THESIS TITLE: *La Bande des Quatre: Nineteenth-Century Artistic and Literary Sources in Late Nouvelle Vague Filmmaking*

ABSTRACT: This thesis examines the different ways the cinemas of Éric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard adapted literary and artistic motifs characteristic of the nineteenth-century romantic and realist traditions, from the 1960s to the 1980s. The selection of these four directors is based on their early and formative commitment to the politique des auteurs, a film criticism trend that was significantly indebted to central aesthetic precepts of the realist and naturalist novels. The profound social changes of the 1960s led directors, artists and writers to question long-accepted ideas about representation and authorship. The left-wing culture in France, which envisioned art and political protest as an inseparable whole, extensively criticised the nineteenth-century discourse on the realist novel as the outward revelation of the author's inner life. As a result, critics rapidly considered the politique des auteurs and, by extension, the universalist and openly westerncentric premises of the Nouvelle Vague as unpersuasive and dismissible. This thesis acknowledges that the relation these directors maintained with nineteenth-century thought has been overshadowed by scholarship on their individual careers, a research tendency that consolidates the notion of rupture and discontinuity between Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's filmographies. However, each one of them commonly returned to nineteenth-century sourcing and imagery in the post-1968 period through adaptations and transpositions of Heinrich von Kleist, Honoré de Balzac, Adèle Hugo, Prosper Mérimée and so on. As the first work to regroup this 'gang of four' in the aftermath of Rohmer's forced resignation in *Cahiers du cinéma*, this thesis argues that their approaches to the nineteenth-century cultural legacy should be assessed as distinct forms of reaffirming, revising, challenging and commenting on their former vision of cinema as a novelistic space, able to manifest the essence of sheer appearances. As the chapters will demonstrate, their engagements with nineteenth-century art and literature are complex. They are, on the one hand, inflected by their personal responses to the politicisation of the 1960s and 1970s French film culture and, on the other hand, informed by their individual understanding of the role of nineteenth-century narratives and aesthetic patterns within the framework of modern filmmaking.

The introduction chapter lays the theoretical foundations of the Nouvelle Vague's early engagements with notions of romanticism and realism and, in light of the existing scholarship, establishes the aims and methodology of this thesis. Chapter two examines Rohmer's cinematic transposition of Balzac's rhetorical realism and analyses the paradoxes and modernist potential of the director's neoclassical film aesthetics in *Die Marquise von O…* (1976). Chapter three explores the ways Rivette turns the Balzacian myths of Icarus and Pygmalion into more immediate accounts on his contemporaries' struggle for unalienated and totalising works of art through *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (1971) and *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991). Chapter four analyses Truffaut's long series of engagements with nineteenth-century imagery and explores the reasons why *L'enfant sauvage* (1970), *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971), *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975) and *La chambre verte* (1978) coincided with his growing conservatism. Chapter five develops Godard's relationship with the romantic legacy through the case-studies of *Passion* (1982) and *Prénom Carmen* (1983) – films which allude to Charles Baudelaire's entangled notions of spleen and the ideal and give an unprecedented attention to the aesthetics of chiaroscuro. The conclusion chapter establishes points of convergences and contrasts between the four directors through a comparative account that also addresses the ways in which their individual stands towards the romantic and realist legacies have evolved.

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LA BANDE DES QUATRE:
Nineteenth-century Artistic and Literary Sources in Late Nouvelle Vague Filmmaking

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the different ways the cinemas of Éric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard adapted literary and artistic motifs characteristic of the nineteenth-century romantic and realist traditions, from the 1960s to the 1980s. The selection of these four directors is based on their early and formative commitment to the politique des auteurs, a film criticism trend that was significantly indebted to central aesthetic precepts of the realist and naturalist novels. The profound social changes of the 1960s led directors, artists and writers to question long-accepted ideas about representation and authorship. The left-wing culture in France, which envisioned art and political protest as an inseparable whole, extensively criticised the nineteenth-century discourse on the realist novel as the outward revelation of the author's inner life. As a result, critics rapidly considered the politique des auteurs and, by extension, the universalist and openly westerncentric premises of the Nouvelle Vague as unpersuasive and dismissible. This thesis acknowledges that the relation these directors maintained with nineteenth-century thought has been overshadowed by scholarship on their individual careers, a research tendency that consolidates the notion of rupture and discontinuity between Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's filmographies. However, each one of them commonly returned to nineteenth-century sourcing and imagery in the post-1968 period through adaptations and transpositions of Heinrich von Kleist, Honoré de Balzac, Adèle Hugo, Prosper Mérimée and so on. As the first work to regroup this 'gang of four' in the aftermath of Rohmer's forced resignation in *Cahiers du cinéma*, this thesis argues that their approaches to the nineteenth-century cultural legacy should be assessed as distinct forms of reaffirming, revising, challenging and commenting on their former vision of cinema as a novelistic space, able to manifest the essence of sheer appearances. As the chapters will demonstrate, their engagements with nineteenth-century art and literature are complex. They are, on the one hand, inflected by their personal responses to the politicisation of the 1960s and 1970s French film culture and, on the other hand, informed by their individual understanding of the role of nineteenth-century narratives and aesthetic patterns within the framework of modern filmmaking.

The introduction chapter lays the theoretical foundations of the Nouvelle Vague's early engagements with notions of romanticism and realism and, in light of the existing scholarship, establishes the aims and methodology of this thesis. Chapter two examines Rohmer's cinematic transposition of Balzac's rhetorical realism and analyses the paradoxes and modernist potential of the director's neoclassical film aesthetics in *Die Marquise von O…* (1976). Chapter three explores the ways Rivette turns the Balzacian myths of Icarus and Pygmalion into more immediate accounts on his contemporaries' struggle for unalienated and totalising works of art through *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (1971) and *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991). Chapter four analyses Truffaut's long series of engagements with nineteenth-century imagery and explores the reasons why *L'enfant sauvage* (1970), *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971), *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975) and *La chambre verte* (1978) coincided with his growing conservatism. Chapter five develops Godard's relationship with the romantic legacy through the case-studies of *Passion* (1982) and *Prénom Carmen* (1983) – films which allude to Charles Baudelaire's entangled notions of spleen and the ideal and give an unprecedented attention to the aesthetics of chiaroscuro. The conclusion chapter establishes points of convergences and contrasts between the four directors through a comparative account that also addresses the ways in which their individual stands towards the romantic and realist legacies have evolved.

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This work is dedicated to my late father, Mostafa Tavassoli Tehrani…

'Je pense que les révolutions sont très attachées aux traditions'

– Jean Renoir interviewed by
Jacques Rivette (1963)

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. The Nouvelle Vague between tradition and modernity

This dissertation examines the role four French directors, at the origin of the politique des auteurs, gave to nineteenth-century art and literature in the aftermath of 1968. The approach adopted is a comparative one, exploring the ways the conservative – and in some cases even reactionary – precepts of Éric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard's film criticism informed, challenged and determined their later engagements with Heinrich von Kleist, Honoré de Balzac, Adèle Hugo, Eugène Delacroix and others. As cinema professionals and lovers still mourn the death of Jacques Rivette (an event which further relays the Nouvelle Vague to the rank of modern myth), it is suprising to note that no consistent attempt at scrutinising the traces of a shared aesthetic project beyond the 1956-1964 time frame has yet been conducted. Though we may be far from the idea of comparing Rohmer's relationship with his former allies to the 'inviolable bonds' that united Balzac's secret society in *L'histoire des Treize* (1833), their common return to nineteenth-century sources in the more mature stage of their careers provides an opportunity to measure the extent to which their perceptions of the novel, painting, theatre and music have developed, changed and adjusted themselves to the socio-cultural upheavals of the late 1960s.[1] This thesis therefore claims the importance of analysing the reverential and parodic references, adaptations, reworkings, and implicit or explicit incorporations of nineteenth-century themes and motifs in late Nouvelle Vague filmmaking as a means to reconstituting and reflecting on the remaining vestiges of the politique des auteurs.

To build the case for needed research on the relationship of the Nouvelle Vague with nineteenth-century art and literature, it is necessary to analyse, through the example of *Suzanne Simonin, La religieuse de Diderot* (1966), how the press, publicity, cultural distributors and even scholars are at the origin of the amalgamation between the French directors from *Cahiers du cinéma* and the progressive, if not subversive, aspect of their film aesthetics.

[1] Honoré de Balzac, *History of the Thirteen*, trans. Herbert J. Hunt (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 21.

Today, the 'Jacques Rivette affair' has acquired a privileged status in the discourses concerned with the triggers of May 1968. The trial of Rivette, whose film adaptation was charged for offending religious and public morality, focused on the transgressive overtones of the director's reworking of Denis Diderot's novel *La Religieuse* (1796) in the context of 1966.[2] Rather than a thorough exploration of Rivette's relationship with the eighteenth-century novel and of the significance of reclaiming Diderot's legacy in the 1960s, through cinema, scholarship has given priority to the political impact such controversy has had on the history of French cinema. Surely, alongside more serious affairs, such as the disappearance of Mehdi Ben Barka, the founder of the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP), the censorship of *La religieuse* has provided further evidence of the French government's rogue policies since the Occupation and the Algerian War of Independence.[3] The length of the legal process endured by Rivette and his producer Georges de Beauregard brought to light public debates on the interference of the Church with political matters, and, as such, on the Clergy's legitimacy to impose moral regulations and guidelines within the media and cinema institutions.[4]

From the perspective of film and television productions, *Suzanne Simonin, La religieuse de Diderot* was not, however, the only work to portray the Ancien Régime's decay during the 1960s. Stellio Lorenzi's television series *La caméra explore le temps* brought popular acclaim to stories from the French Revolution, like the death of Marie-Antoinette or the lives of Danton and Robespierre during the Reign of Terror.[5] The

[2] On the 6th of April 1966, Yvon Le Vaillant reported in *Le nouvel observateur* the numerous complaints generated by the film adaptation of Diderot's *La religieuse* since the beginning of Rivette's shooting. The journalist describes, with a tinge of irony, the atmosphere of suspicion and complot led by Roman Catholic-affiliated groups such as the A.P.E.L. (Association de Parents d'élèves des Écoles Libres) and by a wide network of nuns in charge of education, hospital and parish institutions. Giving in to nation-wide petitions asking for the ban of the film's impending release, the Minister of Information Yvon Bourges disregarded the screening visa granted by the Censor Board and denounced, in unison with Catholic associations, a film which 'travestit la vie religieuse, porte atteinte à l'honneur des religieuses, blesse le sens moral, dénature la vie de celles qui furent les éducatrices de nos mères, de nos épouses et qui sont celles de nos enfants…'/ '[Rivette's film] transvestites religious life, violates the honour of nuns, offends moral sense, misrepresents the lives of those who educated our mothers, ours wives and our children…' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Yvon Le Vaillant, 'La cabale des dévotes', *Le nouvel observateur* (6 April 1966): 38–39.

[3] There are reasons to believe that the Ministry of Information used Rivette's adaptation as a scapegoat to reaffirm its authority amid the pressure of the Catholic community. See Sabine Rousseau, 'L'Affaire de la Religieuse de Rivette (1965–1967)', *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires*, Numéro spécial (2012): 3–5, Accessed January12, 2016, doi:10.4000/cerri.1101

[4] The affair of the *Religieuse* extends over a period of five years, from 1962 to 1967. See Valérie Vignaux, *Suzanne Simonin, ou, La religieuse*: *Jacques Rivette* (Liège: Éditions du CÉFAL, 2005), 78.

[5] Sylvie Dallet, *La révolution française et le cinéma* (Paris: Éditions des Quatre-Vents, 1988), 154.

French Revolution was, within the cinema and television industry, a rich and controversial topic that playwrights, scriptwriters and directors approached through different, if not opposing, perspectives. Scriptwriters like Lorenzi, André Castelot and Alain Decaux, who belonged to Resistance groups during the Occupation, aimed to reconcile the French people with their national culture by taking advantage of television's wide audience.[6] The importance given to the psychological complexity of historical characters and of the French crowd was evidence of their literary ingenuity. Through archival research and clever dialogues, these writers illuminated the public with the individual and political motivations that shaped French Republican values and provoked historical events like the Storming of the Bastille.[7]

What was therefore so special about Rivette's *La religieuse*? In the realm of cinema, Rivette's adaptation practices were oriented towards an aesthetic of authorial erasure, as shown through the minimal role left to montage and the priority given to minimalistic sequence shots which better highlight Diderot's text.[8] In this regard, Douglas Morrey and Alison Smith described *La religieuse* as an 'apparently innocent academic exercise' rather than an act of provocation as the censorship petition implied.[9] At the time of the occurrence, the abbot Marc Oraison was intrigued by the government's decision and held the view that *Suzanne Simonin, la religieuse de Diderot* was an analysis of the moral decadence of the late eighteenth century and thereby the film, just as the novel, criticised the hypocritical and anti-religious dimension of clerical life: '[Rivette's film] n'est absolument pas antireligieux, au contraire'.[10] Many contemporaneous articles concurred with Oraison and reckoned that the censorship of Rivette's adaptation was somewhat unjustified.[11] Considering the context and the

[6] In contrast with cinema, the French television enjoyed, in the late 1950s, the status of a 'new medium', which many times prevented production managers to get through State control and censorship. See Dallet, *La révolution française et le cinéma*, 152–153.

[7] The very name of this television genre, the *dramatique*, referred to historical reconstitutions known for downplaying luxurious décors and dismissing famous actors, in favour of pedagogical narratives which taught the spectators about their cultural patrimony and civic responsibility. Ibid., 157–158.

[8] Rivette's adaptation resulted from the unsuccessful staging of Diderot's novel, which ran for less than a month in February 1963 in the Théâtre du Studio des Champs Élysées. See Kevin Jackson, '"Carnal to the Point of Scandal": On the Affair of La Religieuse', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction on Screen*, ed. Robert Mayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148.

[9] Douglas Morrey and Alison Smith, *Jacques Rivette* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 182–183.

[10] '[*Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Diderot*] is absolutely not an anti-religious film, quite the opposite' [My translation, ZTZ]. Le Vaillant, 'La cabale des dévotes': 39.

[11] Avant-garde plays like Peter Weiss' *Marat-Sade* were staged in unambiguously Artauldian and Brechtian fashion at the Théâtre de la Ville Sarah Bernhardt in September 1966, while Rivette's film was still forbidden to the public. See Dallet, *La révolution française et le cinéma*, 166.

existing scholarship on the matter, there is evidence to suggest that the banning of *La religieuse* did not originate from the a-posteriori viewing of the film but from an a-priori association of leading actress Anna Karina and director Rivette to a certain post-war youth, which made the newspaper headlines in the early 1950s through captions like 'mal de jeunesse', 'Une certaine jeunesse', 'La génération des J-3 à la conquête de Paris', until Françoise Giroud formulated the famous and all-encompassing phrase 'Nouvelle Vague' in *L'Express* in 1957.[12]

The case of *La religieuse* demonstrates that the many levels of reading at play are intrinsically related to the film's historical context. In fact, its controversial reception gives an indication of cinema's status as a politically influential medium, which, contrary to television, radio and print journalism, differs from the role of a democratic and information organ at the service of the nation.[13] In 1966, the general misunderstanding of Rivette's artistic intentions resulted partly from his belonging to the Nouvelle Vague, a tradition which was characterised, so the story goes, by contemporary subjects of concern, small shooting teams, young and relatively unknown actors, the challenging of the narrative conventions of classical Hollywood cinema and, of course, the disregard for period films. While scholarly accounts of the Nouvelle Vague have consolidated these ideas, especially in the light of François Truffaut's pamphlet against the *tradition de qualité*, each of Rivette, Truffaut, Godard and Rohmer's filmic corpora have a strong and overlooked relationship with the western tradition of the novel, and more generally, with nineteenth-century artistic and literary legacy. The association of the Nouvelle Vague with a stylistic rupture with the *tradition de qualité* clarifies the controversial nature of Rivette's adaptation.

In 1957, film critic and director Jacques Doniol-Valcroze estimated that 90% of the national film production was inspired by literature and theatre: 'l'esprit, le goût, sont en retard sur la technique'.[14] Clearly, the co-founder of *Cahiers du cinéma* was referring to film productions' tendency to adapt French classics in order to compete with the commercial standards of Hollywood films. In addition to the left wing and anti-clerical

[12] According to Henri Lefebvre, the prevailing disenchantment and political cynicism expressed by the French youth in the decade following World War II was provoked by the sense of powerlessness for these generations to intervene in the making of history. See Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 19; 141–184.

[13] Dallet, *La révolution française et le cinéma*, 152–153.

[14] 'The spirit and the taste are lagging behind the technique' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, 'Cinéma et littérature', *Cinéma 57* (February 1957): 59–60.

bias of some prevalent scriptwriters (i.e., Jean Aurenche, Pierre Bost, Henri Jeanson, Jacques Sigurd), their literary and playwright skills reinforced the status of cinema as the poor cousin of theatre and the novel, through film scripts that took the liberty of modifying the source text for commercial and political purposes:[15]

> Ils se comportent vis-à-vis du scénario comme l'on croit rééduquer un délinquant en lui trouvant du travail, ils croient toujours avoir 'fait le maximum' pour lui en lui parant des subtilités, de cette science des nuances qui font le mince mérite des romans moderne […] (N'a-t-on pas parlé de Sartre et de Camus pour l'œuvre de Pagliero, de phénoménologie pour celle d'Allégret?)[16]

While the film adaptation became the leading practice of the *tradition de qualité*, Nouvelle Vague directors brought stylistic, technical and political renewal through personal and innovative films, which, for a large part, focused on representing the daily life of contemporaneous French youth. In his insightful account of the politique des auteurs, John Hess distinguished the editorial line of *Cahiers du cinéma* from other journalistic sources (e.g., *Les temps modernes*, *Les lettres françaises*, *France-observateur*, *Positif*, *L'Express*) through its refusal to understand cinema as a socially committed art form and subsequent 'advocacy of art for art's sake'.[17] In other words, the political disengagement of *Cahiers du cinéma* meant, in the 1950s, that the film critics wrote against the left-wing French culture led by politically engaged writers, philosophers and historians like Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Aragon, Albert Camus and Georges Sadoul.[18] The situation of *Cahiers du cinéma* and the future Nouvelle Vague

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[15] Guy Austin, *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 9–12.

[16] 'They approach scripts the way people do when they think they can rehabilitate a delinquent by finding him or her a job; they always believe they have done 'all they can' for a script by embellishing it with subtleties, with the art of nuance that is the tenuous merit of the modern novel […] (The work of Pagliero has prompted references to Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, that of Allégret allusions to phenomenology).' See François Truffaut, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français', *Cahiers du cinéma* 31 (January 1954): 20. For the English translation, refer to François Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema', in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 13.

[17] John Hess, '*La Politique des Auteurs*: World view as Aesthetics', *Jump Cut* 1 (1974): 19–22, Accessed April 24, 2016, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC01folder/auturism1.html To learn about the political cleavages and oppositions between post-war French journals, see the following collection of essays: Marc Dambre (ed.), *Les Hussards: Une génération littéraire* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne-Nouvelle, 2000).

[18] Antoine de Baecque, *La cinéphilie: Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture (1944–1968)* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2003), 177–188.

was therefore much subtler than a Manichean condemnation of tradition and celebration of modernism. On the one hand, leftist critics such as Bernard Dort and the *Positif* group attacked *Cahiers du cinéma*'s reactionary return to an out-dated and romantic definition of cinema as an autonomous bourgeois art, freed from any political militancy and, on the other hand, the Nouvelle Vague became a revolutionary and anti-conformist cultural force that witnessed (through simple storylines which combined ascetic with idiosyncratic cinematic techniques) the French youth's existential malaise and collective search for points of reference. In parallel with the influence of *Esprits* critics such as André Bazin, Roger Leenhardt and Amédée Ayfre, whose writings on cinema supported Emmanuel Mounier's Personalist philosophy, the Young Turks' criticism praised films that revealed the transcendence and salvation of individuals, whom the director generally introduces, at the beginning of the film, as solitary, morally lost, disconnected from the rest of society and from any type of spiritual life.[19] This contextualisation allows me to clarify the principle that *La religieuse*, alongside any other Nouvelle Vague film, was born of a dialogue between the classical tradition and modernist ambitions. In this sense, the atmosphere of suspicion and apprehension generated by Rivette's adaptation stemmed from its artistic and commercial disengagement from the Church's moral leadership, which exerted a strong influence on State Ministries.[20] The margin of freedom de Beauregard granted to Rivette, did not mean, after all, that the director encouraged blasphemy – quite the opposite, in fact.

As we shall see, Rivette and his accomplices of *Cahiers*, Rohmer, Truffaut and Godard, have developed filmmaking careers that continuously engaged with nineteenth-century traditions, themes and motifs. These engagements became even more apparent in the aftermath of May 1968, a moment where intellectuals, artists and directors struggled over, contested and alternatively interpreted the legacy of nineteenth-century romanticism and realism. To further clarify this thesis' mission, closer inspection of *Cahiers du cinéma*'s early film criticism is useful to understand the ways the romantic and realist legacies have informed the aesthetic foundations of the Nouvelle Vague.

