearing just before the war, was seen as too harsh an indictment of society, and was forced off the screen by indignant audiences until calmer political times prevailed.

Political climate affects filmmaking, both directly and indirectly. Love stories appear more likely to have tragic endings in trying political times. Sensitive political topics are generally avoided, at least immediately, sometimes disguised in films à clef, and quite often banned outright. Some topics which shook French society to its core retain the power to create controversy. The "Terror" of the Revolution is one such example of a controversial political era which remains relatively untouched by French filmmakers. The "Dreyfus affair", dealt with in a film made in 1898 by Méliès, who gave Dreyfus a sympathetic portrayal, was banned until 1950. Collaboration during World War II remains a sensitive topic - the recent trial involving the "Butcher of Lyon", Klaus Barbie, was feared by many as potentially damaging to the national image by disturbing old memories and

events that many felt were better left alone.

The tensions prevalent in pre-World War II France allowed for the complete misinterpretation of films. La Règle du Jeu was probably the most problematic. Renoir, who would be in the projection box while the film was being shown, would cut out a scene that had been badly received, only to find that the next night, the audience would attack a different scene, hissing and booing their displeasure. The film was finally reconstituted and exonerated twenty years after its first presentation, when it was given a new premiere at the 1959 Venice Film Festival. With the passage of time, the film became an acknowledged masterpiece.¹⁹¹

War itself brought its own problems. The exodus of major filmmakers during the war was not just of benefit to the film industry of France by opening new positions there, but was also an inspiration to filmmaking in the host countries, through the introduction of new techniques. The French directors were admired but not always appreciated. Darryl F. Zanuck is quoted as saying: "Renoir has a lot of talent, but he isn't one of us".¹⁹²

Audiences were not the ultimate arbiters of what films could be shown at what times in France. That power fell to the censors. The wars in French Indochina and Algeria were forbidden subjects until after the events, no matter which point of view was taken. Government censorship was very much a part of the French life, in peace time as well as war, and

played a large role in the French film industry.

The next major political crisis affecting cinema was les événements of May, 1968, when the Marxists attempted to assume authority over the arts by applying their own critical theories. For the next decade or so a succession of eagerly espoused and equally quickly discarded pseudo-Marxist theories followed one another. Questions to be answered concerned Marxism's basic properties - Is Marxism a science, giving objective knowledge of social reality, or just another ideology, offering, at the most, a consistent political and economic viewpoint? - Is the theoretical structure determined by the economic base of Marxism? - Is society formed of two mutually exclusive and opposing classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, or does the dominant class succeed in imposing its ideology on other classes, so that the ideology of the subordinate class or classes, instead of reflecting their own social being, coincides with that of the ruling class and therefore runs counter to their own interests.¹⁹³ The genuine social and economic flaws inherent in the Marxist system, which are currently showing up in the collapse of Marxist states, will likely not concern the adherents to the theories.

The irony is that the Marxist theorists of the literary world became interested in cinema in the late sixties when its influence was declining. Theories incorporated into films in order to change society cannot work if the societal

members at whom the theories are aimed do not go to the cinema. Cinema changed from being an evening of entertainment to requiring a politically aware audience, while at the same time, its power to influence that audience was waning. Television took over many functions of cinema. Ophui's Le Chagrin et la Pitié was not banned as a film, although the movie theatre in which it was allowed to be shown was very small. Cinema audiences had by now fragmented and diminished. It was the release of Ophui's film on television, the new mass medium, that was banned by the censors. The new technologies which pushed cinema into a minor place in society possess the power to dictate tastes and shape opinions. It was the power of television, bringing the Viet Nam horrors into American living rooms each evening, that brought an end to that war. Combined with computers, television has become the overwhelming information distributor of modern times.

Cinema is nowadays included with theatre, the opera, the ballet, and the concert, as places where a fluctuating number of spectators goes for diversion. No longer is it a weekly or bi-weekly source of information, entertainment, knowledge and socialisation for large numbers of people.