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[19] Hess, '*La Politique des Auteurs*: World view as Aesthetics': 19–22. To learn about Mounier's Personalism and its impact on Bazin's film criticism, see Elisabeth de Bourqueney, 'Cinéma et Personnalisme: la formation d'André Bazin', *Autres temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social* 6 (1985): 80–82, Accessed April 25, 2016, doi: 10.3406/chris.1985.1021

[20] Rousseau, 'L'Affaire de la Religieuse de Rivette (1965–1967)': 3–5.

As previously evoked, the politique des auteurs was influenced by a new kind of romanticism pervading the young generations born in the interwar years.[21] According to Henri Lefebvre, the sense of discontentment and boredom experienced by the post-war youth led artists and writers to reflect on the 'spiritual void' left by the Second World War, through a wide range of romantic variants that encompassed, on the one hand, the revolutionary aesthetics of post-war avant-garde movements such as Lettrism and Situationism and, on the other hand, a romanticism characterised by an 'unblinkered aestheticism and an extreme individualism' as well as a 'quietist withdrawal from political engagement'.[22] The writings of Maurice Schérer (soon to be known as Éric Rohmer), Hans Lucas (also known as Jean-Luc Godard), Jacques Rivette and François Truffaut were situated at the opposite end of the political left, which in the early 1950s was dominated by Sartrean existentialism.[23] In the section 'Opinions sur l'Avant-Garde' of *Cahiers du cinéma* 10, Rohmer did not hide his contempt for the deconstructionist aesthetics of Dada and Surrealism through a double-edged apologia for Isodore Isou's Lettrism*:*

> Le Chef du Lettrisme fut trop assidu aux séances des ciné-clubs pour se bercer de l'illusion funeste à tant d'autres, que le cinéma n'a été jusqu'à lui qu'entre les mains d'artisans grossistes ou d'adroits commerçants. En ce domaine aussi, proclame-t-il dans son commentaire, tout a été dit et bien dit et avant de nous révéler ses théories destructives, prend-il le soin de rendre hommage aux anciens maîtres qu'il se propose d'égaler peut-être, non pourtant de surpasser. [24]

In this excerpt, Rohmer expresses a semblance of sympathy towards Isou due to the artist's (admittedly pessimistic) acknowledgement of the superiority of D.W. Griffith, Abel Gance, F.W. Murnau and Sergueï Eisenstein (i.e., the 'old masters'), hence

[21] Henri Lefebvre, *Vers un romantisme révolutionnaire* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Lignes, 2011), 40–55.
[22] Michael E. Gardiner, 'Post-Romantic Irony in Bakhtin and Lefebvre', *History of Human Sciences* 25, 3 (2012): 60, Accessed April 25, 2016, doi: 10.1177/0952695112439142
[23] Marco Grosoli explores the aesthetic influence of the Hussards' post-war rightist literature on the Young Turks early criticism in *Arts* and *Cahiers du cinéma* in Marco Grosoli, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of the "politique des auteurs"', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 33–50.
[24] 'The leader of Lettrism was assiduously attending the cine-clubs' screenings and was therefore unable to harbour the illusion – disastrous for so many others – that cinema remained, up to him, in the hands of wholesale artisans or skilled businessmen. In this domain too, he announces in his commentary that everything has already been said, and said very well, and before revealing his destructive theories he takes care of paying tribute to the old masters that he wishes to equal but not to surpass.' [My translation, ZTZ] See Maurice Schérer, 'Isou ou les choses telles qu'elles sont', *Cahiers du cinéma* 10 (March 1952): 30.

reaffirming his own pantheist and anti-modernist bias.[25] The conservative-type of romanticism connoted by the ironic tone of this review which, broadly speaking, points out the fascistic insinuations of a movement pretending to be '"à la gauche" du surréalisme', was in tune with Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's early associations of cinema with high culture.[26]

Surely, there is no need today to dispute the repeatedly proved influence of B-movies, thrillers, fantasy and science fiction novels and other derivative products from 'pop culture' on the film aesthetics of the Nouvelle Vague. The premise according to which Godard's later involvement in radical politics undermines any attempt to build a coherent comparative study between his films and those of Rohmer, Rivette and Truffaut is nonetheless problematic. In fact, their film criticism, which many scholars still consider as a fundamental lead to understand the aesthetic workings of their earlier and more contemporary films, explicitely established cinema as the legitimate heir of fine arts, literature and classical music, in the most traditional and elitist sense. In other words, it is necessary to further studies that make apparent the links between the neoromantic bias and conservative tendencies of the politique des auteurs and the individuated approaches to nineteenth-century themes and source material in their later works. Regardless of their respective and shifting political colours, i.e., simply put, the right-wing orientations of Rohmer and Truffaut and the anti-bourgeois positions of Godard and Rivette, each commonly worked towards the recognition of cinema's respectability, with the help and through the significant influence of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc. Regarding Bazin and his film magazine, *Cahiers du cinéma*, Astruc wrote in January 1959:

> […] on ne peut y nier le désir de donner au cinéma tous ses titres de noblesse, même si l'on ne comprend pas toujours que le plus grand titre de noblesse que l'on puisse lui donner quelque jour (et qu'en fait il possède déjà) c'est *de le considérer comme une fin en soi*, et comme un art auprès duquel, et au profit duquel les autres formes d'art s'épuisent parce qu'il s'en nourrit.[27]

[25] In relation to these directors, Schérer uses the word 'grandeur'. See Schérer, 'Isou ou les choses telles qu'elles sont': 31.
[26] '"On the left-side" of Surrealism' [My translation, ZTZ]. See ibid.: 27.
[27] 'We cannot deny the desire to give to cinema all its titles of nobility, even if we don't always understand that the major title of nobility it could be some day given (and that, in reality, it already has) is to *consider it as an end in itself*, and as an art with which, and for the benefit of which, other art forms become exhausted since cinema feeds on them' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Alexandre Astruc, 'Une façon d'aimer', *Cahiers du cinéma* 91 (January 1959): 22–23.

The understanding of cinema as an end in itself, which is able to reveal the director's personal vision of the world, just like a painting or a novel, contains a paradox whereby the classical concept of mimesis and the romantic genius intersect and eventually fuse into each other. Mise-en-scène, according to Bazin and his followers, should reveal an individuality *within* mimesis, a concept which the author of 'Le mythe du cinéma total' (1946) defined, in relation to cinema, as 'a recreation of the world in its own image, an image unburdened by the freedom of interpretation of the artist or the irreversibility of time'.[28] The conflicting factor of the Young Turks' so-called romanticism therefore lies in the director's intentional self-erasure, a position that lets reality's overwhelming totality speak for itself.[29] To paraphrase Rohmer: rather than constructing the characters' emotional lives and psychology through *découpage* and editing techniques, directors must privilege camera angles and montage that preserve the unity of time and space.[30] Gifted authors were, according to the Young Turks, those directors who created images that went beyond the expression of dictated intentions and acquired, in turn, the autonomous and ineffable beauty of nature.[31] In relation to *Strangers on a Train* (1951), Godard described Alfred Hitchcock's genius through his ability to take nature as his main model and '[…] d'être conduit à la nécessité d'embellir les choses qu'elle [la nature] exposait éparses, de donner, par exemple, à une fin d'après-midi, cet air endimanché de lassitude et de Bonheur'.[32] This critique implies that directors should favour certain cinematic techniques that permit the revelation of an inner life through the outward appearance of the world. Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's acceptance of Bazin's concept of cinematic realism shaped, therefore, the spiritualist and moralistic tone of their criticism which, according to Hess, was concerned with 'the

[28] André Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *What is Cinema, Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 21.
[29] To learn about the notion of totality in romantic and realist literature see Christian Godin, *La Totalité, vol.4: La totalité realisée, les arts et la littérature* (Seyssel: Éditions Champ Vallon, 1997), 363–383.
[30] Éric Rohmer praised Nicholas Ray's *Bitter Victory* (1957) for the director's capacity to transpose, through a strict refusal of psychological conventions, the heroes' 'internal movement'. See Éric Rohmer, 'Venise 1957: *Amère victoire*', *Cahiers du cinéma* 75 (October 1957): 46.
[31] In his review of Luis Buñuel's *Ensayo de un crimen* (1955), Rohmer wrote: 'I am always looking for the moment when the stroke surpasses the intentions of the hand drawing it'. See Éric Rohmer, 'Luis Buñuel: *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*', in *Eric Rohmer, The Taste for Beauty*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 147.
[32] 'to be infallibly driven to embellish things which are insufficient – for instance, to give a late afternoon that Sunday air of lassitude and well-being.' See Hans Lucas, 'Suprématie du sujet', *Cahiers du cinéma* 10 (March 1952): 59. For the English translation, see Jean-Luc Godard, 'Strangers on a Train', in *Godard on Godard*, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 24.

transcendence and salvation of the individual' living in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world.[33]

The belief that the photographic mechanism of cinema could re-establish the original order of nature by revealing a glimpse of meaning and clarity to the world was fundamentally related to Bazin's conception of cinematic realism. According to Bazin, film's instantaneous and unmediated touch with reality opened the way to the concretisation of the human longing for an absolute imitation of nature. Following this logic, Bazin traced back the idealistic concept of cinema as a total reproduction of movement to the ancient rituals of embalming, which were symptomatic of man's psychological apprehension and, at the same time, fascination for death.[34] Just like a mineralogist scrutinises the patterns and reliefs of fossil remains, Bazin treasured cinema's heterogeneous nature and suggested 'there can be no cinema in and for itself'.[35] Indeed, the *Cahiers* critics praised Jean Cocteau, Jean Renoir and Robert Bresson's films because of their unique and unadorned relationship to literature, theatre and painting.[36] According to Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard, filmmaking was an art that drew strength from its synthesising power, which reveals the bonds of brotherhood between arts, just as the nineteenth-century novel worked towards a narrative that borrowed aesthetic virtues from all types of art forms and drew inspiration from multiple literary genres.[37] In this sense, it could be argued that each one of them understood cinema as a medium that could compete with Balzac's aesthetic of totality, through a camera that reveals a physical and metaphysical truth, all at once: 'L'écrivain doit être familiarisé avec tous les effets, toutes les natures. Il est obligé d'avoir en lui je ne sais quel miroir concentrique où, suivant sa fantaisie, l'univers vient se réfléchir'.[38] Just as Rohmer compared Breton and the Surrealists to an 'anarchist junta', the film criticism of this 'gang of four' resembled a nineteenth-century cenacle discussing on a

[33] Hess, '*La Politique des Auteurs*: World View as Aesthetics': 20.
[34] André Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 9–10.
[35] Philip Rosen, 'From impurity to historicity', in *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and intercultural approaches to Film*, eds. Lucia Nagib and Anne Jerslev (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 10.
[36] Bazin theorised the relationship of cinema with literature, theatre and painting in André Bazin, 'Pour un cinéma impur: défense de l'adaptation', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 81–106; Bazin, 'Théâtre et cinéma', 129–178; Bazin, 'Peinture et cinéma', 187–192; Bazin, 'Un film bergsonien: *Le mystère Picasso*', 193–202.
[37] Arlette Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 70.
[38] 'The writer should be familiarised with all impressions, with all types of nature. He must find within himself a concentric mirror through which the universe reflects itself from time to time' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Balzac quoted in Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 66.

common aesthetic doctrine. Rivette summed up their relation to past literary and artistic traditions as such:[39]

> Je crois énormément aux maîtres, à l'école, aux exemples […]. On peut être moderne, et il faut le souhaiter, car il faut tout de même arriver à apporter sa toute petite contribution à l'art de son temps, mais on ne peut y arriver qu'en s'effaçant très modestement derrière les anciens.[40]

A cenacle presupposes a private meeting place (*Cinémathèque*, *Cahiers du cinéma*) where members of different social backgrounds and ages discuss ideas and objectives, which, despite their diverse nature, form a cohesive and homogeneous whole (*École Schérer*).[41] This shared aesthetic ideology (*politique des auteurs*) becomes the seal of their collective identity and singularity.[42]

1.2. The 1960s turn: the nineteenth-century legacy *à la loupe*

The filmmaking careers of Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard derive from an aesthetic theory, which considered cinema as the prolongation of the nineteenth-century realist novel. Examining the ways in which these directors expressed ideas and motives of modern art and literature from the late 1960s to the 1990s becomes a means to demonstrate their respective aesthetic evolution which, in some cases, questions and rejects Bazin's and the politique des auteurs' legacy, and in others, consolidates and revises these pre-established principles. The selection of these four directors precisely originates from their common views on cinema when contributing to *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Arts* in the 1950s.[43]

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[39] Schérer, 'Isou ou les choses telles qu'elles sont': 28.
[40] Jacques Rivette cited in Vignaux, *Suzanne Simonin, ou, La Religieuse*: *Jacques Rivette*, 13.
[41] In 1953, Maurice Schérer stated: 'Pierre Kast m'a fait naguère l'honneur de m'instituer chef de file d'une école qui brille peut-être plus par la flamme que par le nombre de ses adeptes'/ 'Pierre Kast formerly gave me the honour of appointing me head of a school which, I think, shines more because of its flame than because of its number of followers' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Maurice Schérer, 'De trois films et d'une certaine école', *Cahiers du cinéma* 26 (August–September 1953): 22.
[42] Anthony Glinoer, 'Sociabilité et temporalité: le cas des cénacles romantiques', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 110 (Mars 2010): 547–549, Accessed April 26, 2016, doi: 10.3917/rhlf.103.0547
[43] The notable exclusion of Chabrol is, for its part, due to the simple fact that his primary reference points are contemporary literature and Hitchcock; *Madame Bovary* (1991) is, in this sense, an exception.

The originality of my contribution is thus the regrouping of this 'gang of four' in an attempt to develop the multiple ways they understood and renewed cinema's affiliation with the nineteenth-century modern legacy in the period leading to, and consecutive to May 1968. In the course of their filmmaking careers, these four directors have had different and sometimes antagonistic forms of approaching the modern novel, poetry and the visual arts. Films like *Alphaville* (1965), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) *La religieuse* and *La collectionneuse* (1967) show that these directors were concerned with different and, for most of them, veiled and at first sight unsuspected aspects of nineteenth-century thought and traditions. And yet, French journalists characteristically filled their accounts of the Nouvelle Vague with terminologies, which held, alternatively, romantic and revolutionary connotations. The romantic values advocated by Truffaut in *Les 400 coups* (1959) sharply differed, nonetheless, from the seemingly romantic theme of *L'enfant sauvage* (1970). On a similar note, the romantic patterns of *Prénom Carmen* (1983) deviate from the romantic spirit Godard formerly instilled in *Pierrot le fou* (1965). Finally, Rohmer and Rivette have continuously engaged with romantic and realist heritage in the most opposed manners possible. At first glance, *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (1971) appears at odds with *Die Marquise von O...* (1976), but, surprisingly enough, both directors are indebted to Balzac.

This thesis investigates the ways these Nouvelle Vague directors judged nineteenth-century literature and arts within the broader spectrum of the 1960s politicisation of French culture and via references to their early ideas on cinema's relationship to realism, neighbouring art forms and authorship.[44] Indeed, the revival of interest in Kleist, Delacroix, Balzac, Henry James and Adèle Hugo coincided with a historical period when language was brought at the forefront of thought, through anti-authorialist discourses, which disassembled the traditional idea that man can create original and unalienated meaning.[45] Alongside the championing of existentialist literature and cinema in the early 1960s and the advent of the poststructuralist theories of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, critics and directors rapidly questioned and dismissed the (relatively fresh) articles on the politique des auteurs.[46]

[44] My approach to their works echoes Roland Barthes' logic: 'One cannot judge Literature without some previous idea of Man and History, of Good, Evil, Society, etc'. See Roland Barthes, 'Neither nor Criticism', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 82.
[45] Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 12–16.
[46] Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, 29.

Bazin's notion of cinematic realism, which became the theoretical basis upon which Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard departed from and developed their own filmmaking careers, was revised and challenged by its own proponents through works that spoke on the social, political and moral issues of the 1960s. These directors witnessed and commented on the crisis of representation and the linguistic upheaval that overwhelmed ideas on knowledge and history through, precisely, new forms of representing romantic and realist tropes that broke with the period film traditions of classical Hollywood and poetic realism.[47]

From a film history perspective, French period films became scarce in the immediate aftermath of May 1968 for the benefit of more versatile and 'timely' cinematic genres like militant fictions, *cinéma-vérité*, comedy and political thrillers.[48] Barthes' critique of period costumes in the realms of theatre shows that, in the wake of the 1960s, historical and costume dramas were scrutinised with a certain degree of scepticism and the ostentatious, anachronistic and falsely sumptuous attires soon became easy targets of mockery: 'vulgairement, le costume est plus *payant* que l'émotion ou l'intellection, toujours incertaines et sans rapport manifeste avec leur état de merchandise […] combien d'anachronismes morphologiques, combien de visages tout modernes posés naïvement sur de fausses fraises ou de faux drapés!'.[49] In the period that led to May 1968, the French intellectual élite multiplied debates and political incentives against the bourgeois concept of art as self-sufficient and detached from the social and political realms.[50] Within *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jean-Louis Comolli distinguished bourgeois directors, whose attachment to the classical forms of narrative cinema belonged to the archaic era of 'shortage, certainties and clarity' from those who understood cinema as a linguistic and thereby political object. This divide, which occurred gradually, was irreversible and provoked a scholarly gap in relation to these four directors' aesthetic affinities. It is instructive to illustrate the radical and anti-

[47] Anne-Marie Baron, *Romans français du XIXe siècle à l'écran. Problèmes de l'adaptation* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presse Universitaire Blaise Pascal, 2008), 18–19.
[48] Alison Smith, *French Cinema in the 1970s, The Echoes of May* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), 1–16.
[49] '[…] coarsely, costumes are more *profitable* than emotions or intellection, which have an uncertain and indiscernible relation to their merchandise status', '[…] how many morphological anachronisms, how many modern faces naively set on false ruffs, false tunics!' [My translation, ZTZ]. Roland Barthes, 'Les maladies du costume de théâtre', in *Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), 55.
[50] See Eve Tavor Bannet, *Structuralism and the Logic of Dissent: Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan*, (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1989), 3–11.

authorial discourses on the relationship of art, cinema and politics through two historical examples.

In 1968, the young intellectual élite (composed of university students and artists) united forces with the working class and created collectives like the *Atelier populaire*, a revolutionary organisation which challenged the art school system proposed by the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris through the co-creation of anonymous, anti-capitalist and oppositional lithographs, silk-screen printings and slogans with industrial and farm workers, union activists, high school and university students.[51] This Parisian workshop, which functioned like an autarkic space of creativity, collective action and solidarity, had an outstanding impact throughout Europe, where other groups (e.g., in Czechoslovakia, Italy and French provinces) emulated the *Atelier populaire*'s living system.[52] By organising debates at the *Beaux Arts*' general assemblies and advertising their revolutionary messages in the streets, the *Atelier populaire* retaliated against the bourgeois cult of the atelier as a private, confined space, as well as the cult of the creative genius. Its advertisements echoed Barthes' 1960s notion of the 'death of the author': 'Atelier Populaire: Oui! Atelier Bourgeois: Non!'.[53]

In the realm of cinema, film industry professionals (technicians, directors, critics, students, actors, cultural activists) founded the *États Généraux du Cinéma*, which were held in May and June 1968 throughout France and consisted of assemblies calling upon debates and solidarity actions which would mark a rupture with the capitalist values and moral order of the Gaullist state and, subsequently, with the reactionary structures of the CNC and State-regulated cultural institutions.[54] Kristin Ross' description of the events of May as a 'new kind of mass organizing (against the Algerian War in the early 1960s, and later against the Vietnam War) that involved physical dislocation' reflects Chris Marker's militant activities with the group

[51] Gérard Fromanger, 'L'Atelier populaire de l'ex-École des Beaux Arts. Entretien avec Gérard Fromanger', *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 11 (1988): 184–187, Accessed April 27, 2016, doi: 10.3406/mat.1988.403852

[52] Fromanger, 'L'Atelier populaire de l'ex-École des Beaux Arts. Entretien avec Gérard Fromanger': 188.

[53] Rebecca J. DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 59.

[54] Antoine de Baecque and Sébastien Layerle provided a detailed account of the internal political dynamics, organisation, missions and actions of the *États Généraux du Cinéma*. See Antoine de Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma histoire d'une revue. Tome II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1991), 189–191; Sébastien Layerle, *Caméras en lutte en mai 68* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2008), 36–46.

Medvedkine as well as the *Cinétracts* project.[55] The latter was an anonymous and collective film composed of an assemblage of still photographs from the events of May, slogans and visual texts via the rostrum camera technique.[56] Its purpose shared with the *Atelier populaire* the desire to reflect on the utilitarian and political role of art by providing a counter-discourse to State-run information media like the *Office de Radiodiffusion–Télévision Française* (ORTF). Among the project's contributors, Godard created his own filmic collages and participated to discussions that followed the *Cinétracts*' screenings. The film experimentations of May 1968 anticipated the aesthetics of the Dziga Vertov group, which rethought the relationship between film production and reception, through the emphasis on filmmaking as a social and democratic process and revolutionary instrument: 'Cette fabrication peut faire comprendre aux gens qui font du cinéma qu'il faut travailler avec les gens qui n'en font pas'.[57] Godard's editing techniques reclaimed the legacy of Soviet cinema by creating association of images that contributed to the construction of a political argument and influenced the minds 'in a certain direction'.[58] Godard's association of cinema with a new form of language able to challenge nineteenth-century realism (as the dominant literary and artistic form to represent the world) encapsulates the political division between directors who involved their filmmaking practices with the class struggle and the ones who withdrew from the debates on the relationship between cinema and modernist thought (i.e., critical theory and poststructuralism).[59]

Godard's collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin from 1968 to 1972 became emblematic of radical political cinema and, within the scope of our study, clearly delineates the director's dissociation from his initial advocacy of Bazin's ontological realism. In parallel, the sharpening of Rohmer, Rivette and Truffaut's individual cinematic styles, which were, in varying degrees, influenced by the aforementioned

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[55] Kristin Ross, *May'68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 25; Trevor Stark, 'Cinema in the Hands of the People: Chris Marker and the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film', *October* 139 (Winter 2012): 117–150, Accessed May 11, 2016, http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/OCTO_a_00083

[56] Layerle, *Caméras en Lutte en Mai 68*, 141–145.

[57] 'This production process shows to directors that cinema should be made with people that usually don't make cinema' [My translation, ZTZ]. Godard quoted in Layerle, *Caméras en lutte en mai 68*, 145.

[58] Dziga Vertov quoted in Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining documentary film* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 8. To learn about Soviet montage theorists see Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 37–47.

[59] See Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique', *Cahiers du cinéma* 216 (October 1969): 11–15; Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'D'une critique à son point critique', *Cahiers du cinéma* 217 (November 1969): 7–13.

socio-political events, became the obstacle that dissuades scholars from thinking these filmmakers' evolution in one single document. The necessity to pursue this thesis relies nonetheless on two important factors that provide a nuance to the political and aesthetic division of this 'gang of four'.

On the one hand, spread associations between subversive aesthetic practices (not to say, in a caricatured way, the 'political left') and the Nouvelle Vague, which are largely due to the ambiant questioning of cultural mores and prevailing social order by intellectual and students in the 1960s, are easily refutable. Out of four directors, Godard was the only one truly involved in radical politics. However interested in experimental theatre and marginal communities Rivette was, the case study of *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (1971) will demonstrate that his cinematic practices pursued and pushed further the novelistic aesthetics established in the early 1950s under the influence of Bazin and Rohmer. As for Rohmer and Truffaut, their cinema never pretented to revolutionise anything. One of the ambitions of this thesis is therefore to emphasise the western-centric and thereby novelistic essence of their writings, which, in Godard's own words, already counted as a rudimentary step in filmmaking: 'Making films hasn't changed my life very much, because I made them before by writing criticism, and if I had to return to criticism, it would be a way of going on making films'.[60]

On the other hand, this thesis defends the principle that the relationship between the Nouvelle Vague's proponents did not abruptly end at *Cahiers du cinéma*. Although the dialogue remained implicit and often complex, its existence and, more importantly, the interest of analysing it cannot be denied. In his letter to the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Malraux, Godard spoke on behalf of Truffaut who, despite being in England at the time *La Religieuse* was banished, showed solidarity with Rivette.[61] While Rohmer was known for his restraint and discretion in respect of politics, his review of *Out 1: Noli me tangere* was full of praise: 'C'est à mes yeux, une entreprise unique, un monument capital de l'histoire du cinéma moderne, une pièce essentielle du patrimoine

[60] Jean-Luc Godard, 'From Critic to Filmmaker: Godard in Interview (extracts)', in *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 64.

[61] To access Jean-Luc Godard's famous letter to André Malraux, 'Lettre ouverte à André Malraux, Ministre de la Kultur' (originally published in *Le nouvel observateur* in April 6, 1966) see de Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma histoire d'une revue. Tome II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981*, 175–176.

cinématographique'.[62] His appearance as an expert of *La comédie humaine* in Rivette's most experimental film was by no means insignificant; it is indeed Rohmer who, for the first time, introduced Rivette to Balzac's literature.[63] Ultimately, the enmity between Godard and Truffaut after the release of *La nuit américaine* (1973) has become, in my opinion, a well-known fact whose impact in strengthening their antagonistic views on cinema should not be underestimated. This study proposes to overcome the simplified linkage that has prevailed between these directors since the late 1960s through the creation of a comparative methodology, which will analyse the personal, political and aesthetic motivations behind their sudden desire to construct and reinterpret nineteenth-century literary and artistic traditions. The selected resource material stretches from novelle dating back from the Napoleonic wars, like Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Marquise von O…* (1808) in Rohmer's eponymous adaptation, to texts written or taking place at the dawn of World War I (Henry James, Henri-Pierre Roché), a period which Truffaut particularly cherished, as shown in *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971) and *La chambre verte* (1978).

1.3. Existing scholarship

The term 'Nouvelle Vague' was born from a sociological study on French youth and, ever since its inception, has escaped the School etiquette and laid the foundations, instead, for a prosperous research field on the rhetorics of change and renewal in the 1950s and early 1960s. The incommensurable task of determining 'what is, and what is not' Nouvelle Vague literature results from the fact that, in the past fifty-five years, scholars have fostered a paradoxical situation. Indeed, two accounts of the Nouvelle Vague, which I will now delineate, inevitably meet and foster the premise according to which this movement (if movement it is) cannot be framed through an undivided, exclusive and chronologically determined definition. In fact, the idea of the Nouvelle Vague as an unspecific and scattered event has provoked an uncontrolled and uneven proliferation of research which has surprisingly dismissed reflections on the relationship

[62] 'In my view, it is a unique enterprise, a major moment in the history of modern cinema, an essential piece of film heritage' [My translation, ZTZ]. Rohmer quoted in Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe, *Éric Rohmer biographie* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2014), 272–273.
[63] Francesca Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette* (La Madeleine: Éditions LettMotif, 2013), 157.

between the cultural and theoretical core that unites filmmakers like Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard, and their 1960s antagonistic responses to notions of mise-en-scène, authorship and politics.

1.3.1. The Nouvelle Vague through French film criticism and cultural history

The first scholarly tendency contextualises the Nouvelle Vague phenomenon via aesthetics, history and sociology. It sheds light on the principal theoretical premises of what appears to be an aesthetic movement. I consider the monographs by Jacques Siclier, James Monaco, Jean Douchet, Antoine de Baecque, Jean-Michel Frodon, Robert Stam, Lynn A. Higgins, Richard Neupert, and Michel Marie (to only name a few on this subject) as elemental in explaining the significance of the Nouvelle Vague within French film culture, and foregrounding it, as such, as an overarching, heterogeneous and indeterminate subject of research in the spheres of film, modern French and cultural studies.[64] Schematising its main research areas will illustrate the current limitations and developments in the existing scholarship.

A common discourse on the Nouvelle Vague consists in erecting the post-war journal *Cahiers du cinéma* as the primary organ within which film critics, who later became Nouvelle Vague directors, germinated their ideas on modern cinema. Monaco's pioneering Anglophone study on the Nouvelle Vague selectively named five *Cahiers* critics as the most representative members, namely: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette. Similarly, Douchet delineated the time frame of the Nouvelle Vague in accordance with these five critics' early cinematic works.[65] As such, the Nouvelle Vague began in 1956 with Rivette's *Le coup du berger* and ended up around 1964 with Godard's *Bande à part*.[66] These monographs and catalogues documented and strengthened the legend according to which the affinities between these critics and

[64] Scholars like James Monaco, Annette Insdorff, Dudley Andrew, Jonathan Rosenbaum and Jim Hillier brought Nouvelle Vague studies to a worldwide academic audience. See James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Annette Insdorf, *François Truffaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Jonathan Rosenbaum (ed.), *Jacques Rivette: Texts and Interviews* (London: BFI Publishers, 1977); Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[65] Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette*, 13–21.

[66] Jean Douchet, *Nouvelle Vague* (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 1998), 9.

future directors began at the Parisian *Cinémathèque* and dissolved once the editorial leadership of Rohmer was overthrown by the political commitments of Rivette and his followers in *Cahiers du cinéma*. This division takes place around 1963, year in which the apolitical yellow cover of the magazine is substituted by a more symbolic purplish-red.[67]

Recently, de Baecque, Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, Morrey and Marco Grosoli have nonetheless pointed out the limits of this well-worn approach by suggesting new research directions in the coveted field of the politique des auteurs. As an alternative, these scholars gave an unprecedented attention to Rohmer, Truffaut, Godard and Rivette's publications in the journal *Arts* from 1954 to 1959.[68] Their archival research has foregrounded the impact of the rightist literary group, the *Hussards*, in shaping the foundations of the Young Turks' film criticism in the 1950s. Indeed, Jacques Laurent, Roger Nimier and Antoine Blondin were at the head of *Arts* throughout the period in which these young cinephiles collaborated with the magazine through cinema reviews. While generational dissimilarities separated Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Rivette with the Hussards,[69] literary historian Marc Dambre highlighted some of the common characteristics between the two groups as follows: 'Since the hussars [sic] favour individualism, intellectual libertinism, and the demands and pleasures of aesthetics, there is no incompatibility'.[70]

Another monograph by Grosoli, to be published by Amsterdam University Press in 2017, aims to bridge the gap between the worldwide acclaim of the politique des auteurs as the main landmark of the Nouvelle Vague phenomenon and the surprisingly limited accounts of the theoretical and aesthetic aspects of this trend in film criticism. It seems like Grosoli's study will prolong the recent attempts to deepen scholarly insights on the politique des auteurs by inquiring into the wide range of cultural and theoretical circumstances which preceded Truffaut's all-too-famous pamphlet against the *tradition*

[67] From 1963 onwards, critics from *Cahiers du cinéma* like Rivette or Godard no longer claimed their belonging to l'École Schérer, whose a-political bias and eclectic film interests became the main fuel of the magazine's editorial line between 1957 and 1963 and fostered the theoretical and philosophical premises of the *politique des auteurs* (Truffaut's famous article 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français' undoubtedly set off the national acknowledgement of this critical stance). See de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 65.
[68] Marco Grosoli and Hervé Joubert Laurencin (eds.), *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014).
[69] Maurice Schérer, alias Rohmer, belongs to Jacques Laurent's generation (the former was born in 1920 and the latter in 1919).
[70] Marc Dambre, '*Arts* and the Hussars in their Time', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 17.

de qualité, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français' (1954).[71] As such, Grosoli will bring a much-needed focus on the decisive role of Schérer (alias Rohmer) in determining the dominant aesthetic patterns of the politique des auteurs, through a monograph entirely dedicated to his writings from 1948 to 1953.

These closely related and criticism-driven approaches offer an alternative perspective to a more general account which considers the Nouveau Roman, the Nouvelle Vague and the Nouveau Cinema as a 'loosely assembled collection of artists' whose works testify to their non-restrictive and varied interactions.[72] My thesis is inspired by these scholars' desire to develop, from an interdisciplinary perspective (i.e., the relationship of post-war film criticism with nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and philosophy) our understanding of the cultural and aesthetic grounds of the politique des auteurs. While I situate my investigation downstream of their careers as film critics, my project provides further insight into the auteurist legacy by studying their personal and discontinuous forms of engagement with nineteenth-century art and literature.

Complementarily, scholars like Higgins, Siclier, Neupert, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi and Richard Ivan Jobs have widen the scope of Nouvelle Vague scholarship beyond the French film history and aesthetics framework and developed discourses on the sociological and political logic behind this cinematic trend.[73] This type of research has privileged (without limiting itself to) the study of the production conditions necessary to the creation of this 'new cinema' (film legislation, sources of funding, film reception, profits, media coverage, cast, etc.) through meticulous archival research. The more recent monograph by Neupert could be considered as a detailed continuity of the pioneering *La Nouvelle Vague?* since it thoroughly uncovers the sociological, economical and technical circumstances of the phenomenon.[74] Like Grosoli and

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[71] Truffaut, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français': 15–29. To understand the term 'tradition de qualité' refer to Guy Austin's definition. See Austin, *Contemporary French Cinema: An Introduction*, 11–13.

[72] To only mention a couple of examples: Marguerite Duras wrote the screenplay of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), and Godard appeared in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962). For extensive details on the relation between New Novel and New Wave, see Lynn A. Higgins, *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1–16.

[73] Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, *Godard et la société française des années 1960* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2004); Philippe Mary, *La Nouvelle Vague et le cinéma d'auteur. Socio-analyse d'une revolution artistique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006); Richard Ivan Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War (*Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[74] As early as 1961, Siclier wrote a report on the Nouvelle Vague which is divided into three distinct sections: reflections on the phenomenon (the state of post-war French cinema, the relation between the

Joubert-Laurencin's account of the politique des auteurs, Neupert downplays the much-fetishized role of *Cahiers* in order to develop the position of other film magazines, like *Cinéma 55* and *Positif*, and give attention to a wider range of filmmakers, such as Louis Malle, Roger Vadim, Pierre Kast and Doniol-Valcroze.

Eventually, this first dominant approach, which scrutinises the Nouvelle Vague through a multiplicity of histories (history of film criticism, film theory, film culture, French modern thought, French politics and so on) branches out into a vast range of possible research areas, including the relation some Nouvelle Vague filmmakers have had with foreign film cultures: be it American, European, Asian, and more recently, postcolonial Algerian.[75] The scholarship concerned with the system of relations filmmakers of the Nouvelle Vague have built with their work and the external world (in the most general sense) descends from, without limiting itself to, an authorship perspective.

1.3.2. The authorship approach: reading the author and his work

Like a funnel effect, the history-oriented approach to the Nouvelle Vague and its originative and derivative topics (post-war cinephilia, the politique des auteurs, the Langlois affair, the events of May 1968, and so on) leads to more author- and biography-driven accounts of the Nouvelle Vague. This research avenue could be defined as the most common and literary-influenced form of film criticism.

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economic crisis and the new generation's need for renewal), a catalogue on the Nouvelle Vague (notes on the filmmakers) and the universe of the Nouvelle Vague (its thematic content, more than its aesthetic form). See Jacques Siclier, *La Nouvelle Vague?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1961).

[75] See, for instance, Laurence Alfonsi, *L'aventure américaine de l'oeuvre de François Truffaut* (Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan, 2000); Laurence Alfonsi, *Lectures asiatiques de l'oeuvre de François Truffaut: de la sociologie du cinéma* (Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan, 2000); Gavin Millar, 'Hitchcock versus Truffaut', *Sight and Sound* 38, 2 (Spring 1968): 82; David W. Galenson and Joshua Kotin, 'From the New Wave to the New Hollywood', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 43, 1 (2010): 29–44; Nicole Brenez and Christian Lebrat, *Jeune, dur et pur! Une histoire du cinéma d'avant-garde et expérimentale en France* (Milan: Cinémathèque Française/Mazzotta, 2001); Ruth Perlemutter, 'Le Gai Savoir: Godard and Eisenstein – Notions of Intellectual Cinema', *Jump Cut* 7 (1975); Leighton Grist, 'Powell Godard Scorsese: Influence-Genealogy-Intertextuality', *Cineaction* (2013): 28–37; Tom Gunning, 'Éric Rohmer et l'héritage du réalisme cinématographique', in *Rohmer et les autres*, trans. Mireille Dobrzynski and Michelle Herpe-Volinsky (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 11–20; Janet Bergstrom, 'Entre Rohmer et Murnau: Une histoire de point de vue', in *Rohmer et les autres*, trans. André Dreyfus and Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 21–27; Daniela Giuffrida (ed.), *Jacques Rivette: La règle du jeu* (Turin: Centre Culturel Français de Turin/Museo Nazionale del Cinema di Torino, 1991); The Edinburgh University Press will publish Mani Sharpe's monograph, *Screening the Algerian War in French Cinema*, in 2018.

Its method is indeed rooted in the French nineteenth-century literary criticism, and draws, more particularly, from the literary portraitures of romantic writer and critic Sainte-Beuve, whose interpretative technique consisted in (but was not limited to) enhancing the understanding of the text through the biographical components of the author's life.[76] The controversial aspect of Sainte-Beuve's criticism was due to a writing style which continuously overthrew the thin frontiers between the 'creative', the 'public' and the 'private' self of the author, whether it is in the literary or in the artistic realm.[77] Broadly speaking, this perspective on authorship is tantamount to measuring the value of a work in accordance with the author's individual circumstances, worldview and social persona.[78]

In the domain of film criticism, it is, precisely, the politique des auteurs' critics that gave birth to the very first series of monographs on directors. These were published by French editorials like the Éditions Universitaires (since 1954), the *Premier plan* collection (1959), the *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui* volumes (1961), and the *Anthologie du cinéma* issues (1961).[79] For that matter, it is through Éditions Universitaires that Rohmer and Chabrol published, in 1957, the first book on Alfred Hitchcock. Statements taken from the directors themselves additionally nurtured the criticism of the Young Turks. As such, printed interviews appeared on a regular basis in *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Arts*: Roberto Rossellini spoke with Rohmer and Truffaut in 1954, and, again in 1959, with Rivette and Fereydoun Hoveyda. Max Ophuls discussed with Rivette and Truffaut in 1957. Bazin and Truffaut met Jacques Tati in 1958, Godard interviewed Alexandre Astruc shortly after, and Renoir in 1959.[80] The list certainly continues. The politique des auteurs criticism has a strong and overlooked connection with biographical positivism by the simple fact that the Young Turks glorified directors whose mise-en-

[76] Martine Boyer-Weinmann, *La relation biographique: enjeux contemporains* (Seyssel: Éditions Champ Vallon, 2005), 26. See also Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi de Essais et articles*, eds. Pierre Clarac and Yves Sandre (Paris: Gallimard/Pléiade, 1971).
[77] Boyer-Weinmann, *La relation biographique: enjeux contemporains*, 31.
[78] This rule is, by the way, reversible and totalising since it assesses the value of a man through the merits of his work.
[79] David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Interference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 52–53.
[80] Éric Rohmer and François Truffaut, 'Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini', *Cahiers du cinéma* 37 (July 1954): 1–13; Fereydoun Hoveyda and Jacques Rivette, 'Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini', *Cahiers du cinéma* 94 (April 1959): 1–11; Jacques Rivette and François Truffaut, 'Entretien avec Max Ophuls', *Cahiers du cinéma* 72 (June 1957): 7–25; André Bazin and François Truffaut, 'Entretien avec Jacques Tati', *Cahiers du cinéma* 83 (May 1958): 2–20; Jean-Luc Godard, 'Jean-Luc Godard fait parler Astruc: "*Une vie*, c'est la folie derrière le réalisme"', *Arts* 684 (August 20, 1958); Jean-Luc Godard, 'Jean Renoir: "La télévision m'a révélé un nouveau cinéma"', *Arts* 718 (April 15, 1959).

scène made the subject's inner spiritual and moral life apparent through certain ways of filming the world's physical appearances. In this regard, Godard's 1952 criticism had a fundamentally Balzacian style: 'there are, in effect, no spiritual storms, no troubles of the heart which remained unmarked by physical causes'.[81] The idea of an authorial identity *circulating through* the movement and composition of the cinematic image straightforwardly derives from Sainte-Beuve's famous tendency to build biographies through the prism of novels and other art forms.[82]

To date, monographic accounts of the life work of Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Rivette have, after all, consolidated the individualist precept of the politique des auteurs by bringing to light the aesthetic particularities, recurring patterns and major influences of these leading figures. In fact, monographs on directors usually place the cinematic sources within a cultural and biographical logic, which restores the sense of continuity and completeness of the life work under scrutiny.[83] This authorship approach generally highlights, on the one hand, the complexity of the artist's life work by evoking the plurality of possible readings it has generated so far, and proposes, on the other hand, the relevancy of a specific and disregarded research direction. The analysis of key characteristics of individual filmmaking careers has generated a vast and intricate web of interconnected monographs and articles, each contributing to the construction of the directors' artistic and cultural identity. The vantage points of the authorship approach are manifold. Books like de Baecque's series of biographies on Truffaut, Godard and Rohmer fulfil academics' interest for extra-textual information on the filmmaker (family background, anecdotes, unsuspected relationships, friendships, professional and private networks and conflicts, etc.).[84] The sense of exhaustivity, in these cases, resides in the writer's attempt to account for the entirety of the director's active life, in a more or less novelistic form. Despite the thickness and enjoyable nature of these essentially biographical accounts, de Baecque's assertive narrative voice has nonetheless the effect of hindering the reader's engagement with the existing

[81] Jean-Luc Godard, 'Defence and Illustration of Classical Montage', in *Godard on Godard*, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 28.
[82] Pierre Moreau, *La critique selon Sainte-Beuve* (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1964), 8–22.
[83] According to Bordwell, this interpretative practice differs distinctly from the Anglo-American New Criticism since it draws upon the philosophical, political, technical and artistic background within which the piece of work was created.
[84] Colin MacCabe's monograph on Godard, as well as Robert Ingram and Paul Duncan's book on Truffaut correspond to this biographical trend. See Colin MacCabe, *Godard: a Portrait of the Artist at Seventy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003); Robert Ingram, *François Truffaut auteur de films 1932–1984* (Paris: Taschen, 2008).

scholarship on the subject. In contrast, the Manchester University editions of Holmes and Ingram's *François Truffaut* (1998), Morrey's *Jean-Luc Godard* (2005) and Morrey and Smith's *Jacques Rivette* (2009) favoured a thematic perspective on these directors' filmmaking careers. Contrary to chronological outlines, theme-based accounts build their arguments upon secondary literature thereby suggesting innovative angles of approach. In this way, their originality is to be measured against, or compared to, older works by Jean Collet, Insdorf, David Sterritt, Bonitzer, or Hélène Frappat. Additionally, these scholarly editions successfully situate the works in relation to the history of their production process, their critical reception, their commercial success, their stylistic and theoretical influences as well as their major aesthetic and narrative motifs. However, the format of these ambitious projects allows limited space for film analyses.