A pattern over the years can be identified. The expression of the political in French films developed slowly, and was varied, polarised or unified, depending upon the political times. The 1920s was an era when film was

influenced more by the trends prevalent in the art community than by the ideas held by the political factions in the country. While the artistic movements were often politically inspired, filmmakers at this early stage were primarily interested in their uses as narrative techniques. Clair, in Entr'acte, uses Dadaism not for its nihilistic associations, but for its fantasy component, to demonstrate to the patrons of the ballet the magical effects of which film was capable. His motivation was to win over larger audiences to cinema. The characters in his film die and disappear, only to revive and reappear, much like the action in a cartoon. In Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie, Clair uses a universally accepted comic device, the chase, as his main narrative technique. The farcical nature of the film does not preclude a political theme, and it was seen by many as a denunciation of the bourgeoisie, the chase after the hat being interpreted as the pursuit of material goods. Clair continued his career, making many more films, including comedies, without turning to political topics or themes. Advocates of *la politique des auteurs*, which contends that a director always tells the same story, or presents the same moral judgments on the action and characters, would consider this an indicator that Clair's films were not politically motivated.

Kirsanov uses the narrative technique of montage to move the action along in Ménilmontant. Montage, which, in Lumière's time,

simply meant editing, was a technique adopted by the Russian expressionists. Its political associations developed not just through its use in the films of Eisenstein, which deal with the epic events leading up to and including the Russian Revolution, but because it ostensibly gave the director total control over both his subject matter and his audience. One objection to montage was that it curtailed the viewers' freedom to interpret for themselves the events on the screen. Ideologically, if measured by the guidelines set out by Brecht, Ménilmontant would belong more to the genre of social drama than to the epic form of Russian expressionism. Brecht's definitions of epic theatre, which warn against emphasising bourgeois concerns with personal predicaments, have been ignored in the film. The audience is allowed to identify closely with the sisters. Fate, personified by the murderous woman and her companion, and not a historical event, such as revolution, is given the role of improving the lives of the young women. Kirsanov's film appears to be an example of the unstable nature of montage through which the social realist traditions are seen to re-emerge. Again, referring to *la politique des auteurs*, and looking at Kirsanov's other films, it would appear that the expression of the political was not his major filmmaking motivation.

A film of the early 1930s, Zéro de Conduite uses surrealism as one of its narrative devices. The renowned fantasy scenes of the film, the pillow fight in the boys'

dormitory, Huguet's classroom where the unusual teaching methods prevail, and the graduation ceremony, all feature the characteristics associated with surrealism. The entire film can be viewed as an expression of the imagination, with the boys indulging in the freedom made available to them in the surrealist world of incongruous and inappropriate behaviour, but there are heavy political overtones. The appearance of the Anarchist flag in the last scene indicates that the surrealist techniques conceal a potentially more realistic and violent conclusion to the day's activities. The updated British version of Zéro de conduite, Lindsay Anderson's If... (1968), also uses the allegorical setting of the public school in which to stage a rebellion, although Anderson implies a bloodier ending than does Vigo. The technique of moving from scenes of reality to those of fantasy blurs the distinction to the point where both films' anarchic endings can be interpreted as either real or imagined. Through the use of surrealist techniques, politics are deliberately introduced into both films, the original and the update.

Carné's style of rebellion contrasts sharply with the surrealist techniques of Vigo. Social realism, as well as the imminence of war, give Le Jour se lève its dark, depressing film noir atmosphere. Carné uses flashbacks as the main narrative device to explain how his hero has arrived at his present situation of committing a murder. The cutting

back and forth from the present to the past shows the increasing involvement of François with the man he murders, and the woman whose honour he avenges. While not specifically political, the film ends with François' suicide, just moments before he is about to be attacked and killed by an insensitive and impersonal police force. The hopelessness of François' situation would seem to reflect the political times.