The proliferation of monographs, interview collections and anthologies on the life work of directors Godard and Truffaut (whose careers remain the most commented) led scholars to develop another type of literature which mainly develops and deepens uncovered aspects of these four filmmakers' careers. In contrast with monographs aiming to account for the totality of a director's filmography, this scholarship focuses on piecemeal, specific and tacit components of the artist's work. Mapping out some important trends will help to illustrate this secondary literature.

De Baecque and Youri Deschamps were not wrong when describing Godard as probably the most celebrated film philosopher in the world, so voluminous is the scholarship on the director.[85] The profuse and self-reflexive dimension of Godard's cinema led scholars to break his filmography down into time frames (early, middle, late period), genres (narrative, militant, essayist, educational) and other subgroups, as with the greatest composers, painters and novelists. Beyond monographs dedicated to particular periods, films or series of work, the later impact poststructuralism and Althusserian Marxism have had on the career of Godard is an outstanding subject of study which continues to generate debates.[86] On an international scale, workshops,

[85]Antoine de Baecque, *Godard biographie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2010), 10–11; Youri Deschamps, 'Jean-Luc Godard cinéaste du XVIe siècle – esquisse pour un portrait', in *Où en est le God-Art?*, ed. René Prédal (Courbevoie : Cinémaction – Corlet, 2003), 130.

[86] For example, the late work of Godard is the main subject of study of Maryel Locke and Charles Warren (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard's Hail Mary: Women and the Sacred in Film* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Alain Bergala, *Nul mieux que Godard* (Paris: Éditions Cahiers du Cinéma, 1999); Céline Scemama, *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard: la force faible d'un art* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006); Frédéric Hardouin, *Le cinématographe selon Godard: Introduction aux Histoire(s) du cinéma, ou, réfléxion sur le temps des arts* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007); Michael Temple and James S. Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985–2000* (Amsterdam:

seminars, lectures, conferences, symposia, and entire modules are, today, exclusively dedicated to investigating Godard's relation to politics, philosophy and history of art.[87] It is worth noting that the unccountable scholarship dedicated to Godard mirrors the director's aesthetic principles, which continually seek to evade any categorisation through difficult and hybrid forms of representation. As such, comprehensible and unscattered accounts of Godard's relationship to the nineteenth-century romantic tradition are limited. Daniel Morgan has recently contributed to this research field by publishing a solid chapter on the relationship of Godard's late films (i.e., *Soigne ta droite* [1987], *Nouvelle Vague* [1990], *Allemagne 90 Neuf Zéro* [1991] and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* [1988–1998]) to the imagery of the sublime.[88] My approach to Godard's romantic aesthetics, which draws upon nineteenth-century literary and art criticism, will complement Morgan's philosophical perspective.

Secondary literature on Truffaut's cinema remains widespread (if to a lesser extent than Godard); it was annotated and recompiled in Eugene P. Walz's guide to reference and resources already in 1982.[89] Unlike Godard, whose early film criticism is not generally considered as representative of the radical turn his filmmaking career

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Amsterdam University Press, 2000); Charles Tesson and Emmanuel Burdeau, *Jean-Luc Godard: The Future(s) of Film: Three Interviews 2000–01* (Bern: Verlag Gachnang & Springer AG, 2002); Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (eds.), *For Ever Godard* (London: Black Dog, 2004); Daniel Morgan, *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema* (London: University of California Press, 2013).

[87] See, for instance, Colin MacCabe, Mick Eaton and Laura Mulvey, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Mary Lea Bandy and Raymond Bellour (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Images 1974–1991* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992); Yosefa Loshitszky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Harun Farocki and Kaja Silverman, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Michael Witt, 'On Gilles Deleuze on Jean-Luc Godard: an Analysis of "la Méthode du Entre"', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 36, 1 (1999): 110–124; Junji Hori, 'Godard's Two Historiographies', in *For Ever Godard*, eds. Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (London: Black Dog, 2004); Jean-Luc Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour, *The Archaeology of Film and the Memory of a Century*, trans. John Howe (Oxford: Berg Press, 2005); Jacques Rancière, 'The Red of *La Chinoise*: Godard's politics', in *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (New York: Berg Press, 2006); Robert Patrick Kinsman, 'Radical Form, Political Intent: Delineating Countercinemas beyond Godard' (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2007); Maurice Darmon, *La Question Juive de Jean-Luc Godard, filmer après Auschwitz* (Paris: Le temps qu'il fait, 2011); Stefan Kristensen, *Jean-Luc Godard philosophe* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'homme, Coll. 'Histoire et Théorie du Cinéma/Travaux', 2014); Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard Cinema Historian* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2013); Michael Witt, 'Archeology of *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*', in *Jean-Luc Godard, Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television*, ed. and trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2014); Dominic Topp, 'The Representation of Politics: The Films of Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group' (PhD diss., University of Kent, 2014); Jeremy Spencer, 'Politics and Aesthetics within Godard's Cinema', in *Marxism and Film Activism, Screening Alternative Worlds*, eds. Ewa Mazierska and Lars Kristensen (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 58–80.

[88] Daniel Morgan, 'Nature and its Discontents', in *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema* (London: University of California Press, 2013), 69–119.

[89] Eugene P. Walz, *François Truffaut: a Guide to References and Resources* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982).

undertook in the 1960s, Truffaut's formative years as a critic take a prominent place in monographs concerned with restoring a certain continuity, but also revealing some contradictions, between the director's approach to film theory and practice.[90] Three years ago, Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain edited an important and wide-ranging volume on Truffaut's cinema, signed by renowned Nouvelle Vague experts: Alain Bergala, Marie, Michel Chion, Neupert, Angella Dalle Vacche, among others.[91] These scholarly contributions strengthened the idea of his mise-en-scène as the bearer of three broad concerns: cinephilia, biography and universal acclaim.

Likewise, scholars have continuously stressed the relationship between Rohmer's critical writings and his cinema, hence creating a hegemonic discourse which recognises the theoretical and aesthetic coherence that runs throughout his life work. The neoclassical bias of Rohmer's criticism and filmmaking is today a well-established theory which has developed into ramified research fields concerned with the director's relationship with morality and philosophy, the legacy of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature and arts, as well as the theological dimension of his cinematography.[92] Philippe Fauvel is currently finishing a doctoral thesis on the television works of Rohmer, a project which will shed a much-needed light on the openly pedagogical inclination of his film aesthetics.[93]

In comparison with Godard, Truffaut and Rohmer, the least studied career is, undoubtedly, Rivette's. While Collet wrote a monograph on Godard's cinema as early as 1963 and English books on Truffaut were already published in 1970, it was not until

[90] In this vein: Yannick Mouren, 'L'art du récit chez François Truffaut: essai de narratologie appliquée à quelques films de Truffaut' (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1990); Anne Gillain, *François Truffaut le secret perdu* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991); Alain Bergala, Marc Chevrie and Serge Toubiana (eds.), *Le roman de François Truffaut* (Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile, 1985); Arnaud Guige, *François Truffaut: La culture et la vie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); Dominique Auzel and Sabine Beaufils-Fievez, *François Truffaut le cinéphile passioné* (Paris: Séguier, 2005); Robert Stam, *François Truffaut and Friends: Modernism, Sexuality and Film Adaptation* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

[91] Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (eds.), *A Companion to François Truffaut* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

[92] C.G. Crisp, *Eric Rohmer : Realist and Moralist* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1988) ; Maria Tortajada, *Le spectateur séduit : le libertinage dans le cinéma d'Éric Rohmer et sa fonction dans une théorie de la représentation filmique* (Paris : Éditions Kimé, 1999) ; Jean Cléder, 'Entre littérature et cinéma : Éric Rohmer, esthétique et ontologie de la séduction' (PhD diss., Université Rennes 2, 1999) ; Michel Serceau, *Éric Rohmer les jeux de l'amour, du hasard et du discours* (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 2000) ; Noël Herpe (ed.), *Rohmer et les autres* (Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007) ; Keith Tester, *Eric Rohmer : Film as Theology* (Basingstoke : Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) ; Violaine Caminade de Schuytter, 'Le corps dans l'œuvre d'Éric Rohmer' (PhD diss., Université de Caen Normandie, 2008).

[93] Philippe Fauvel, 'Les films de télévision d'Éric Rohmer: des essais de cinéma' (PhD diss., University of Picardie Jules Verne, 2016)

2001 that Frappat wrote the first monograph on Rivette.[94] Morrey has problematized the most common approaches to his filmmaking by outlining scholars' main research tendencies.[95] Length, fragmented narratives, improvised performances and the difficulty to access to full-length versions of films like *Out 1: Noli me tangere* have traditionally posed obstacles for exhaustive textual analyses of Rivette's films.[96] Although the self-reflexive dimension of his cinema is undeniable and omnipresent, Morrey points out that the scholarly importance given to Rivette's working methods has had the effect of producing descriptive, redundant and reductive readings. In his reasoning, Morrey calls for much-needed textual analyses to overcome blind-alley conversations about Rivette's endless cycle of returning themes and patterns. The purpose of this recommendation is to place greater emphasis on the historical context within which Rivette engaged with cultural motifs and traditions (such as the universe of Diderot and Balzac), thus analysing the significance of Rivette's aesthetic influences and restoring the singularity of each work. Morrey's proposal is pertinent and anticipated Francesca Dosi's insightful monograph on the place of Balzac in *Out 1: Noli me tangere*, *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991) and *Ne touchez pas la hache* (2007). Dosi's intertextual approach, to which my thesis claims a certain level of affinity, stands out from the existing scholarship dedicated to Rivette.

A small account about her strategy will help situating my own methodology, which draws from and builds on these two important branches of research: namely, from the perspectives of cinema's interdisciplinary relation to French culture and authorship.

1.4. Methodology

The originality of Dosi's monograph lies in its true interdisciplinarity: it addresses film scholars as well as literary and artistic experts by balancing the amount of research dedicated to the work of Balzac and to the films of Rivette. There is indeed a clear

[94] Jean Collet, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: Seghers, 1963); Graham Petrie, *The Cinema of François Truffaut* (New York: Zwemmer and Barnes, 1970).
[95] Douglas Morrey, 'Secrets and Lies, or how (not) to write about Jacques Rivette', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 47, 2 (2010): 121–132.
[96] Distributed by Carlotta films, the restored and long version of *Out 1: Noli me tangere* was screened in September 2015 in a few theatres near Paris. The film is now up on sales in DVD format.

attempt, on the author's part, to build a discourse which follows egalitarian logics of exchange between cinema and literature:

> La tendance à l'hybridation à travers l'insertion parcellaire de références diversifiées, qui caractérise son style [de Jacques Rivette] et accompagne sa relecture de Balzac est, en elle-même, une invitation à désaxer la linéarité et la frontalité d'une analyse traditionnelle, à prendre des 'chemins de traverse'.[97]

As a point of departure, Dosi develops the notion of hybridity in the artistic, literary, linguistic and cinematic climate of the 1970s. In fact, Dosi lays the foundations of her methodology by suggesting that debates on the interrelated concepts of intertextuality, interpretative plurality and postmodernism (as defined by Jean-Louis Leutrat, Julia Kristeva, Ihab Habib Hassan, Jean-François Lyotard and others) were, to a certain extent, the culmination of Bazin's, Astruc's and *Cahiers* critics' efforts to emancipate the cinematic art from the traditional tutelage of theatre, literature and painting.[98] With this in mind, Dosi suggests assessing Rivette's relationship to literature beyond the binary paradigm of adaptation, which supposes a hierarchical relationship based on resemblance, imitation and fidelity.[99] Accordingly, Dosi favours evaluating the notions of 'resonances', 'rewriting', 'reinvention' and 'redistribution' of Balzac's text.

Among the advantages of Dosi's monograph is the fact that the level of familiarity and the amount of research on Balzac creates a rich and unprecedented perspective on Rivette's cinema. Dosi's interdisciplinary methodology is a promising and much-welcomed step towards the exploration of this overlooked equilibrium between literature, art and Nouvelle Vague filmmaking.[100] Indeed, Dosi's academic profile reflects the pluri-disciplinary dimension of her research by combining French literature expertise, self-taught painting and cinephilia.[101] Nevertheless, despite the

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[97] 'Rivette's inclination for hybridisation, through his continuous and fragmented use of diversified references that contribute to his reading of Balzac, is, as such, an invitation to decentre the linearity and frontality of a traditional analysis. It is an invitation to "take shortcuts"'[My translation, ZTZ]. See Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 12.

[98] Philip Rosen evoked the relationship between Bazin's reflections on the impurity of the cinematic form and the theorisation of hybridity in the last thirty years. See Rosen, 'From impurity to historicity', 14–17.

[99] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 15.

[100] It is worth mentioning that the work of Angela Dalle Vacche is significant for scholars and students interested in the multi-disciplinary study of cinema. See Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (London: Athlone, 1996).

[101] Francesca Dosi was a painter and draftswoman before carrying on with her postgraduate studies in French literature.

suitability of an intermedial approach to Rivette's cinema, Dosi's analysis generates slight contradictions. These are merely due to a propensity to juxtapose analogies between Balzac's theory of the novel and Rivette's reading of Balzac without making sufficiently clear the multiple ways in which the director transgresses some aesthetic precepts of the realist novel. In this respect, the spectre of the Balzacian universe is taken at face value when Dosi compares the characters of *Paris nous appartient* (1961) to the literary figure of the *flâneur*.[102] In this example, the influence of Sartrean existentialism vanishes and is replaced by Balzac's Aristotelian reading of reality, which, broadly speaking, restores essence and soul to the visible world. Although this interpretation of Rivette's early 1960s films is tempting, especially in light of his film criticism, it should not overshadow the historical, technical and political reality within which he was working. Additionally, Dosi's account of the Nouvelle Vague tends towards generalisations, especially when suggesting that all Nouvelle Vague filmmakers condemned standardised forms of cinema, disregarded the characters' psychological depth and repudiated the narrative constraints of traditional storytelling.[103] While this short critique certainly recognises the remarkable analytical depth and theoretical value of Dosi's work, my thesis wants to provide a more detailed and differentiated account of Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Rivette's approach to the nineteenth century. To this end, my analyses highlight, on the one hand, the ways in which their readings of nineteenth-century sources vary according to the political and aesthetic stages of French film history, and on the other hand, remind the type of relation each of one of them has preserved with the initial endorsement of the theoretical precepts of Bazin and the politique des auteurs.

More precisely, my project retains Dosi's commitment to move beyond a purely analytic approach to mise-en-scène, as theorised by the New Criticism and the Anglo-American tradition of aesthetics, and proposes to remain close to the Bazinian principle of impurity of the cinematic medium. In contrast with the formalist discourses on cinematic specificity (e.g., Hugo Münsterberg, Rudolf Arnheim, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean Epstein), Bazin radically changed the focus of post-war film criticism. He drew on the myth of Icarus (among other mythical references) to explain the birth of cinema and to

[102] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 46.
[103] These extrapolations are all the more apparent when the Rohmerian *flâneries* are interpreted at the same level as the presumed Rivettian *flâneries.* Ibid., 48.

suggest that cinema was an unspecific medium in continuous evolution.[104] This thesis follows Bazin's tendency to track historical origins and mythical sources to understand the modern developments of cinema. In fact, each chapter demonstrates the many ways in which these four directors interpreted canonised nineteenth-century texts and artworks by scrutinising the theoretical and aesthetic relationship they have established with the romantic and realist legacies (i.e., Kleist's pre-romantic short stories, Delacroix's romantic pictorialism, Mérimée and Balzac's novels, and so on).

Far from limiting my research to textual analyses, this thesis aims to conceptualise their respective understanding of the role of nineteenth-century art and literature in modern cinema through chapters that continuously explore their aesthetic evolutions, from their early 1960s films to the post-1968 period by reflecting on the following sort of questions: was the sense of 'tenderness', 'poetry', 'humility' and 'lyricism' (how film critics praised *Les 400 coups*) still conveyed in Truffaut's coming-of-age films like *L'Enfant sauvage*, *Les deux anglaises et le continent* and *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975)? If so, why did the romantic features associated with *Les 400 coups* attest the film's modern value in 1959, whereas the sentimentality of the same Léaud in the context of a puritan Welsh environment becomes, in 1971, nothing but 'nostalgic prettiness' and 'boredom'?[105] This 'mal du siècle' or 'mal de jeunesse' of which actor Léaud was, in *Les 400 coups*, the French male representative (along with Brigitte Bardot for the female youth) gave way, from the late 1960s onwards, to Truffaut's renewed discourses on boyhood which, despite being pervaded with romantic imagery as shown in *Les deux anglaises*, soon appeared outmoded, conservative or of an uncalled-for naivety.[106] This thesis enquires into these shifts in mentalities, which are the symptoms of social changes, through these directors' direct engagements, and in many cases, adaptations of romantic and realist works from the *siècle des révolutions*.

In addition to looking for cinema's ontological status through a return to myths, Bazin proposed that the appreciation of cinema could not be separated from the awareness, on the part of the film critic and theorist, of the technological advancements, the attitudes of filmmakers, the desires of the modern masses, the cultural and social

[104] The fate of Icarus illustrates man's failure at delivering a complete imitation of nature. See André Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total' in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 24.
[105] Tristan Renaud, 'Un temps pour la mélancolie', *Lettres françaises* (1–6 December 1971): 34.
[106] See Ivan Richard Jobs' study of the Bardot phenomenon in Jobs, *Riding the New Wave*, 197–212.

concerns of historical periods, and so on.[107] My thesis gives an account of the cultural and political context within which a dominant reading of a given artwork or literary piece emerges, and analyses, from that standpoint, the significance of relying, on the part of the director, on specific narrative techniques and aesthetic forms. While the material reality (the signifier, in Saussurean terms) of Kleist, Balzac, Mérimée and Delacroix's novels and paintings will never change, the historical and cultural circumstances within which these works are read inevitably generate new, multiple and hegemonic interpretations. The adaptation, from literature (or other artwork) to cinema, entails a particular reading of the source text and, what's more, the construction of a discourse that situates this legacy in sync or in an intended disconnection with contemporary concerns. Accordingly, comparisons between early and late Nouvelle Vague films, as well as games of contrasts and associations between these four directors' contemporary works pervade each chapter.

In other words, this thesis does not solely refer to works concerned with representing nineteenth-century sources but takes into consideration films that foreshadowed the changes and reinforcement of their respective visions of cinema, and of its mission. Therefore, earlier short films, television works and later period films, like *Perceval le Gallois* (1978), give further insight into Rohmer's interest in the didactic dimension of Balzac's realism. Likewise, transitional experimental films from the 1980s, such as *Le pont du nord* (1981), work as examples to develop Rivette's approach to the Balzacian theme of conspiracy. The cinematic case of *Fahrenheit 451* clarifies the theoretical motives behind Truffaut's need to build an oeuvre based on introspection and will additionally problematize his general approach to nineteenth-century literature.[108] Finally, the narrative and aesthetic patterns of *Pierrot le fou* help exploring Godard's relation to the myth of doomed love and connect, as such, with *Prénom Carmen*, a feature film which focuses on the epic but worn-out legend of Carmen and Don José.

Although this thesis does not give up on the notion of adaptation, whose binary system (which supposes, theoretically, a certain type of coexistence between two

[107] Bazin wrote in 1952: 'Sans nous dissimuler les périls de l'entreprise, nous continuons pourtant à penser qu'une bonne critique, au moyen âge, aurait été celle qui eût enseigné aux chevaliers à être de leurs temps'/ 'We will not hide the risks of such undertaking, but we still believe that, in the context of Medieval times, a good critique would be the one that teaches knights to move with the times' [My translation, ZTZ]. André Bazin, 'L'avant-garde nouvelle', *Cahiers du cinéma* 10 (March 1952): 17.

[108] Indeed, most scholars have argued that Truffaut's cinema is based on storylines mixing elements of fiction with autobiographical components.

different media, more generally between film and literature) certainly applies to Rohmer and Truffaut's films, Godard and Rivette's approach to nineteenth-century artistic and literary culture requires an alternative approach. In view of the deconstructionist and anti-auteurist theories of the 1970s and 1980s, it is necessary to make apparent the more labyrinthine network of references that runs throughout films like *Out 1*, *Passion*, *Prénom Carmen* and *La Belle Noiseuse.*[109] The veiled references and taste for visual and aural associations (which characterised the Nouvelle Vague from the very beginning) are brought forward through textual analyses which tackle nineteenth-century themes and motifs like the creative genius, chaste and tragic love, the legend of Carmen, feral children, secret societies, the epistolary romance, the obsession for death and so on.

In relation to the nineteenth-century source texts and artworks, the interdisciplinary perspective of this thesis leads, naturally, to the correlation of binary time-scales. The historical frame is clearly not limited to the numerical benchmark of 1800. The Enlightenment thought, as portrayed by *La religieuse*, prepared the ground for the Declaration of the Man and the Citizen and was the pioneer bearer of the Republican values. In a similar way, the nineteenth-century timeline doesn't punctually end in 1900 but encompasses literary works which were already displaying signs of worry and paranoia as World War I approached. The fear of oblivion Henry James expressed in his morbid tale *The Altar of the Dead* (1909) illustrates this. In other words, the nineteenth-century corpus, whether they are memoirs, novelle, paintings, operas or musical compositions, is composed of works which are today considered at the origins of modern visual, musical and literary culture.