Renoir's pacifist film and his end-of-era film both illustrate his admitted preoccupation with "the meeting" as his narrative technique. The forced association between the other French prisoners and himself eventually awakens Boeldieu to his duty as a citizen of France in a twentieth-century war, instead of holding on to outdated ideas of chivalry and fair play from earlier times. The outsiders in La Règle du Jeu are never admitted into the groups they wish to join, but remain outsiders. Both films were badly misinterpreted, with the Rightists calling La Grande Illusion a patriotic film, and the Marxists excluding it from their list of films with political themes. Almost everyone in pre-war France saw La Règle du Jeu as defeatist, while the post-war Marxists hailed it as a brilliant attack on the decadence of French society, necessarily leading to war. Renoir's artificially created groups give realistic portrayals of political situations. The multiplicity of interpretations of Renoir's films would seem to support

Bazin's contention concerning the ambiguity of realism.

Truffaut is not content with leaving young Antoine Doinel as the runaway of Les Quatre Cents Coups. Antoine's alienation is complete in the first film, but Truffaut continues with the semi-autobiographical story through a number of sequels. He shows the reintegration of his hero, and therefore, himself, into French society. The shift through time following the young adult Antoine as he copes with National Service, sex, marriage, and divorce, among other things, is accompanied by a change to colour film, giving a less documentary-style approach to societal problems. The survival of Antoine was no longer an issue, and French society, which accepted Truffaut as a cherished member, was no longer on trial.

Although Resnais' intentions are to present topical issues to his viewers, it was his technique of combining the fictional love story with the documentaries, rather than the messages themselves, which created the controversy over Hiroshima Mon Amour. This suited his purpose, since his technique attracted more viewers, who would then be exposed to his messages. Most members of the audience would agree that war is bad, racism is not conducive to international peace, and nuclear war is horrific. Propagandists do not give both sides of an issue, so there is no mention of Japan's role in Asia prior to World War II, no examination of the xenophobia rampant in Japanese society, nor any portrayal

of the many victims of Japanese war atrocities. The War in the Pacific was more of an American preoccupation, and the dropping of the A-bomb was an American decision. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and the continued testing of bombs, however, is an international problem which the French government continues to ignore.

With A Bout de souffle, Godard actually reinterprets his own motivations, based on his politicisation after les événements of May 1968. He claims that the story is concerned with the difficulty of maintaining a love relationship in a society ruled by the capitalist concerns of money and profit.

As annual film festivals continue to bring forth new offerings for the many loyal patrons of cinema, Godard continues to direct films. The 28th New York Film festival which opens on September 21, 1990, at Lincoln Centre will present a reconstituted version of Jean Vigo's L'Atalante. Also featured are the latest films by two New Wave directors, Eric Rohmer's Tale of Springtime, the first of a planned tetralogy, and Godard's Nouvelle Vague. Richard Pena, the film society's program director, describes Nouvelle Vague as "a fresh look at themes the director has explored before: the difficulty of conveying thoughts and feelings in language, and contemporary men and women in a world increasingly ruled by commerce".¹⁹⁴ Such reports of continuity and stability in filmmaking are indicators that

Godard exemplifies *la politique des auteurs*, his often told story unchanged through political turmoil and time.

ENDNOTES

1. Anne Gillain, "The script of delinquency: François Truffaut's Les 400 coups (1959)" in French Film, eds. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau, p. 187.
2. Michel Marie, "'It really makes you sick!': Jean-Luc Godard's A bout de souffle (1959)", in French Film, eds. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau, p. 202.
3. Marie, p. 206.
4. Georges Sadoul, Histoire du cinéma français, p. 6.
5. Sadoul, p. 6.
6. François Truffaut, Les Films De Ma Vie, p. 132. Truffaut is making the point that techniques of realism make a subject more knowable to its audience. Neo-realism "demystifies" the proletariat by filming them in realistic situations as they go about their everyday activities. It is associated mainly with the Italian filmmakers who portrayed the dispossessed of post-World War II Italy in their daily struggles for survival. While the genteel dress and demeanour of the workers leaving Lumière's factory in 1895 bear little resemblance to the shabby attire and desperate behaviour of the characters featured in the prototype film of neo-realism, Vittorio de Sica's The Bicycle Thief (1948), Lumière's film, nonetheless, constitutes the first portrayal of the working class in its everyday pursuits.
7. Sadoul, p. 7.
8. Sadoul, p. 8.
9. Sadoul, pp. 8-9.
10. Sadoul, p. 10.
11. Sadoul, p. 10.
12. V. F. Perkins, Film as Film, p. 61.