Correspondingly, this thesis is concerned with relying on a twentieth-century time-scale that supports its overarching mission, which is to create, throughout the chapters, a comparative framework which helps to determine Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's divergent engagements with romantic and realist heritage. For example, Balzacian motifs run throughout these directors' films. This thesis explores the different meanings Rohmer, Rivette and Truffaut have conferred to the creator of *La comédie humaine* and shows multiple ways of rehabilitating this predominant nineteenth-century figure. However, to foster a dialogue between the next four chapters, this thesis must

[109] Robert Stam, 'Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation' in *Literature and Film, A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 4–5.

follow a time frame that corresponds closely to these directors' common period of professional activity. In this regard, the year of Truffaut's death, October 1984, becomes the major landmark that prevents us from moving beyond the late 1980s. The exceptional case of *La Belle Noiseuse* is preserved in the benefit of a stronger and more complete argument on Rivette's approach to Balzac's discourses on myths.

In terms of structure, this thesis dedicates a chapter each to Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard. This particular order follows a certain logic. Opening chapter two with Rohmer strategically develops some core ideas of the politique des auteurs through the director's uninterrupted engagement with Balzac. The consistent and harmonious dimension of Rohmer's lifework therefore becomes the aesthetic nucleus against which Rivette, Truffaut and Godard diverge, in their specific ways. Far from isolating each director from one other, this individual arrangement allows for comparisons that support, during the reading process, the creation of a wider and comprehensive portrait of their positioning towards the nineteenth-century legacy.

1.5. Outline of chapters

This thesis is organised into five broad chapters. Chapter one has set the background and motivations of this thesis by addressing these directors' complex relationship with the nineteenth-century legacy since the early days of *Cahiers du cinéma* and the ways in which the political tensions of the 1960s modified their views on filmmaking. In the light of a moment of extraordinary developments in France (from the late 1960s to the 1980s), scrutinising their respective approaches to nineteenth-century art and literary culture aims at an unprecedented study of the Nouvelle Vague tradition and the late works of these four directors. The schematisation of the existing scholarship has demonstrated the absence of literature examining these four filmographies as an ensemble. The belief in a common denominator that moves beyond *Cahiers du cinéma* and the tight and indefinite Nouvelle Vague time frame is the very motor of the following chapters.

Chapter two sets the grounds of Rohmer's ontological realism, a theory that shaped, throughout the decades, the aesthetic principles of the director's filmmaking. It argues that Rohmer's re-appropriation of neoclassical aesthetic values derived from the

idea of cinema as the successor of the nineteenth-century realist novel. To develop this claim, I bring into dialogue the scholastic dimension of Rohmer's body of work and the Aristotelian principles of Balzac's rhetoric. In a further stage, I demonstrate the political implications of Rohmer's reclaiming of the classical canon in the context of the 1970s. The textual analysis of *Die Marquise von O…* allows me to situate Rohmer's adaptation in a decade in which scholars, critics and directors reassessed the cultural authority of Goethe's classicism as a response to the surge of interest for Kleist's romantic legacy. In contrast with counter-discursive aesthetic practices, Rohmer's neoclassical approach to Kleist, I suggest, revives the syntactic ambiguity and contradictions of the novella through a harmonious, sober and clear narrative that reveals in the subtlest manner the epistemological breach between language and nature.

Chapter three is structured around underlying myths of *La comédie humaine*: the myths of Icarus, Prometheus and Pygmalion. These myths, I argue, are at the heart of Rivette's reflection on the aesthetic possibilities of cinema and become the most fruitful means to read *Out 1: Noli me tangere* and *La Belle Noiseuse*. These two films provide alternative readings of Balzac that significantly differ from Rohmer's. Whereas Rohmer affiliates Balzac with the classical literary tradition, Rivette reclaims Balzac's romanticism by transposing the author's melancholic quest for heroic actions and metaphysical powers in *Out 1*. Rivette's avant-garde cinematic practices compete with Balzac's ambition to create a work of art that transcends traditional genres and reunites mythical stories with reflections on modern society. *La Belle Noiseuse* completes this mythological cycle through Rivette's engagement with the romantic myth of Frenhofer and his unknown masterpiece. Comparisons with the source text, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (1831), demonstrate that Rivette remained faithful to Balzac's theory of painting through an approach of filmic space that emulates the romantic search for the Absolute. While Rivette kept intact the mystical imagery surrounding the creative act, his mise-en-scène challenges nonetheless the patriarchal value of the novella by re-introducing the collective and egalitarian methods of *Out 1*.

Chapter four demonstrates that Truffaut's association of authorship with the literary culture of the nineteenth century contributed to isolate him from the modernist experimentations of French cinema in the late 1960s. To give an account of Truffaut's aesthetic evolution, the textual analysis of *Fahrenheit 451* crystallises the director's concern to preserve an idealised vision of authorship, which understands biography as the most illuminating tool to read a literary work. Situating this science-fiction film in

the context of Godard's *Alphaville* allows me to highlight Truffaut's political contradictions and growing conservatism. To further develop this claim, I scrutinise the ways in which nineteenth-century novels and memoirs become Truffaut's tool of choice for the exploration of autobiographical themes. In this regard, Truffaut reflected on his personal journey through the stories of *L'enfant sauvage*, *Les deux anglaises et le continent*, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* and *La chambre verte* and consolidated, in the most politicised decade of French cinema, the problematic idea of film as a result of a dominant, creative and truthful entity.

Chapter five argues that, contrary to Truffaut, Godard expressed romantic themes and patterns through a pictorialist bias, which privileges space, form and light over storytelling. Godard's interpretation of Mérimée's novella in *Prénom Carmen*, I argue, shows his desire to get rid of the mythical ornaments and flourishes established by the opera and to focus, instead, on bringing forth the paradox at the foundation of the tragedy. Like Mérimée, Godard's narrative interrogates Carmen's identity by creating a complex network of storylines which intersect and blur the steady and Bizetian image of Carmen as a glamorous, threatening and exotic mythical figure. Comparisons with the source text reveal that Godard, like Mérimée, decentralises the Carmen story by alternating narrators and storylines and reviving, as such, the romantic conflict between moments of reverie and disenchantment. Godard's unprecedented interest in the romantic association of nature with the sublime points at a new form of melancholy, which differs from his previous works. I therefore explore Godard's aesthetic evolution to highlight the ways in which modernist imagery collides with evanescent quests for unity in *Passion*, a film that reflects on the romantic aesthetics of chiaroscuro.

The conclusion summarises the convergences and breaking points between these four different ways of approaching the nineteenth-century artistic and literary heritage. This final section addresses the importance of reconsidering these directors' relationship with romantic and realist heritage so as to gain deeper insight into the Nouvelle Vague legacy – a pressing, problematic and often-misconceived component of contemporary French cinema. I conclude by proposing new areas of research that may contribute in strengthening the findings of this thesis. Further research on the chauvinistic and western-centric background within which their aesthetic and theoretical beliefs arose should indeed demonstrate that the Nouvelle Vague carried, throughout their careers, an obsession with the richness and complexity of nineteenth-century western culture.

CHAPTER TWO

Dieu, cher pasteur, est une magnifique unité
qui n'a rien de commun avec ses créations et
qui néanmoins les engendre.

– Honoré de Balzac[1]

2.1. Introduction

To approach Éric Rohmer's legacy, scholars have continuously drawn on their knowledge of André Bazin's theoretical and critical corpus.[2] This etiological perspective, which consists in explaining a phenomenon through the investigation of its origin, seems to be the most appropriate, especially since Rohmer himself advocated it over the course of his career as a film critic and director. In 1984, when interviewed by Jean Narboni, Rohmer positioned himself with regard to Bazin as a simple 'reader' and 'repeater', whose mission was none other than 'organising' Bazin's theoretical ideas about cinema.[3] Of course, Bazin's writings were cut short on the eve of *Les 400 coups*' release (1959), due to cancer. Bazin left behind a collection of no less than 2600 articles written between 1943 and 1958.[4] Despite the volume of his work, the historical time frame within which Bazin wrote is relatively short and could have led, in different and less tragic circumstances, to new reflections on the relation of history with the development of cinematic techniques, the film production trends, the mass mentality and desires, the contemporary artistic and literary debates, philosophical concerns and so on. Bazin's premature death did not really alter

[1] 'God, dear pastor is a glorious Unit who has nothing in common with His creations but who, nevertheless, engenders them'. See Honoré de Balzac, 'Seraphita', in *Le livre mystique*, vol. 2 of *La comédie humaine* (Bruxelles: J.P. Meline, 1836), 178. For the English version: Honoré de Balzac, *Seraphita*, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (Gutenberg Ebook, 2010), 85, Accessed May, 11, 2016, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1432

[2] See, for instance, Tom Gunning, 'Éric Rohmer et l'héritage du réalisme cinématographique', in *Rohmer et les autres*, trans. Mireille Dobrzynski and Michelle Herpe-Volinsky, ed. Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 11–20; Marco Grosoli, 'Rohmer's *Les Amours d'Astrée et de Céladon* as a Systematical Synthesis for Bazin's Space-based Adaptation Theory', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 3, 2 (2010): 115–127, Accessed April 18, 2016, doi: 10.1386/jafp.3.2.115_1

[3] Éric Rohmer, 'The Critical Years: Interview with Éric Rohmer', in *Eric Rohmer, The Taste for Beauty*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10–11.

[4] Marco Grosoli, 'La tela del tomiside: André Bazin riletto attraverso l'integralità del corpus' (PhD diss., University of Bologna, 2010).

Rohmer's film theory but had the effect of strengthening Rohmer's wish to reclaim back Bazin's legacy through his own writings and films. Rohmer was indeed convinced, as revealed in an earlier *Cahiers* interview, that Bazin's ontological perspective on cinema was the theory which would most aptly defy time.[5] Indeed, Rohmer's purpose as a critic and apprentice filmmaker was not to question and challenge Bazin's ontological and spatial-temporal theory of realism but, on the contrary, to demonstrate its sustainability and durability throughout the century/-ies.

However, what does realism mean to Rohmer? It is not my purpose to provide an in-depth analysis of Rohmer's film theory but to rather trace back its interdisciplinary origin. This chapter is based on the principle that the ontological realism of Bazin has a hereditary connection with the nineteenth-century realist novel and demonstrates it through Rohmer's critical and filmic corpus. Rohmer has indeed referred, many times, to Honoré de Balzac as a fundamental reference to support his vision of cinema as a novelistic art of space. Taking into account the anti-auteurist criticism that shook Bazin's realist premises in the 1960s, this chapter has a two-fold ambition.

First, I propose to restore the complexity of the background against which Rohmer started to write ideas about cinema and its relation to the realist novel. Sketching out the artistic and philosophical climate within which Rohmer's work evolved will clarify the cultural subtleties of his theory, which held a persistent and controversial neoclassical bias. Furthermore, this study clarifies the director's theoretical stand by returning to some core Aristotelian principles that shaped Balzac's rhetorical system. The study of the roots of Rohmer's realist theory will provide an alternative response to research which increasingly attends to the effect Catholicism has had on his work.[6] Indeed, I submit that the key to understanding the metaphysical and didactic dimension of Rohmer's realism should be

[5] In relation to Pasolini's 'poetic cinema', Rohmer stated: 'These innovations are doomed to die without issue. It has never been possible to lay down the law on the direction cinema might be about to take. Every time people thought it was moving in a particular direction, in fact it went completely the opposite way'. See Éric Rohmer, '"The Old and the New": Rohmer in Interview with Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli (extracts)', in *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 86–87.

[6] Many scholars are elaborating on the transcendental (or the so called spiritual) dimension of Bazin and Rohmer's film theories. These two examples come to mind: Keith Tester, *Eric Rohmer: Film as Theology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Vinzenz Hediger, *The Miracle of Film: André Bazin and the Cosmology of Film* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

understood by scrutinising pre-established cultural and educational sets of values, rather than focusing on the more personal dimension of religious concerns.

Second, I develop Rohmer's conception of modernism through the case-study of *Die Marquise von O…* (1976). While Rohmer's period films have often been misunderstood, simplified, and considered as passé (not to say reactionary), I suggest that Rohmer gave an unprecedented and fertile perspective on modern cinema through the very mimetic quality of his adaptations. Rohmer's neoclassical aesthetics are, precisely, the instrument with which the director evoked the drama surrounding the notions of reason, language and truth. To support this point, I will draw analogies between the ways in which Heinrich von Kleist used neoclassical aesthetics to express his existential malaise in his own moral tales and Rohmer's realist theory. Rohmer responded to the crisis of representation that dominated European cinema in the 1970s through extreme fidelity to the source texts, outstandingly clear and harmonious mise-en-scènes that revealed an underlying tension between language and physical appearances.[7] Although Rohmer did not pretend to overthrow the traditional mould of narrative cinema, the neoclassical values of measure, order, sobriety and simplicity became the privileged means for him to endow his cinema with a sense of uncertainty and instability of meaning. With this in mind, this final part argues that, despite what film critics may have claimed in the mid-1970s, no one other than Rohmer would have equally succeeded in restoring, on-screen, the pre-romantic sensibility and narrative ambiguity of Kleist's novella.

2.2. Restoring the portrait of Professeur Maurice Schérer

It is no exaggeration to say that Rohmer glorified classicism. To understand the relationship between Rohmer's realist theory and neoclassical aesthetic values, I suggest setting, as a first step, the biographical background within which Rohmer's vocation as a film critic emerges. Prior to scrutinising Rohmer's interpretation of Balzac, this section will thus

[7] Vincent Amiel, 'Rohmer et la crise du récit', in *Rohmer et les autres*, ed. Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 61–68.

prevent simplifications about Rohmer's realism by contextualising his personal and professional situation in the 1940s and 1950s.

Maurice Schérer was a disciplined and bright pupil from Tulle, who, along with his younger brother André, was headed for a successful career as a professor of higher education. Once in Paris, Maurice failed the oral test of the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) on several occasions, while André thrived as a *Normalien* since the age of twenty-one.[8] Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe indicate, in this regard, that Maurice, alias the future Rohmer, got rejected due to a lack of 'charisma', 'doublé d'une grande timidité, triplé par une manière souvent saccadée de s'exprimer, un débit irrégulier, peu clair, non loin du bégaiement parfois'.[9] Another letter from the *Comité Consultatif des Universités* (CCU), dating from April 1972, reveals that Rohmer's application to the position of Lecturer was declined: 'Il nous semble que Maurice Schérer, excellent cinéaste, devrait trouver un autre point d'attache dans l'université qu'un poste de maître-assistant pour lequel il ne répond pas aux conditions requises'.[10] These elements show that, despite teaching literature at secondary-school level and giving lectures at the Art and Archaeology Institute of Paris-Sorbonne University, the French university system kept rejecting the possibility of tenure due to a failure to provide the requested pedagogical certificates. Interestingly, Rohmer remained discreet about these particularly disappointing episodes and, according to his brother, never expressed any particular resentment towards the institution.[11]

On the contrary, Rohmer's filmography gives enough evidence to believe that he endowed his fictional characters with the literary and philosophical knowledge his colleagues from l'ENS failed to recognise. Indeed, Rohmer's protagonists from the cycles of *Six contes moraux* (1962-1972) and *Comédies et proverbes* (1981-1987) counterbalanced the director's lack of oratory skills through their inborn taste for beauty and eloquence. Anyone who has seen a film by Rohmer would agree that his generous dialogues and voice-

[8] Rohmer failed the ENS on three occasions between 1939 and 1942 and was also denied the *Agrégation* in classical literature in 1943 and 1947. See Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2014), 25.
[9] 'a high degree of timidity, tripled by a jerky manner of speaking, and an unclear and irregular delivery, close to stammering' [My translation, ZTZ]. See de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 25.
[10] 'We feel that Maurice Schérer, excellent filmmaker, should find another anchor point in the university; his experience does not meet the required conditions for the Assistant-Professor post' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid., 265.
[11] Ibid., 25.

over monologues, as well as the choice of characters and settings, convey a considerable degree of *préciosité*. In a contemporary and seemingly trivial film like *Pauline à la plage* (1983), each character defines their professional and sentimental situation in the first twenty minutes in a fashion that reminds the spectator of the expository scenes of classical plays, from Greek and Roman dramaturgy to the seventeenth-century European theatre. In terms of conversations, the characters amusingly debate about ageless and classic themes like love and freedom. For instance, Pierre's conversation with Marion, with whom he fell deeply in love, illustrates this courtly love and social niceties: 'Tu es une fleur qui ne peut s'épanouir que sur sa propre terre…' The metaphor goes on, as Marion answers: 'Oh, écoute Pierre, bientôt tu m'accuseras de trahir la France!'[12] As a rule, Rohmer gives a privileged place to speech by creating scenes inhabited by talkative characters who, in most cases, do nothing but talk. Although twenty years separate *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969) and *Conte de printemps* (1990), both films show situations in which philosophy is the primary subject of conversation and monopolises the attention of all characters.[13] In relation to *Ma nuit chez Maud*, philosopher Laurent Thirouin was indeed surprised at the length of the characters' philosophical musings and acknowledged the technique was a rather daring artistic choice in the context of the late 1960s.[14] The reason why Rohmer has continuously integrated his characters in an exclusively bourgeois environment, pervaded with classical erudition and chivalric codes of conduct, has, however, more subtle explanations than a strict adherence to traditionalist and conservative values. To explain this point, it is instructive to map out Rohmer's artistic and literary itinerary prior to becoming Bazin's most faithful disciple, mentor of the Young Turks and leading figure of the Nouvelle Vague.

Rohmer's early adulthood was torn between the traditional values of classical education and a strong interest in modernist literature. Additionally, Rohmer's curiosity for

[12] *Pauline à la plage*, DVD, directed by Éric Rohmer (1983; Les Films du Losange, 2003).
[13] In *Ma nuit chez Maud*, Vidal, the communist, and Jean-Louis, the Christian, talk about Pascal's wager. This discussion underpins Jean-Louis' matrimonial choice throughout the film. In *Conte de printemps*, Jeanne is a philosophy teacher and gives her own reading of Kant's transcendental philosophy at a dinner in which the four main characters meet.
[14] This sequence, which introduces the main character, lasts almost six minutes. We can draw a parallel between this conversation and another café scene by Godard in *Vive sa vie* (1962) in which Nana talks with the philosopher Brice Parain for at least ten minutes. See Laurent Thirouin and Adèle Van Reeth, 'Philosopher avec Éric Rohmer 4/4: *Ma nuit chez Maud* et *Conte d'hiver*', *Les Nouveaux chemins de la connaissance*, France Culture (Paris: March 22, 2012).

the modern medium of cinema was, as we shall see, intrinsically connected with the stylistic developments of contemporary literature. This dual and somewhat contradictory aspect of Rohmer's career explains why he never communicated his vocation of film critic and director to his mother. Indeed, she forever remained unaware that her eldest son was the internationally acclaimed Éric Rohmer.[15] Given the austerity of his Catholic and provincial background, it is no surprise that Rohmer subscribed to journals like *La nation française*, an openly anti-republican newspaper with monarchist tendencies.[16] In contrast, Rohmer nonetheless exchanged ideas with the Parisian intellectual elite through his brother's social network, which included Trotskyites like Jean Toussaint-Desanti, Maurrasians like Pierre Boutang, and more liberal figures such as Jean-François Revel and Marc Zuorro.[17] Thus, Rohmer was receptive to debates about modern art and philosophy, contrary to what might sometimes be believed. Rohmer also practised his artistic skills through sketches that attempted to copy great paintings like Pablo Picasso's *La femme au chat*. Henri Matisse, Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne and Vincent Van Gogh seemingly inspired a few other paintings. These pictorial studies were complemented by Rohmer's research into their theoretical and historical background, as proved by a thank-you letter from director of weekly magazine *Action*, Francis Ponge, with regard to his critical text on Jean Dubuffet, dating back from 1944.[18]

Rohmer himself explained to Narboni that, prior to writing about cinema in journals such as *Les temps modernes*, *Arts*, *La gazette du cinéma*, *La nouvelle revue française* and *Cahiers du cinéma*, Sartre's existential philosophy had a significant impact on his formative years as a novice novelist.[19] The case of *Élisabeth* (1944), Rohmer's one and only novel (which he signed with the pen name of Gilbert Cordier), illustrates the impact

[15] De Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 237.
[16] *La Nation Française* replaced the journal *Action Française*, created by Charles Maurras. The latter was an influential and royalist man of letters and politician who encouraged the Maréchal Pétain's 'national revolution'. For more details, see Joseph Algazy, *La tentation néo-fasciste en France de 1944 à 1965* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1984), 28–30.
[17] Rohmer considered his brother as a more progressive, left wing and open-minded Schérer. See de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 25.
[18] Ibid., 24.
[19] 'I never talk about Sartre, but he was still my starting point. The articles that appeared in *Situations I*, which discovered Faulkner, Dos Passos, and even Husserl, contributed a great deal to my thinking. I went through an existentialist period before I began thinking about film, but the influence remained, I think, and continued to affect me in my first films. Rossellini is the one who turned me away from existentialism. It happened in the middle of *Stromboli*.' Rohmer, 'The Critical Years: Interview with Éric Rohmer', 8–9.