13. Truffaut, p. 133.
14. Truffaut, pp. 132-133.
15. Léo Sauvage, L'Affaire Lumière, p. 211.
16. Lincoln F. Johnson, Film Space Time Light and Sound, pp. 2-3.
17. George Wead and George Lellis, Film: Form and Function, p. 39.
18. Wead and Lellis, pp.33-53.
19. Wead and Lellis, p. 42.
20. Robin Buss, The French Through Their Films, p. 13.
21. Andrew Sarris, Politics and Cinema, p. 2.
22. Alice Yaeger Kaplan, Reproductions of Banality, p. 146. Kaplan reproduces a sentence from the 1935 version of Bardèche's and Brasillach's book, translated by Irene Barry in 1938, referring to a film by Charlie Chaplin, which reads: "Volumes could be written about a certain toughness in Charlie and the suppressed resentment which often lends a strangely human note to his misfortune...". The 1943 revised version reads: "Volumes could be written about a certain toughness in Charlie and the suppressed resentment which often lends a strangely Hebraic note to his misfortune...". Kaplan cites other similar changes.
23. Lucien Rébatet, quoted in André Bazin, French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance, p. 13.
24. Roger Régent, quoted in Bazin, p. 19.
25. Truffaut, in Bazin, p. 19.
26. George Lellis, Bertolt Brecht: Cahiers du Cinéma and Contemporary Film Theory, p. 8.
27. Lellis, p. 13
28. Russell Campbell, Cinema Strikes Back, pp. 71-114.
29. Lellis, p. 3.
30. Paul Virilio, War and Cinema, pp. 31-45, first published in Cahiers du Cinéma, 1984.

31. Alexandre Astruc, "La Caméra/Style" in The New Wave, ed. Peter Graham, p. 22.
32. Bazin, quoted in James Monaco, The New Wave, p. 7.
33. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 15.
34. Clair quoted in R. C. Dale, The Films of René Clair, Volume I, pp. 12-13.
35. Clair quoted in Dale, Volume I, pp. 12-13.
36. Clair quoted in Dale, Volume I, pp. 12-13.
37. Dale, Volume I, p. 28.
38. Summary of Paris Qui Dort in Dale, Volume I, pp. 15-16.
39. Scenario of Entr'acte by Francis Picabia reprinted in Dale, Volume I, p. 33.
40. Clair quoted in Dale, Volume I, p. 17.
41. Summary of Entr'acte in R. C. Dale, The Films of René Clair, Volume II, pp. 22-25.
42. Paris-Midi quoted in Dale, Volume II, p. 26.
43. Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, A History of Motion Pictures, pp. 243-244.
44. Jean Renoir, Rules of the Game, p. 23. Bergman adopts the danse-macabre technique in his The Seventh Seal (1956) where the victims of the bubonic plague are linked and silhouetted while being lead away by black-robed Death, as does Woody Allen in Love and Death (1976) as a group of recalcitrant victims are dragged off, kicking and screaming, by the Grim Reaper.
45. Clair quoted in Dale, Volume II, p. 83.
46. Summary of Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie in Dale, Volume II, pp. 70-80.
47. Parade (1915) is an avant-garde ballet, and Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel (1921) a surrealist play, both by Jean Cocteau.
48. The item identified with Paul Olivier who plays Uncle Vézinet is the troublesome ear trumpet. Bardèche and Brasillach must have seen a different version, or else confused the paper hat with the paper boat that appears in Entr'acte.