the behaviourist manners of American novelists such as John Dos Passos, William Faulkner and William Saroyan had on his literary style. Indeed, *Élisabeth* shared similarities with the self-reflexive and anxious atmosphere conveyed by the Nouveau Roman. His meticulous descriptions of behaviours and seemingly banal and monotonous lives were, as a matter of fact, compared to Marguerite Duras' *La vie tranquille* (1944).[20] And yet, in this atmosphere of humiliation, recrimination and reprisal which characterised France at the eve of the Allies' victory, Rohmer's novel also displayed a political detachment that was not unconnected to the political *tristesse* and aesthetic formalism of the post-war rightist literary group, the Hussards.[21] Broadly speaking, the French literary climate was, in the immediate post-war period, divided between Leftist pacifist intellectuals like Sartre, Albert Camus and André Breton and the literary nationalism of the so-called Hussard generation, led by writers like Jacques Laurent, Roger Nimier and Antoine Blondin.[22] Although this group of writers only established their reputation four years after the release of *Élisabeth* (through Laurent, Nimier and Blondin's contributions to the literary journal *La table ronde*), it should be remembered that Rohmer collaborated with these authors in the journal *Arts* from 1956 to 1959.[23] I situate *Élisabeth* at the very intersection between these two post-war literary tendencies:

> Et puis, il s'est produit quelque chose: après avoir écrit *Élisabeth* j'ai détesté ce roman, j'ai voulu m'en éloigner parce qu'il m'a semblé que c'était sans issue, que les américains avaient dit ce qu'ils avaient à dire… et qu'on ne pouvait pas les imiter. J'ai donc changé, je me suis senti plus proche des écrivains de la fin du XIXe siècle; par exemple de Herman Melville, que je lisais alors.[24]

[20] Éric Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre, suivi d'un entretien inédit* (Clamecy: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2010), 85–86.
[21] Nicholas Hewitt, *Literature and the Right in Postwar France. The Story of the Hussards* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 5.
[22] The Hussards were the direct heirs of the famous interwar rightist literary group composed of Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Marcel Aymé, Georges Bernanos, Jacques Chardonne, Paul Morand and Henry de Montherlant. See Richard Golsan, 'Montherlant et les Hussards: d'une génération l'autre', in *Les Hussards: une génération littéraire: actes du colloque international*, ed. Marc Dambre (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2000), 265.
[23] Antoine de Baecque, 'Éric Rohmer at *Arts*: a Cinema Writer', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 67–79.
[24] 'Then, something happened: I hated *Elisabeth* after I wrote it, I wanted to distance myself from it because I thought it was a dead end, that the Americans had said what they wanted to say… and that we couldn't imitate them. Therefore, I changed, I felt closer to writers of the late nineteenth century; for instance, Herman

Rohmer looked for a philosophical and aesthetic system upon which he could build his own theory of literature and, as the quote implies, the writing of *Élisabeth* was a decisive turning point. In fact, like all good ENS candidates, Rohmer believed that classical models were the basis of all creation.[25] The modern developments in American and French literature (more specifically the 'Lost Generation' and the Nouveau Roman) had, in turn, broken with the classical rules of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realist novel. In this sense, writers like Dos Passos, Samuel Beckett or Alberto Moravia were not good models to 'imitate' since their own literary system called into question the author's classical pretention to a perennial existence through his work. Alain Robbe-Grillet's critique of the bourgeois novel is fitting in this regard: 'L'écrivain lui-même, en dépit de sa volonté d'indépendance, est en situation dans une civilisation mentale, dans une littérature, qui ne peuvent être que celles du passé'.[26] Surely, Rohmer was curious about the literary stylistics of modernist authors. But, in assessing his own work, Rohmer became even more persuaded that the existentialist-inclined style, which stresses the subjective nature of perception and the contingency of consciousness by interrupting the flow of uniform and chronological temporality, had, contrary to the realist novel, an expiry date. As we shall see, Rohmer's renouncing of pursuing an existentialist-inflected writing had a crucial impact on his film theory.

The relationship between cinema and the novel, and more specifically the American novel, was an important subject of debate in the years following the war and was theorised by Claude-Edmonde Magny in 1948.[27] In *L'âge du roman américain* (1948), Magny

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Melville, whom I used to read' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre, suivi d'un entretien inédit*, 86.

[25] Rohmer based his paintings and drawings on processes of imitation and adaptation. See de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 24–25.

[26] 'The writer himself, despite his desire for independence, is situated within an intellectual culture and a literature which can only be those of the past. It is impossible for him to escape altogether from this tradition of which he is the product.' Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1961), 17. For the English version, see Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 18.

[27] In the aftermath of WWII, novelists and directors problematized ideas of freedom, consciousness and time in the light of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophical essay *L'Être et le Néant* (1943) and jointly recognised the American novel as the precursor and father of a self-conscious and existentialist type of cinema (Roberto Rossellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, to only name a few). See Claude-Edmonde Magny, *The Age of the American Novel. The Film Aesthetic of Fiction beween the Two Wars*, trans. Eleanor Hochman (New York: Ungar, 1972).

argued that the American Novel borrowed from cinema its aesthetic techniques of absolute objectivity, close-ups, ellipses, superimpositions, cross-cuts and so on:

> The great lesson the American novel learned from the movies – that the less one says the better, that the most striking artistic effects are those born of the juxtaposition of two images, without any commentary, and that the novel, no more than any other art, should not say too much – was very well understood by Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck.[28]

Rohmer, like Bazin, could only agree with Magny's logic, according to which 'Stendhal, Balzac and the naturalists' had anticipated cinema.[29] Indeed, this assumption conforms to Bazin's essay 'Ontologie de l'image photographique' (1945), which understands cinema as the achievement of that which the other arts forever wanted and forever failed to attain, that is, capturing the essence of reality without the disruption of human intervention.[30] However, while in the novel the narrator maintains his neutrality and exteriority through linguistic devices, cinema, according to Rohmer, *effortlessly* shows the materiality of the world. Thus, the photographic nature of cinema prevents it from having to rely on language.[31] Here, Rohmer's understanding of the relationship between cinema and nature (broadly, this term stands for the physical appearance of the material world) draws directly from Bazin. Whereas Magny suggested that cinema influenced the modernist novel, Bazin and Rohmer argued that cinema follows the system of thought established by the nineteenth-century novel.[32] In other words, Magny developed the thesis according to which the American novel and, later, the Nouveau Roman emphasised the depthlessness of the perceptual world by transposing the human-less and automatic system of cinema to

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[28] Magny, *The Age of the American Novel. The Film Aesthetic of Fiction beween the Two Wars*, 48.
[29] Ibid., 48–49.
[30] André Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 9–17.
[31] Éric Rohmer, 'The Classical Age of Film', in *Éric Rohmer: The Taste for Beauty*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 41; Éric Rohmer, 'Lessons of a Failure: *Moby Dick*', in *Éric Rohmer: The Taste for Beauty*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 108.
[32] Bazin emphasised the fact that both the nineteenth-century realist and naturalist novel and cinema shared a spatial quality. While the novelist's mission is the unfolding of appearances through time, the director concretises what novels can only do virtually and by ways of linguistic conventions. See André Bazin, 'Le *Journal d'un curé de campagne* et la stylistique de Bresson', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 126–127.

literature. Rohmer's conception of cinema went against the existentialist bias of the period because it claimed that cinema is bound to reconnect with the nineteenth-century realist novel by restoring the unity and transcendental dimension of nature. The important point is that Rohmer retained from the nineteenth-century realist novel its classical keystone, that is, the quest for beauty: 'we call *classical* the periods when beauty in art and beauty in nature seemed to be one and the same'.[33] As a matter of fact, one year after Magny's publication, Rohmer suggested that cinema owed more to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels than to Faulkner and Dos Passos:

> Believe it or not, Diderot is a more modern scriptwriter than Faulkner is. Besides, there is no need to scour the past for examples. I am sure that our best scriptwriters, fascinated by the glamour of a literature that they believe themselves to be in no position to denigrate, are destroying their secret moralistic or psychological leanings.[34]

Rohmer recognised the necessity of learning from the 'classics' in order to practice his ability to appreciate beauty. In one of his most controversial essays, 'De la métaphore' (1955), he precisely praises the classical quality of Balzac's narrative: 'ce que j'admire en lui, c'est qu'il ait retrouvé cette science naïve du monde antique'.[35] Rohmer's allusion to Ancient Greece implicitly shows his disapproval of a new literature that claims to be modern by ways of exalting 'confusion' and 'darkness' as an intent to rebel against the classical taste for order, harmony and light.[36] Although his essay begins with reflections on the contemporary state of poetry, it is clear that Rohmer wanted to transpose his reasoning to the realm of cinema: 'Le cinéma nous dispensant de nommer rend toute métaphore littéraire inutile. La beauté d'une vague captée en couleurs par l'écran large rend, plus que jamais, superfétatoire tout artifice de style'.[37] The following section identifies the

[33] Éric Rohmer, 'Such Vanity is Painting', in *Éric Rohmer: The Taste for Beauty*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 45.
[34] Rohmer, 'The Classical Age of Film', 41–42.
[35] Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre suivi d'un entretien inédit*, 50–52.
[36] Ibid., 54.
[37] 'Cinema, which exempts us from naming, makes all literary metaphors useless. The beauty of a wave projected in colour on a large screen renders, more than ever, stylistic tricks superfluous' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid., 52.

philosophical theory underpinning Balzac's rhetorical system and the way in which Rohmer transposed it to cinema.

2.3. Rohmer, reader and imitator of Balzac

Rohmer wrote 'De la métaphore' in a period in which the advent of Italian Neorealism and the early works of Jean Rouch stimulated the European radical practice of 'no scripts, no studios, no actors'. In relation to Vittorio de Sica and Federico Fellini, Rohmer argued that *Umberto D.* (1952) and *La Strada* (1954) were successful for the wrong reasons. In fact, Rohmer criticised both directors' need to hint at some unanticipated but creative ideas like, in *Umberto D.,* a little maid shutting the door with her foot:

> Rare sont ceux des cinéastes qui ne confondent pas la vraie poésie avec une recherche crispée de l'insolite, pour qui toute belle trouvaille n'est pas de celles qui puissent être notées dans leurs moindres détails sur le script.[38]

To this harmless, but superfluous, touch of humour, Rohmer opposed George Cukor's final scene in *A Star is Born* (1954). Cukor's ending insinuates that Norman Maine (played by James Mason) committed suicide through the simple shot of a wave sweeping away his dressing gown.[39] In this case, Rohmer associates Cukor's mise-en-scène with classicist aesthetics because of the camera's respectful and non-invasive relation to nature. There is no need, indeed, for Cukor to resort to visual metaphors, comparisons or ellipsis to render the transcendental aspect of the material surface visible. This example shows that Rohmer understood cinema as the best-equipped medium to reveal the laws that govern the universe, since it captures, without the interference of language, the parallelism residing

[38] 'Only very few directors don't mistake true poetry with the restless search for the unusual. It is as if directors have given up on the idea that great findings can also start with a detailed script' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid., 55.
[39] Ibid.,56.

between the spiritual world and the material one. This analogy was established, very long ago, by the canons of beauty of Ancient Greece.[40]

Although it is not this chapter's mission to scrutinise Aristotle's metaphysics, it is important to keep in mind the philosopher's core idea about the necessary reconciliation between spirit and matter, so as to better understand the politics and aesthetics of Rohmer's films. In fact, Aristotle's system of thought is worth mentioning because Rohmer interpreted it, just as nineteenth-century writers like Balzac, as a universal framework able to reconcile the classic versus modern paradigm. Clarifying this point is essential. The legacy of Aristotelian philosophy generated important debates over the course of the nineteenth century in the realms of biology, physics and psychology. The ambivalence of Aristotle's philosophical reflections, which established the principle of interdependency between body and soul, led to various and often antagonistic interpretations of the philosopher. For instance, the modern materialism of Hippolyte Taine drew inspiration from the Aristotelian connection between the mind and molecular movement. In turn, Catholic writers like Paul Claudel retained from Aristotle his idealistic bias by subverting Carl Vogt's definition of materialist thought:[41] 'ce n'est pas le corps qui sécrète l'âme, c'est l'âme qui produit le corps'.[42] The successful reception of Rohmer's 1960s films partly resulted from similar ambivalent readings of Rohmer's realism, which shuttled between idealism and materialism, and placed him at the meeting point of conservative and radical values. As a matter of fact, Rohmer used cinematic devices (depth of field, sequence shots, minimalistic movements of camera, diegetic and synchronised sound, etc.) that were associated, in the 1960s, with modernist filmmaking. The intense clarity of the Rohmerian image, which allows the spectator to dwell on the shapes, matter, texture, game of looks, gestures and a complex range of environmental and stereophonic sounds, led critics and scholars to suspect the author of *Le signe du lion* (1959) of a certain degree of sensualism,

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[40] Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre suivi d'un entretien inédit*, 52–54.

[41] The physiologist Carl Vogt famously summarised the materialist principle: 'le cerveau sécrète la pensée comme le foie la bile: l'esprit et la liberté sont deux chimères'/ 'the brain secretes thought just as the liver secretes the bile: freedom and spirit are two chimeras' [My translation, ZTZ]. Claude-Pierre Perez, 'Aristote dans le XIXe siècle. Lectures d'Aristote en France de Cousin à Claudel', *Romantisme* 103 (1999): 121, Accessed February 25, 2016, doi: 10.3406/roman.1999.3391

[42] 'the body does not secrete the soul, it is the soul that produces the body'. [My translation, ZTZ]. See Perez, 'Aristote dans le XIXe siècle. Lectures d'Aristote en France de Cousin à Claudel': 122.

on the verge of existentialism.[43] And yet, Rohmer's aesthetics, I argue, owe everything to the Aristotelian principle of communion between essence and existence.

The Aristotelian body-soul relation becomes the theoretical background within which Balzac and Rohmer meet. Arlette Michel explained the Aristotelian undertones of *La comédie humaine* through Balzac's rhetorical system. Indeed, Michel places Balzac's realism in opposition to Plato's radical dualism between the sky of ideas and the material world and suggests that it reconnects, instead, with Aristotle's postulate on the materiality of the soul. In Balzac's novels, the empirical world, the 'image', is considered to be the concrete trace of the interrelation between heaven and earth and of their intrinsic oneness. For example, when Balzac describes Saint-Gatien's cathedral in his early novel *Wann-Chlore* (1825), he emphasises the analogical relation between the Baroque infrastructures and the possibility of a super-natural dimension beyond the realm of the mortals:

> Le propre de cette architecture est de pouvoir allier l'abondance, la minutie, la bizarrerie même des ornements à la grandeur, à l'audace du sujet: où est le vrai Dieu, il semble que là soit le sublime et qu'il y ait place aux représentations les plus fantastiques des créatures.[44]

While it is an acknowledged fact that industrialisation introduced the concept of ugliness to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century landscapes, Rohmer believed that beauty was a timeless concern, and that directors ought to look for it. To this end, Rohmer followed the logic of Balzac (and the 'Ancients') by aligning technical and scientific progress with poetry. In *Métamorphoses du paysage* (1964), Rohmer resumes the position of Louis Lumière in *Panorama de l'arrivée à Aix-Les-Bains pris du train* (1897) by filming the rural and urban landscapes from a rail car. In this pedagogical work for television, Rohmer invites the spectator to learn about the history of the European industrial landscape, from

[43] Claude Beylie drew some analogies between Roberto Rossellini and Éric Rohmer before suggesting the unclassifiable nature of *Le signe du lion*: 'Épopée, tragédie, complainte, mythe ou chronique objective de la condition de l'homme?'/ 'Epic, tragedy, lament, myth or objective chronic about man's condition?' [My translation, ZTZ], see Claude Beylie, 'Les trois cordes de la lyre', *Cahiers du cinéma* 133 (July 1962): 57.
[44] 'The specificity of this architecture resides in its ability to combine the abundance, the accuracy, the oddness of the ornaments with the magnitude, the boldness of the subject: Where to look for the true God? This is where the sublime appears, amongst the representation of the most fantastic creatures' [My translation, ZTZ]. Honoré de Balzac quoted in Arlette Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 27.

the mid-nineteenth century to the 1960s, through documentary-type footage and informative voice-over monologues. Throughout the journey, the spectator discovers the poetry emanating from a windmill, a factory chimney, and other modern buildings. Rohmer associates these geometrical forms, which appear in the different stages of modernity, with the natural phenomenon of the volcanic eruption or with the more epic image of the dungeon **(fig. 2.1.)**. On a few occasions, Rohmer refers to Balzac: 'Ce n'est plus des hauteurs du Père-Lachaise qu'il convient, comme Rastignac, de contempler le spectacle du Paris laborieux, mais prenant un large recul des collines d'Argenteuil'.[45] Accordingly, Rohmer's mise-en-scène encourages the viewer to adopt a contemplative pose, which allows the discovery of metaphors within the recorded reality itself. By privileging documentary techniques, Rohmer suggests that poetry is to be found in the unity and depth of the photographic image and not in the way filmmakers break with the spatial-temporal harmony of nature through disruptive editing practices. Moreover, in *L'amour l'après-midi* (1972), Rohmer projects Frédéric's inner thoughts to the bourgeois environment of Paris through the following voice-over technique:

> J'aime la grande ville. La province et la banlieue m'oppressent, et malgré la cohue et le bruit, je ne rechigne pas à prendre mon bain de foule. J'aime la foule comme j'aime la mer. Non pour m'y engloutir, m'y fondre, mais pour voguer à sa surface en écumeur solitaire, docile en apparence à son rythme, pour mieux reprendre le mien propre dès que le courant se brise, ou s'effrite. Comme la mer, la foule m'est tonique et favorise ma rêverie. Presque toutes mes pensées me viennent dans la rue. Même celles qui concernent mon travail.[46]

In this monologue, Rohmer presents a character that claims to be in perfect harmony with the rhythm of urban environment. As a matter of fact, Frédéric is in synchrony with the

[45] 'It is no longer from the heights of Père-Lachaise that we should contemplate laborious Paris, like in the old days of Rastignac… Today, we can only contemplate Paris with distance, from the hills of Argenteuil' [My translation, ZTZ].

[46] 'I love the city. The suburbs are oppressive. And despite the crush and the noise, I don't mind diving into the crowd. I love the crowd as I love the sea. Not to be engulfed by or lost in it… but to sail it like a solitary pirate, seemingly docile to the crowd's rhythm… but as soon as the current breaks or dissipates, I find my own pace. Like the sea, the crowd is invigorating. Thoughts usually come to me in the streets, even those that concern my work.' *L'amour L'après-midi*, DVD, directed by Éric Rohmer (1972; Warner-Colombia films, 2003).

movement of the crowd and seems to embrace, as such, the social order of bourgeois culture. This is evidenced, for instance, by his obedience to the institution of marriage and subsequent upbringing of biological children. In this example, Rohmer implicitly creates a relation between the bourgeois lifestyle of Frédéric (and the other solitary souls of the Parisian crowd) and the theory on the evolution of species, through an ensemble of terms that connote the oceanic realm ('bain', 'mer', 'engloutir', 'fondre', 'voguer', 'écumeur', 'courant', 'tonique').[47] Thus, the sociological, technical and architectural transformations of the environment are historical components which, according to Rohmer, form a pre-established indivisible and continuous whole with the orderly system of the universe.

During his formative years as a novelist, Balzac wrote journalistic essays, notably *Physiologie du mariage* (1829) and *Traité de la vie élégante* (1830), which focused on the physiognomical singularities of French contemporary modern society. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the belief in a universal correspondence between man's exterior appearance and interior self was a fundamental tenet of the French literary canon, and, through the novels of *La comédie humaine*, reached its most sophisticated method. To date, scholars continue to debate on the complex ramifications of Balzac's literary thinking and the implications of its perennial forms. According to Michel, Balzac renewed Saint-Simon's approach to sociology, which consists in establishing close linkages between human corporeality and morality, in order to thoroughly portray the behaviour of social species.[48] Christopher Rivers, in addition, stressed the theoretical lineage between Balzac's literary practices and Johann Kaspar Lavater's physiognomic system of classification.[49] Both studies indicate Balzac's concern with connecting the facial expressions, body movements (*démarche*) and vestignonomy of his fictional characters to the nineteenth-century French social hierarchy and psychological typologies: 'Mais si la toilette est tout l'homme, elle est encore bien plus toute la femme. La moindre incorrection

[47] Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre suivi d'un entretien inédit*, 51.
[48] Michel explains: 'Comme l'historien use des "tableaux" pour dégager "l'esprit" de l'époque de "l'immense vérité des détails", le physiologiste s'engage à décrire le comportement des "espèces sociales" pour faire jaillir du rapprochement des détails une vérité'/ 'Just as the historian uses "tableaux" in order to accentuate the "spirit" of an era from "the immense truthfulness of the detail", the physiologist wants to observe the behaviour of "social species" in order to bring out a truth from the merging details' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 42–43.
[49] Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 104–106.

dans une parure peut faire reléguer une duchesse inconnue dans les derniers rangs de la société'.[50] Balzac's character descriptions have thus provided historians with a broad and meticulous network of portraits, which not only document the changing customs, attitudes and fashion of his nineteenth-century contemporaries but also laid, according to Rohmer, the aesthetic foundations, not to say the fundamental purpose, of mise-en-scène.

In his 1992 preface to *La Rabouilleuse* (1842), Rohmer characterises Balzac's rhetoric as a spatial organisation, due to the novelist's capacity to blend his authorial voice into the narrative, to multiply viewpoints, to re-emerge through self-reflexive touches of humour, to create contrapuntal melodies through his audacious treatment of narrative form.[51] As a conclusion to his rigourous analysis, Rohmer explains the reasons why the Nouvelle Vague, including Jean Renoir, never dared adapting Balzac (until the recent *La Belle Noiseuse* by Jacques Rivette):

> Ce qui nous a arrêtés, ce n'est pas, comme pour d'autres auteurs, que nous nous trouvions en face d'une oeuvre trop spécifiquement littéraire, mais l'inverse, si je puis dire: que la mise en scène y était déjà inscrite, dans toute la force inventive de ses détails, le décor, les objets, les gestes, les cadrages, les angles de prise de vue. Alors, à quoi bon recopier?[52]

Contrary to the handful of French directors who tried to adapt *Les chouans* (Henri Calef, 1946), *La Rabouilleuse* (i.e., *Les arrivistes*, Louis Daquin, 1959) or *La fille aux yeux d'or* (Gabriel Albicocco, 1961) in the aftermath of World War II, the spectre of *La comédie humaine* which runs through Rohmer's filmography is to be measured in theoretical terms.

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[50] 'If a man's outfit tells us about his entire being, a woman's attire is all the more revealing. The slightest impropriety in her finery can relegate an unknown duchess to the lowest ranks of society' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Honoré de Balzac, *Traité de la vie élégante suivi de la Théorie de la démarche*, ed. Claude Varèze (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1922), 106.

[51] 'De la diversité brouillonne des *Études philosophiques* se dégage une constante: tous les pouvoirs de l'homme, de la nature apparente ou cachée y sont d'ordre spatial'/ 'In the sketchy diversity of *Philosophical Studies* emerges a constant: all powers relating to humans or to the visible and hidden nature correspond to a spatial order' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Éric Rohmer, 'Lignées balzaciennes', preface to Honoré de Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse* (Paris: La Collection P.O.L., 1992), XI.

[52] 'What stopped us, was not, as in the case of other authors, the fact that we had before us a work too specifically literary, but rather the reverse, if I may say so: that the mise-en-scène was already mapped out, in all the inventive power of its details, décor, objects, gestures, framing and viewing angles. So why bother copying?' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Rohmer, 'Lignées balzaciennes', XVII.

In other words, the novel, as developed by Balzac, is the very heart of Rohmer's aesthetic theory of cinema.

To elaborate on this point, it is useful to examine Rohmer's most constant and continuous narrative pattern, that is, noble-born, and more generally, well-born bourgeois characters. In nearly sixty years of filmmaking, Rohmer's plots have *exclusively* been concerned with the life experiences of the French contemporary bourgeoisie, the aristocracy (as in the case of period films: *Die Marquise von O…* and *L'anglaise et le duc* [2001]) and heroes from the medieval (*Perceval le Gallois*) and classical ages (*Les amours d'Astrée et de Céladon* [2007]).[53] Rohmer's disinterest in the representation of the working class and vague allusions to the French peasantry became an easy target for criticism since the late 1960s through reviews that lamented the 'right-wing culture' reaffirmed by films like La *collectionneuse* (1967), *L'amour l'après-midi* and the *Comédies et proverbes* cycle.[54] In *Pauline à la plage*, for instance, Rohmer evokes the lower social classes from an openly western and bourgeois-centric perspective through the caricature of the Norman countryside woman, Louisette. In the same vein as the classical tradition of the valet and soubrette pervading the plays of Molière and Beaumarchais, Rohmer exaggerates the candy-seller's Norman accent in an attempt to humorously contrast it with Marion's more sophisticated and well-bred profile. When Marion notices Louisette, she exclaims: 'Elle est marrante cette fille!'[55] The French notion *marrant* can, in this case, be associated with the widely used and pejorative term *bizarre*, and thereby places the working class girl as a curious object. Just as film critics have analysed the subjectivity of the Rohmerian society by evoking the director's political leanings, Balzac's novels, according to literary critics, have given prominence to the representation of the bourgeois and aristocratic elite.[56]

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[53] In his *Traité de la vie élégante*, Balzac suggests that men belonging from a western and modernised society can be divided into three distinct categories: the man who works, the man who thinks, the man who does nothing. Most of Rohmer's leading characters correspond to the two last definitions, through a multiplicity of scene whose studied simplicity (i.e., fixed medium shots, static placement of the characters, lighting enhancing the clarity of the image, unity and continuity of the visual space through invisible montage) brings the spectator's attention on idealistic and intellectual matters and, subsequently, on the dynamics between ideas and physical reality – one of Balzac's quintessential concerns. See Balzac, *Traité de la vie élégante suivi de la Théorie de la démarche*, 36.

[54] De Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 203–204; 232–233.

[55] 'This girl is funny!' [My translation, ZTZ]

[56] In 1848, Balzac made a stand against labour organisations in *La revue des deux mondes*: 'Vouloir introduire l'Égalité dans la production industrielle par l'égalité des heures et des salaires, c'est vouloir réaliser la chimère de l'égalité des estomacs, de la taille et des cerveaux; c'est vouloir égaliser les capacités; c'est aller

Anatole Cerfberr and Jules Christophe's inventory counts 1225 characters belonging to the bourgeois class (the majority of whom are from the upper and middle class bourgeoisie) and 425 aristocrats. Amongst the remaining characters, about seventy represent the proletariat and only about thirty come from the peasant community.[57] Whether intentional or not (let us not forget that *La comédie humaine* is a fragmented, incomplete project), Balzac's classist bias has had a decisive impact on the twentieth-century subversive approaches to the 'bourgeois' realist novel, as advocated by the Nouveau Roman and some Nouvelle Vague directors like Resnais and Godard.

Surely, to say that Rohmer established the upper middle class as the main environment of his stories is a disputable claim. Films like *Le rayon vert* (1986) and *Quatres aventures de Reinette et Mirabelle* (1987) show peasant life in semi-documentary style. However, provincial life becomes, in these two exceptional cases, a vacation space in which Delphine (in *Le rayon vert*) and Mirabelle (in *Reinette et Mirabelle*) take the role of fortunate passengers who have a momentary glimpse of a simpler and more nature-oriented life before returning to the city. Rohmer's short and unsustained interest in representing non-bourgeois cultures is far from surprising. Indeed, the Rohmerian precept according to which directors need to acknowledge the novelistic origin of cinema inevitably implies that the western bourgeoisie created the seventh art. Thereby, Rohmer's original scripts focused on the representation of French middle and upper class morals and attitudes in order to respect the cultural and social identity of the cinematic medium. The unity and simplicity of his contemporary storylines show that Rohmer neither wanted to interrogate nor challenge cinematic representation as a bourgeois construct and derivative of the nineteenth-century realist novel.

On the contrary, Rohmer many times associates Balzac with antique models of classicism through his capacity to establish a metaphysical unity between vegetal and animal species and the life of the soul. In 'De la métaphore', Rohmer analyses Balzac's comparative system through an extract from *Le Père Goriot*, in which the narrator evokes

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contre nature!'/ 'Wanting to introduce Equality in the domain of industrial production through equal working hours and pay is to participate to the chimera of stomach, height and brain equality; it comes to wanting to equalise capacities; it means going against nature!' [My translation, ZTZ]. Balzac cited in H.U. Forest, *L'esthétique du roman balzacien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 215.

[57] Anatole Cerfberr, Jules François Christophe, *Répertoire de La Comédie Humaine de H. de Balzac* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1888).

the effects of physical activities, like walking, on the characters' emotional responses and sensory perceptions. Rohmer comments this passage, which depicts the beauty of Delphine de Nucingen in the eyes of Rastignac, as follows: 'Mais c'est précisément ce *sang en mouvement* qui me paraît essentiel et l'action *directe* (ainsi pensait Balzac) que ce mouvement même peut avoir sur ceux de l'esprit sans passer par l'intermédiaire de je ne sais quel processus physiologique complexe'. [58]

In his early essay, 'Vanité que la peinture' (1952), Rohmer furthermore explains that the specificity of classical art is its capacity to send the viewer back to the physical reality of nature and to bring forth man's innermost nature all at once.[59] In *Le lys dans la vallée*, Balzac reformulates this precept as such: 'Pour qui contemple en grand la nature, tout y tend à l'unité par l'assimilation'.[60] Unlike Rivette, who, in the aftermath of 1968, subverted Balzac's legacy by experimenting with the storyline's spatial dimension and inventing new social types, Rohmer put great effort in developing his own classical aesthetics through a spatial and 'natural' (i.e., via minimalistic and transparent montage) correspondence and cohesion between characters and the natural environment. In *La collectionneuse*, Adrien expresses the need to organise his vacation days as follows: 'D'abord, me lever tôt. Je n'avais jamais abordé l'aube qu'à revers, au sortir de mes nuits blanches. Il s'agissait maintenant pour moi de lire le matin dans le vrai sens et de l'associer à l'exemple de la quasi-totalité des êtres sur terre: à l'idée de l'éveil et du commencement.'[61] Rohmer further clarified his neoclassical stance during the one and only interview with André S. Labarthe, in 1994.

In the context of the TV programme *Cinéma de notre temps*, Rohmer confidently assumed his lack of imagination and situated his concerns at the opposite side of the erratic, eccentric creator, as mythicized by the romantics. He emphasised the importance of

[58] Balzac's description, which Rohmer retranscribes in this article, goes like this: 'En atteignant au seuil de sa pension, Rastignac s'était épris de Mme de Nucingen, elle lui avait paru svelte, fine comme une hirondelle. L'enivrente douceur de ses yeux, le tissu délicat de sa peau sous laquelle il avait cru voir couler le sang, le son enchanteur de sa voix, ses blonds cheveux, il se rappelait tout; et, peut-être, la marche, en mettant son sang en mouvement, aidait-elle à cette fascination.' See Rohmer, *Le celluloïd et le marbre suivi d'un entretien inédit*, 51.

[59] Maurice Schérer, 'Vanité que la peinture', *Cahiers du cinéma* 3 (June 1951): 26.

[60] Honoré de Balzac*, Le lys dans la vallée. Scènes de la vie de province* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1873), 190.

[61] 'First, get up early. I'd always approached dawn in reverse, after sleepless nights. Now I'd live mornings in the right order, and associate them, like most beings do, with the idea of awakening and beginning.'

working habits by explaining to Labarthe how each cover of his screenplays perfectly matched the predominant colour of his films. Indeed, Rohmer was not prone to sudden bursts of inspiration and, on the contrary, kept the trace of earlier writings that became the point of departure of many of his films, such as *Pauline à la plage.* This film was firstly envisaged as a play whose original title was *Friponne de porcelaine* and, interestingly, some motifs of *Le genou de Claire* (1970) can be found in *Élisabeth*.[62] In parallel, the existing celluloid material and digital images gathered in the box set *Éric Rohmer l'intégrale* corroborate Rohmer's methodological mind.[63] The discipline that characterised Rohmer's work ethics not only had the effect of earning the trust of his entourage but could occasionally cause drowsiness, as testified by one of his interlocutors:

> Il avait demandé d'être filmé d'assez loin, avec un cadrage large, mais j'avais fais disposer un petit rail de travelling qui permettait de s'approcher, jusqu'à l'épaule de Douchet qui lui parlait. Une fois, on s'est approchés un peu trop près, la caméra a touché l'épaule de Douchet: il dormait! Rohmer lui parlait comme si de rien n'était, en grand professionnel… J'admire cette délicatesse qu'il peut avoir: ne pas réveiller un ami en lui faisant sentir qu'il est en faute. [64]

In this documentary, Rohmer answered Douchet's questions with particular attention to developing a logical argument that showed that he took the purpose of the video interview at heart: he was well-determined to make a presentation of his vision of cinema by providing full details of his modus operandi. Away from the merest hint of intimate

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[62] Alain Hertay, *Éric Rohmer. Comédies et proverbes* (Liège: Éditions du CÉFAL, 1998), 49–50.

[63] Rohmer's belongings, which were acquired by the *Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine* (IMEC) in June 2010 remained as meticulously ordered as when stored in the Parisian office of his production company, *Les Films du Losange*, avenue Pierre 1er de Serbie. The impressive collection of Rohmer's archival patrimony facilitated the biographical task of de Baecque and Herpe, who found approximately one hundred forty boxes and leafed through more than twenty thousand pieces of draft notebooks, correspondence, drawings and photographs. In reference to the documentary *Éric Rohmer, preuves à l'appui,* Labarthe remembered with amusement the way in which Rohmer used to pile up his Super 8 films in cake boxes like a child carefully looking after his toys. See de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 9.

[64] 'He [Rohmer] asked to be filmed at a distance, in a wide frame. I managed to install a small travelling rail, which allowed me to progressively come closer, up to Douchet's shoulder. Douchet was in charge of the discussion. At one point, the camera came too close to Douchet and touched his shoulder: I realised he was sleeping! Nonetheless, Rohmer continued speaking as if nothing had happened. He was always very professional… I admired his delicate manners: not waking up a friend while subtly making us feel that someone is at fault' [My translation, ZTZ]. André S. Labarthe quoted in de Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 274–275.

confidence, Rohmer put on the same professorial look as the one described by de Baecque and Herpe whilst discussing Schérer's academic interventions at the Art and Archaeology Institute of Paris-Sorbonne University, where he sporadically taught with a 'slightly sententious and almost boring voice' since the beginnings of the 1970s.[65] Rohmer recognised the principles of reason, education and imitation as predominant aspects of his neoclassical style. In times in which many theorists argued that narrative cinema was the ideal vehicle of bourgeois ideology which helps maintain the boundaries that separate 'individuals from other individuals, classes from classes, nations from nations', Rohmer created narrative films which unanimously displayed informative and persuasive aesthetics.[66]

2.4. The conservative connotations of Rohmer's rhetorical and narrative system in the 1970s

It would be too simplistic to compare Rohmer with Balzac on the sole basis of a shared concern with the sentimental complications of the French bourgeoisie. Rather, I submit that the transparency, coherency and intelligibility of Rohmer's narrative cinema finds its root in this classical line of thought that goes from the antique rhetoric of Aristotle and Cicero to Balzac's modern novel. That is to say: Rohmer belongs, like Balzac, to the lineage of Aristotle and Cicero, who departed from Plato's radical division between *lingua* and *cor.* In *De Oratore* (55 BCE), Cicero suggested that the relationship between eloquence and philosophy should conform to the Aristotelian principle of fusion and harmony between form and content. In others words, elements of illusion and credibility dominated the rhetoric of Cicero in order to calibrate the search for truth to the audience's commonly held beliefs.[67] Cicero's rhetorical speech was, moreover, delivered among the public; a practice which Barthes associated with 'the rhetoric of the masses' due to its tendency to conform to

[65] Ibid., 266–267.
[66] Alan Williams, *Republic of Images. A History of French Filmmaking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 383.
[67] Samuel Ijsseling, 'Rhétorique et philosophie. Platon et les Sophistes, ou la tradition métaphysique et la tradition rhétorique', *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 74, 22 (1976): 197, Accessed October 27, 2014, doi: 10.3406/phlou.1976.5884

the public's basic levels of understanding.[68] Indeed, the persuasive dimension of rhetorical speech leads the speaker to level his reasoning down and creates, thereby, a relationship of dominance between the speaking subject and the listeners. In this regard, Alain Michel has suggested that the rhetoric established by Cicero helped consolidate the laws that shaped society politically and economically. In parallel, the *Fondation Hardt* organised another symposium on 'Éloquence et rhétorique chez Cicéron' (1981) in which Michel developed the idea according to which Cicero's understanding of the relationship between truth and persuasion had major consequences on the history of western culture.[69] Michel's account coincided with Barthes' when it suggested that Cicero nationalised Aristotle's rhetorical theory and imposed philosophy as a field of study for all literate individuals.[70] Cicero's classification of speech in six categories (the *exodium*, the *narrative*, the *partition*, the *confirmation*, the *refutation* and the *peroration*) implied that the mastery of these linguistic conventions became the mandatory route to scientific knowledge and political authority.[71] The institutionalisation of Ciceronian rhetoric therefore prepared the grounds for all sorts of societal, economical and political conflicts, which inevitably led to today's pre-established and hierarchical division of social classes:

> On voit combien cette pédagogie force la parole: celle-ci est cernée de tous côtés, expulsée hors du corps de l'élève, comme si il y avait une inhibition native à parler et qu'il fallut toute une technique, toute une éducation pour arriver à sortir du silence, et comme si cette parole enfin apprise, enfin conquise, représentait un bon rapport 'objectal' avec le monde, une bonne maîtrise du monde, des autres.[72]

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[68] 'Combien de films, de feuilletons, de reportages commerciaux pourraient prendre pour devise la règle aristotélicienne: "mieux vaut un vraisemblable impossible qu'un possible invraisemblable": mieux vaut raconter ce que le public croit possible, même si c'est impossible scientifiquement, que de raconter ce qui est possible réellement, si ce possible là est rejeté par la censure collective de l'*opinion courante*'. See Roland Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique [Aide-Mémoire]', *Communications* 16 (1970): 179–180, Accessed October 28, 2014, doi: 10.3406/comm.1970.1236

[69] Alain Michel, 'La théorie de la rhéthorique chez Cicéron: Éloquence et philosophie', in *Éloquence et rhétorique chez Cicéron, sept exposés suivis de discussions*, ed. W. Ludwig (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1982), 110.

[70] Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique [Aide-Mémoire]', 181.

[71] M.A.R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 86.

[72] 'We can see how far such pedagogy forces speech: speech is beset on all sides, expelled from the student's body, as if there were a native inhibition to speak and it required a whole technique, a whole education to draw it out of silence, and as if this speech, learned at last, conquered at last, represented a good "object

While scholars have generally noted that the majority of Rohmer's films are distinctly eloquent and markedly dialogue-heavy, discussions regarding the hierarchical and divisive nature of his screenplays have yet to be developed.[73] In this respect, the connecting thread that unites the short, medium and long feature films of *Six contes moraux* resides in the subject's male-centric discourse, which systematically tries to rationalise conventionally improper sexual desires. Rohmer's monologue and dialogues are thereby concerned with showing the linguistic mechanisms of political power, through the orator's delivery of a clear and efficient message. For instance, in *La boulangère de Monceau* (1963), the law student (played by Barbet Schroeder) is attracted to the young baker, Jacqueline. Although the narrator's voice-over bluntly telegraphs the fact that the bakery girl is nothing more than a pastime to compensate for the absence of the more sophisticated and well-bred Sylvie (a passerby whom the student wishes to find and seduce), the male protagonist asks Jacqueline to meet him for a drink at a Parisian terrace. To persuade her, he adapts his speech, in a rather patronising and almost comical way, to the lexicon of the bakery:

> Étudiant: 'Écoutez. Vous êtes romanesque?'
> Jacqueline: 'Comment?'
> Étudiant: 'Romanesque. Je passe demain à 7 heures et demi. Au cas où l'on ne pourrait pas se parler à la boulangerie, voilà ce qu'on va faire: je demande un gâteau. Si vous m'en donnez deux, c'est d'accord. Dans ce cas, rendez-vous au café à 8 heures. Compris?'
> Jacqueline: 'Bah oui.'
> Étudiant: 'Il ne s'agit pas de se tromper. Répétez.'[74]

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relation" with the world, a real mastery of the world of men.' See Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique [Aide-Mémoire]', 181–182.

[73] Pascal Bonitzer analysed the ideological mechanisms of *Ma nuit chez Maud* in Pascal Bonitzer, 'Maud et les Phagocytes', *Cahiers du cinéma* 214 (July–August 1959): 59.

[74] Student: 'Listen. Do you like romance?'
Jacqueline: 'Sorry?'
Student: 'Romance. I will be at the shop tomorrow at half seven. If other people surround us, here is what we are going to do: I ask for a cake. If you give me two pieces, it means yes. In this case, you find me at the café at eight. Understood?'
Jacqueline: 'Of course.'
Student: 'Make no mistake. Repeat what I just said' [My translation, ZTZ]. *La boulangère de Monceau/La carrière de Suzanne*, DVD, directed by Éric Rohmer (1962/1963; Les Films du Losange, 2003).

The law student is endowed with the ability to manipulate language through a persuasive speech, which exposes, through cultural references, his level of education and subsequently creates a hierarchy of power between characters.