49. Bardèche and Brasillach, pp. 245-249.
50. Richard Abel, French Cinema, p. 138.
51. Sadoul, p. 83. According to Sadoul, Kirsanov, after the unwarranted failure of his film, Rapt, turned to commercial cinema, but did continue to be an inventive director.
52. Abel, p. 395.
53. Abel, p. 397.
54. Summary of Ménilmontant in Abel, pp.395-402.
55. Perkins, p. 32.
56. Bazin quoted in Perkins, p. 32.
57. Bazin quoted in Perkins, p. 32.
58. Bazin quoted in Perkins, p. 33.
59. Sergei Eisenstein quoted in Perkins, p. 32.
60. Perkins, p. 33. These are criticisms of Russian montage expressed by André Bazin.
61. Sadoul, p. 83.
62. Bazin quoted in Perkins, p. 36.
63. Perkins, p. 37.
64. Rudolph Arnheim quoted in Perkins, p. 37.
65. Arnheim quoted in Perkins, p. 37.
66. Ernest Lindgren quoted in Perkins, p. 37.
67. Bazin quoted in Perkins, p. 38.
68. Perkins, pp. 37-38.
69. William G. Simon, The Films of Jean Vigo, p. 1. Films include A Propos de Nice (1929), Zéro de Conduite (1933), and L'Atalante (1934), and the less important Taras (1931).
70. P. E. Salès Gomès quoted by Jacques Chevallier, "Zéro de conduite", in Régards neufs sur le cinéma, Jacques Chevallier and Max Egly, eds., p. 125.

71. Jean Vigo quoted in "Zéro de Conduite", p. 125.
72. Simon, p. 54.
73. Simon, p. 56.
74. Summary of Zéro de Conduite in Simon, pp. 54-59.
75. Sadoul, p. 260.
76. Peter Calvocoressi, Guy Wint and John Pritchard, Total War: the Causes and Courses of the Second World War, volume I, The Western Hemisphere, p. 317.
77. Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard, p. 317.
78. Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard, p. 318.
79. Jean Renoir, Ma Vie et Mes Films, p. 114.
80. Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard, p. 319.
81. Calvocoressi, Wint and Pritchard, p. 319.
82. Alice Yaeger Kaplan, Reproductions of Banality, p. 52.
83. Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach quoted in Kaplan, p. 144.
84. Jean Renoir, La Grande Illusion, p. 8.
85. Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, "Political polarisation and French cinema, 1934-39", article in Propaganda, Politics and Film, eds. Nicholas Pronay and D. W. Spring, fn., p. 169. This is the old Hollywood style of seamless narration. In dialogue sequences it involves an establishing two-shot followed by a montage of one-shots for each speaker in the dialogue.
86. Strebel, p. 157.
87. Strebel, p. 158.
88. Strebel, p. 158.
89. The Producer's Association quoted in Strebel, pp. 158-59.
90. Strebel, p. 159.
91. Pierre Taittinger quoted in Strebel, p. 160.

92. Strebel, p. 160.
93. L'Action Cinématographique quoted in Strebel, p. 161.
94. La Critique Cinématographique quoted in Strebel, p. 161.
95. La Critique Cinématographique quoted in Strebel, p. 162.
96. Leslie Halliwell, Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion, ninth edition, p. 121.
97. Renoir, Ma Vie et Mes Films, p. 114.
98. Renoir, p. 113.
99. Strebel, p. 162.
100. Strebel, p. 163.
101. Strebel, p. 163.
102. Strebel, p. 164.
103. Strebel, p. 164.
104. Strebel, p. 165.
105. Strebel, p. 165.
106. Strebel, p. 168.
107. Lucien Rébatet quoted by Truffaut in French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance, p. 14.
108. Strebel, p. 169.
109. Jean Renoir, Rules of the Game, p. 42.
110. Renoir, pp. 49-50.
111. Renoir, p. 55.
112. Renoir, p. 62.
113. Renoir, p. 68.
114. Renoir, p. 68.
115. Renoir, p. 21.

116. Sadoul, p. 81.
117. Renoir, p. 13.
118. Renoir, pp. 13-14.
119. Renoir, La Grande Illusion, p. 211.
120. Bazin, French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance, p. 30. In a negative review of the Prévert brother's film, Adieu Léonard, Bazin states that to console himself for having seen such a bad film he went to see Le Jour se lève - for the fourth time.
121. Among others, Drôle de Drame (1937), Quai des Brumes (1938), Hôtel du Nord (1938), and after Le Jour se lève (1939), Les Visiteurs du Soir (1942), and the renowned Les Enfants du Paradis (1944).
122. Bazin in Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert, Le Jour se lève, p. 12.
123. Russell Campbell, Cinema Strikes Back, pp. 27-28.
124. Campbell, p. 8.
125. Summary of Le Jour se lève from Carné and Prévert, pp. 15-128.
126. Bazin in Carné and Prévert, p. 5.
127. Sadoul, p. 86.
128. Renoir, Ma Vie et Mes Films, p. 145.
129. Renoir, p.145.
130. Renoir, p. 145.
131. Renoir, pp. 145-146.
132. Renoir, La Grande Illusion, p. 7.
133. Renoir, p. 7.
134. Renoir, Ma Vie et mes Films, p. 146.
135. Renoir, p. 146.
136. Renoir, p. 177.

137. Truffaut in Bazin, French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance, p. 12. Truffaut claims that set designer Trauner and composer Joseph Kosma worked on Carné's films, but had to let their contributions be signed by others.
138. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 16.
139. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 8.
140. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 11.
141. Bazin, p. 10.
142. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 19.
143. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 20.
144. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 20. These were René Clément, Jacques Tati, Jean-Pierre Melville, Roger Leenhardt, Yves Ciampi, Alexandre Astruc, and Marcel Camus.
145. Truffaut in Bazin, p. 20.
146. Bardèche quoted in Kaplan, p. 167.
147. Bardèche quoted in Kaplan, p. 167.
148. Monaco, p. vii.
149. Monaco, p. viii.
150. "Interview with François Truffaut", in The New Wave, ed. Peter Graham, pp. 10-11.
151. André Bazin, "La Politique des Auteurs", in The New Wave, ed. Peter Graham, pp. 150-51.
152. Jacques Rivette quoted in "La Politique des Auteurs", p. 151.
153. Truffaut, Les Quatre Cents Coups('59); Godard, A Bout de souffle('59); Chabrol, Le Beau Serge('58), Les Cousins('59), A Double Tour('59); Rivette, Paris nous appartient('59); Rohmer, Le Signe du Lion('59).
154. Monaco, p. 113.
155. Monaco, p. 113.
156. Jean-Luc Godard quoted in Monaco, p. 113.
157. Monaco, p. 113.

158. Sarris, p. 121.
159. Sarris, p. 122.
160. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, Film Theory, p.1.
161. Lapsley and Westlake, p. 1.
162. Lapsley and Westlake, pp. 1-2.
163. Truffaut in French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance, p. 15.
164. Marguerite Duras, Hiroshima Mon Amour, pp. 21-22.
165. Duras, p. 22.
166. Duras, p. 22.
167. Freddy Sweet, The Film Narratives of Alain Resnais, p. 23.
168. Sweet, p. 87.
169. Sarris, p. 86.
170. Bernard Pingaud quoted in Sweet, p. 23.
171. Duras, p. 52.
172. Monaco, p. 17.
173. Truffaut quoted in Monaco, p. 17.
174. Truffaut in Monaco. p. 17.
175. Monaco, p. 17.
176. Gillain, p. 188.
177. Truffaut quoted in Gillain, pp. 188-189.
178. Gillain, p. 189.
179. Truffaut quoted in Marie, p.202.
180. Marie, p. 202.
181. Truffaut quoted in Marie, p. 203.
182. Godard in Colin MacCabe, Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics, p. 34

183. MacCabe, p. 50.
184. Godard quoted in MacCabe, p. 23.
185. David Coynik. Film Real to Reel, p. 96.
186. Sarris, p. 6.
187. Sarris, p. 6.
188. Campbell, p. 27.
189. Campbell, p. 27.
190. Godard quoted in Marie, p. 206.
191. Renoir, Rules of the Game, p. 21.
192. Halliwell, p. 586.
193. Lapsley and Westlake, pp. 2-3.
194. Richard Pena quoted in an article by Eleanor Blau in The New York Times, August, 1990.

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