In the same way as the student's introspective voice guides the storyline, Rohmer edits the journeys of all main protagonists from *Six contes moraux* by using homodiegetic and narrative voice-overs. Unsurprisingly, the male characters' internal monologues privilege rational demonstration over lyricism. Their lack of verbal empathy towards women and, in turn, forced self-composure encourage the spectators to distance themselves from the leading protagonists and question the veracity of their speech. Additionally, in *La boulangère de Monceau, La carrière de Suzanne* (1963) *La collectionneuse* and *Le genou de Claire*, Rohmer films and incorporates fragments of the girls' faces and bodies and gives way to an alternative perspective which subtly deviates from the predominant male speech.[75] During one of the law student's visits to Jacqueline in *La boulangère de Monceau*, Rohmer frames the face of the bakery girl in a close-up whilst the actress looks directly into the camera. At this point, both the law student and Jacqueline recognise each other as individuals and undermine the utilitarian and impersonal relationship between merchant and customer. The intimacy created by that instant stimulates the student's desire to overlook the boundaries that separate him to the salesgirl. Rohmer visually represents his successful attempt to approach Jacqueline through a medium wide shot which frames the two characters standing next to each other, eating an apricot tart **(fig. 2.2.)**. I consider these encounters, which are characterised by an ephemeral and sensual dimension, as Rohmer's attempts to create another storyline that breaks with the principal narrative structure, which is, the law student's search for Sylvie. Through these images, Rohmer turns the routine activity of buying pastry into a moment of self-reflection, which occupies the vast majority of the film's duration – despite the fact that the character openly stresses the insignificance of the activity. In fact, Jacqueline turns her back on a large mirror on the back of the shop, which reflects the image of the student (as well as the rest of the clients). This overexposed setting, which includes large windows opening to the boulevard, informs the spectator

[75] Amiel, 'Rohmer et la crise du récit', 65.

about the social world (passers-by, vehicles, buildings) that surrounds the bakery; it also emphasises the hierarchical divide between the bakery girl and the bourgeois customers.

It could be argued that *La boulangère de Monceau*, whose narrative structure is representative of *Six contes moraux*, interrogates social, economic and cultural dynamics only temporarily and superficially. After all, each ending restores the authority of Catholic tradition and moral order. In this short-length film, the law student finally runs across Sylvie and asks her on a date. On the same day he is supposed to meet with Jacqueline, the student stands her up and, instead, marries Sylvie. In contrast with the duration of scenes showing the student's *flâneries* around the bakery, the narrator announces the marriage through the elliptical statement: 'Nous nous sommes mariés six mois plus tard'.[76] The last scene shows the couple entering the bakery to buy their daily baguette. Rohmer frames the austere face of the bakery owner, who reminds us of the missing Jacqueline, in a reverse-shot. Through this brief shot-reverse shot technique, the director restores social order by separating the *petite* from the *haute* bourgeoisie.[77] Evidently, the unity and logic that guide Rohmer's narrative cinema, whose structural form resembles a circle, mirrors his neoclassical tendency. In *La boulangère de Monceau*, the student marries a woman from a wealthy Catholic family and identifies his short interest in the bakery girl as a sign of moral weakness. Most of the films from *Six contes moraux* follow the exact same pattern, with the exception of *Le genou de Claire*, which functions nonetheless as a variation on the same theme. In the succeeding film cycle, *Comédies et proverbes*, Rohmer preserved the bourgeois frame of mind through characters who remain impervious to any change: be it psychological, social, moral or political. Marion nostalgically returns to Paris after a summer love cut short in *Pauline à la plage*, just as Frédéric hastily returns to his wife after running away from Chloé's amorous advances in *L'amour l'après-midi.* The idea of a cyclic and unchanging humanity therefore runs throughout Rohmer's filmography and is portrayed, for instance, through the shot of the white wooden fence, which opens and ends

[76] 'We got married six months later' [My translation, ZTZ].
[77] Barthes explains the relationship of dependency between petite and haute bourgeoisie as follows: 'By spreading its representations over a whole catalogue of collective images for petit-bourgeois use, the bourgeoisie countenances the illusory lack of differentiation of the social classes: it is as from the moment when a typist earning twenty pounds a month *recognises herself* in the big wedding of the bourgeoisie that the bourgeois ex-nomination achieves its full effect'. See Roland Barthes, 'The Bourgeoisie as a Joint-Stock Company', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 140.

Pauline à la plage. Here again, the story comes full circle; the ending suggests that the characters go back on the 'right' road.

The vision of history as a regular, orderly and hardly deviating chain of political and natural events was a problematic stance in the 1960s. In November 1965, when Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Bontemps and Jean-Louis Comolli interrogated Rohmer on the notions of 'old' and 'new' cinema, the latter answered:

> You are going to tell I'm a reactionary and not just a classicist. As far as I am concerned the world doesn't change, at least not much. The world is always the world, neither more confused or clearer [sic]. What changes is art, ways of approaching the world.[78]

Rohmer was well aware of the conservative connotation of his assessment of human history. The tautological expression 'the world is always the world', shows, from a Barthesian perspective, Rohmer's way of emphasising the supremacy of empirical reality over language. Indeed, Barthes explained that tautology is born from the impossibility of rationally explaining a fact and thus becomes the expression of man's surrender of language in favour of an omnipotent reality: 'Tautology is a profound distrust of language, which is rejected because it has failed. Now any refusal of language is a death. Tautology creates a death, a motionless world'.[79] In this same interview with *Cahiers*, Rohmer professed his belief in the cyclical and predictable pattern of human history and therefore postulated on the de-politicised nature of reality. Rohmer's conviction that the external world can be represented, through cinema, in a neutral and intelligible manner, is illustrated by the consistent and methodical aspect of his work habits while preparing period films.

Rohmer's period films endeavour to educate the spectator by remaining as close as possible to the historical truth of the time in question. By 'historical truth', I mean that history, according to Rohmer, is only representable through the recording of artefacts that provide the spectator with empirical evidence from the past. Rohmer's pronounced concern with documentation when adapting Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Marquise von O…* (1808),

[78] Rohmer, '"The Old and the New": Rohmer in Interview with Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli (extracts)', 88.
[79]Barthes, 'Myth on the Right', 153.

Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval ou le conte du Graal* (1180) and Grace Elliot's *Journal of my Life during the French Revolution* (1859) was, therefore, an attempt to emphasise the historical authenticity of the décors and language (through Rohmer's fidelity to the pictorial culture and linguistic mannerisms of the historical periods) over the credibility of realistic recreations. Although critics have often isolated Rohmer's period films on account of their tangible artificiality, which deviates from the naturalism of his contemporary-based film settings, Rohmer's representation of history remains nonetheless faithful to Bazin's critique of the illusory powers of montage. In 'Montage interdit' (1957), Bazin argued that the specificity of cinema 'is to be found in the straightforward photographic respect for the unity of space'.[80] Thus, from a Bazinian perspective, the issue of believability has a particular status in fantasy and period films. Through the case study of Jean Tourane and Albert Lamorisse's children's films, Bazin developed the way in which the concept of photographic realism applies to cinematic works in which imagination generally takes precedence over reality. While Jean Tourane's *Une fée… pas comme les autres* (1957) relied almost exclusively on montage to make the spectator believe in the existence, on-screen, of talking animals, the fantasy world imagined by Lamorisse in *Le Ballon rouge* (1956) and *Crin blanc* (1953) maintained a purer and straightforward bond with reality:

> Their believability is undoubtedly tied in with their documentary value. The events they portray are partially true. The countryside of the Camargue, the lives of the horse-breeders and the fishermen, the habits of the herds, constitute the basis for the story of *Crin Blanc*, providing a firm and unshakeable support for the myth.[81]

Comparably, the documentary value of period films resides in the way in which directors integrate and preserve pre-existing portions of reality that owe nothing to the trickeries of montage. In *Perceval le Gallois*, Rohmer wanted to provide the spectator with an idea of the way in which spatial dimension was represented in medieval visual culture. For this purpose, Rohmer introduces Chrétien de Troyes' story through a fixed, flat, circular and minimalistic studio setting that reminds the informed spectator of medieval miniatures.

[80] André Bazin, 'The Virtues and Limitations of Montage', in *What is Cinema? Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1967), 46.
[81] Bazin, 'The Virtues and Limitations of Montage', 47.

Along the same lines, Rohmer generally positions his actors (who wore realistic medieval costumes) face to the camera, with their hands slightly raised skywards. In addition to these shooting and acting techniques, which document the cultural and artistic practices of medieval times, Rohmer's adaptation practices preserve intact the literary and linguistic codes of specific historical epochs. Although a few editors had already published translations of *Perceval ou le conte du Graal* in French prose, Rohmer went as far as to re-write the poem in octosyllabic verses, so as to remain faithful to medieval literary conventions. Likewise, in *Die Marquise von O…*, Rohmer referred to early nineteenth-century European visual culture by re-enacting Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781). As a result, Rohmer's period films represent the past as a fundamentally foreign land, whose visual aesthetics and dialogues do not hint, in theory, at the contemporaneity of the spectator. Instead of re-constructing medieval architecture in a realistic or naturalistic fashion, Rohmer emphasises the artificial dimension of his décors and acting.[82] To paraphrase Florence Bernard de Courville, Rohmer portrays history as an unrepresentable reality and thereby substitutes naturalistic presentation with figurative representation of medieval stories.[83] In the case of *Perceval*, *Die Marquise von O…,* and *L'anglaise et le duc* (2001), photographic realism is to be found in the way in which Rohmer's camera records the very plasticity of these historical customs and artefacts, whether through the visual re-enactment of Fuseli's romantic painting, the recording of painted canvases which figuratively illustrate the late eighteenth-century Paris in *L'anglaise et le duc*, or the intra-diegetic sonority of the troubadours' songs in *Perceval*. In a sense, the aesthetic distance established between past and present shows Rohmer's desire to dispossess the spectator from a fantasised idea of the past and to suggest, instead, that any simulation of a familiar historical setting is, inevitably, a deceptive resemblance or a false copy. Moreover, these aforementioned techniques of estrangement invite the spectator to reflect on his own role and function as creator of meaning.[84] Through the merging of pictorial 'quotations' with

[82] Ewa Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality: History, Memory and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.
[83] Florence Bernard de Courville, '*L'anglaise et le duc*: Le réel et le tableau', in *Rohmer et les autres*, trans. Mireille Dobrzynski and Michelle Herpe-Volinsky, ed. Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 177–178.
[84]Bazin wanted 'to submerge judgement through documentation' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Laurent Marie, 'The Oak That Wished It Were a Reed: Georges Sadoul and André Bazin', *Paragraph* 36, 1 (2013): 109, Accessed October 13, 2014, doi: 10.3366/para.2013.0080

medieval poetry or Kleistian prose, the spectator interrogates the dynamics between the spoken language and the film's pictorial dimension. This particular tension between the word and the image, which I have already illustrated in Rohmer's contemporary-based feature and short films, will be closely examined in the case of *Die Marquise von O…* To conclude this section, it is necessary to analyse, from a cultural perspective, the reasons why Rohmer's views on film adaptation were, in the course of the 1970s, original and unsettling.

Be it in Germany or France, the aftermath of May 1968 gave rise to an increased interest in the literary legacy of Kleist. While, in the aftermath of World War II, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of East Germany associated the classicism of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe with the socialist values of anti-individualism and nationalism through the promotion of Faust as a 'positive socialist hero', the 1960s saw a shift in the attitude of literary critics towards classical legacy.[85] As a matter of fact, the importance given to the subjectivity of individual experience and thereby to romantic heritage continuously expanded throughout the decade:

> The preoccupation with the problems and possibilities of the artist in society which was already evident in the literature of the 1960s has led not only to increasing identification with the predicaments of writers of previous epochs, particularly Romanticism, but also to bold poetic experiments which explore the contemporary significance of the problematic figures Seghers preferred: Hölderlin, Jean-Paul, Kleist and Karoline von Günderrode.[86]

Kleist's short stories and plays were indeed re-discovered through film adaptations such as *Michael Kohlhaas: Der Rebel* by Volker Schlöndorff (1969), *San Domingo* by Hans Jürgen Syberberg (1970), and *Earthquake in Chile* by Helma Sanders Brahms (1974). Like Werner Herzog, who expressed, through *Signs of Life* (1968), his profound distrust towards language and thereby 'borrowed' (as opposed to 'adapted') a romantic motif from German literature, each of these adaptations transposed Kleist's stories to the social agitations of

[85] Patricia Herminghouse, 'Trends in Literary Reception, Coming to Terms with Classicism: Goethe in GDR Literature of the 1970s', *The German Quarterly* 56, 2 (1983): 275, Accessed November 14, 2014, doi: 10.2307/405681

[86] Herminghouse, 'Trends in Literary Reception, Coming to Terms with Classicism: Goethe in GDR Literature of the 1970s': 278.

present times.[87] In fact, Schlöndorff and Syberberg attempted to establish a link between the revolutionary settings of Kleist's novelle (*Michael Kohlhaas* [1808] and *Die Verlobun in St. Domingo* [1811]) and the students' riots in West Germany. These directors partly illustrated the core principle of Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist stance toward history, which consists in revealing the ways in which bourgeois culture constructs a hegemonic discourse on history, by emphasising the subjective, fictional and political character of the films' storylines and aesthetics.[88] In the opening credits of *Michael Khohlhaas: Der Rebel*, for instance, Schlöndorff established an immediate parallelism between documentary footage on the violent confrontations between students and anti-riot police in the late 1960s and the Kleistian story of heroic revenge. Additionally, Schlöndorff actively participated in the creation of a period film that reflected

[87] Brigitte Peucker develops the influence of Kleist's romanticism and his 'crisis of language' on Herzog's adaptation practices, especially in *Signs of Life*, a loose adaptation of Achim von Arnim's novella *The Mad Invalid* (1818). See Brigitte Peucker 'The Invalidation of Arnim: Herzog's *Signs of Life* (1968)', in *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations*, ed. Eric Rentschler (London: Methuen, 1986), 217–230.

[88] The term 'poststructuralism' refers to a critical perspective that emerged in the 1970s, which aimed to disassemble the system of truth on which structuralism established itself as a dominant thought in the mid-twentieth century. Derrida, Foucault and Barthes, the most important spokepersons of this movement, agreed on two crucial points. Whilst they acknowledged the structuralist precept according to which laws governed the structures of language and society, they argued against the existence of immutable and metaphysical structures at the origin of human life and rejected the idea that situations can be objectively observed. For Derrida, the 'text' does not mirror the world but structures our *interpretation* of reality. In *De la grammatologie* (1967), he explains that logocentrism is at the origin of a prevailing and 'naïve' system of representation, which is founded on the 'uncritical opposition between sensible and intelligible, between soul and body' [My translation, ZTZ]. This system of duality, which encloses a hierarchical value system such as 'Good and Evil' and 'Man and Woman', can be deconstructed and give way to an infinite number of interpretations. According to Derrida, but also to Foucault and Barthes, the meaning of a text is not pre-established but diffuse and uncertain. For his part, Foucault analysed the genealogy of accepted forms of knowledge and scientific understandings of the 'truth'. Like Derrida, he denied the existence of an ultimate truth and shed light on the ways the mechanisms of power are intrinsically linked to the development of knowledge. Barthes situates the institutionalisation of literature – or, strictly speaking, the enclosing of signification within forms – in the mid-seventeenth century. Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole's theological theory of sign and representation appeared at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV of France. *La Logique du Port-Royal* stipulated that French language was founded on a rational and universal linguistic system. Through *l'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des metiers*, the Enlightenment thinkers subjected the world to humans' consciousness and utility, through the didactical demonstration of the instrumental purpose of nature. The anti-authoritarianism advocated by Foucault and Barthes' writings targeted different but interrelated aspects of nineteenth-century bourgeois society, whether these concerned the surveillance and control institutions or the worship of the author through the development of the realist novel. As we shall further explore in the next chapters, poststructuralism had an overwhelming effect on the French university system but also on the development of artistic practices throughout Europe. See Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 123; Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris : Gallimard, 1969); Roland Barthes, *Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984); See Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, trans. Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

on the events of May by introducing anachronistic rock music to the scene where the city of Wittenberg is on fire. This editing strategy, which juxtaposes archival documents with fictional narrative, provides the spectator with an alternative approach to the events of May 1968 and prevented the director from taking the risk of representing, through narrative cinema, a story 'about May'.[89]

As will be further explored in chapter three and five, from the 1970s onwards, directors increasingly resorted to canonised works of art and literature, as well as western myths, as an alternative form to comment and criticise political authoritarianism and conservatism. In *Die Marquise von O…* (to only name this adaptation) Rohmer made aesthetic choices that strikingly isolated him from any cinematic trend of the decade. As a result, American critic Pauline Kael targeted the film by claiming that Rohmer took a 'highly fumable story and treated it as if it were an official nineteenth-century classic, to be given a wooden, measured reading'.[90] There is no doubt that Kael would have preferred giving the responsibility of adapting *Die Marquise von O…* to someone more inclined to show proper 'animal passion'.[91] However, Kael's critique took for granted that the rigour of Rohmer's fidelity to Kleist's text was synonymous with authorial passivity, monotonous and insipid illustration. Such an interpretation, I suggest, fails to understand that Rohmer's faithfulness to Kleist's stylistic economy served to restore the fundamental power of *Die Marquise von O…*, that is, narrative ambiguity. The following part will unpack this seeming paradox and draw theoretical and stylistic analogies between Kleist and Rohmer in order to recognise the two-fold dimension of Rohmer's theoretical precept: modernity is to be found within classical constraints.

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[89] Lynn A. Higgins, *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics. Fiction and the Representation of History in Postwar France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 117. Although the content of films like Costa Gavras' *Z* (1969), Yves Boisset's *L'attentat* (1972) and André Cayatte's *Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu* (1973) criticised, in the same period, controversial affairs of State, the directors' common failure to challenge the contested narrative form of mainstream cinema nullified their political activism, according to critics like Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni. See Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique', *Cahiers du cinéma* 216 (October 1969): 11–15.

[90] Kael quoted in John Gerlach, 'Rohmer, Kleist and the Marquise of O.', *Literature/Film Quarterly* 8, 2 (1980): 2, Accessed November 21, 2014, http://www.questia.com/read/1P3-1310796601/rohmer-kleist-and-the-marquise-of-o

[91] Edith Borchardt, 'Eric Rohmer's *Marquise of O.* and the Theory of the German Novella', *Literature/Film Quarterly* 12, 2 (1984): 2, Accessed November 21, 2014, https://www.questia.com/read/1P3-1314240491/eric-rohmer-s-marquise-of-o-and-the-theory-of-the

2.5. Rohmer and Kleist: literality and intelligibility in the service of secrecy

The previous section demonstrated that the overpowering presence of a rational speech systematically and abruptly ends all possibilities of a story in the cycle of *Six contes moraux*. Rohmer's closed-ended film narratives did not go unnoticed by the critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* and despite the prudence and discretion with which the editorial group of 1963 referred to the 'champion of "a prose cinema"', the Rohmerian representation of middle and upper social classes was soon to be associated with a flagrantly bourgeois way of constructing reality.[92] And yet, Rohmer's 1960s films, as well as the 1970s film adaptations, repeatedly tackled notions of desire and freedom through images that escape, only temporarily, the characters' pre-established and conventional trajectories, as shown through *La boulangère de Monceau.*[93] In a way, Rohmer's entire corpus of films could be regarded as the practical realisation of his early essay 'Pour un cinéma parlant' (1949). Written in *Les temps modernes*, this theoretical piece is Rohmer's most effective and concise defence of speech, whose place in cinema – since the advent of the talkies – was generally subordinated to the image. Indeed, the spoken word was, according to Rohmer, overshadowed by the universality of visual language and, consequently, directors and scriptwriters thought of dialogue as this 'élément parasite qu'il fallait avant tout tenir en lisière'.[94] The era of talking pictures, Rohmer stressed, could only begin once the speech was returned its due power: 'L'art du réalisateur n'est pas fait pour faire oublier ce que dit le personnage, mais, tout au contraire, pour nous permettre de ne perdre aucune de ses paroles'.[95] Rohmer's theory of speech is rooted in the principle that the essence of language is to designate the world through approximate concepts. In Rohmerian terms, language disguises the 'truth' through metaphors and directors should make use of its power of deception by accentuating the gap between nature and spoken language. In this context, it is important to note that the conflict that has opposed, since antiquity, natural laws and the

[92] Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinéma 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood*, 84.
[93] Barthes describes the origins of bourgeois ideology as such: 'I am not forgetting that since 1789, in France, several types of bourgeoisie have succeeded one another in power; but the same status – a certain regime of ownership, a certain order, a certain ideology – remains at a deeper level'. See Barthes, 'The Bourgeoisie as a Joint-Stock Company', 137.
[94]'a parasitic element that, above all, had to be kept to the side' [My translation, ZTZ]. Éric Rohmer, 'Pour un cinéma parlant', in *Le goût de la beauté* (Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile, 1984), 38.
[95] 'The filmmaker's art is not to make us forget what characters say but, rather, to help us not to miss a single word' [My translation, ZTZ]. Rohmer, 'Pour un cinéma parlant', 39.

human's desire to tame, through words, the natural world, was Rohmer's most striking and continuous guiding thought. In *Pauline à la plage*, Chrétien de Troyes' initial proverb 'Qui trop parole, il se mesfait' echoes one of Rohmer's major rationale: the subjectivity with which characters tell an event never matches the objectivity of appearances.[96] Thus, just as the homodiegetic monologues of *Six contes moraux* and the intradiegetic and polyphonic conversations of *Comédies et proverbes* contradict the characters' lived realities, the dialogue (whether it is spoken or written) of *Die Marquise von O…* functions as a device of illusion and deception.

Rohmer's opposition of nature with language originates from a theoretical concern that characterised the pre-romantic literature of Kleist. According to Sigurd Burckhardt, the anti-idealistic connotations of *Die Marquise von O…* were symptomatic of the Romantic school of philosophy, which provoked Kleist's growing disbelief towards the notions of truth (*Wahrheit*) and education (*Bildung*): 'In Kleist's texts representation becomes a rhetorical, visual figure in and of itself, incapable of representing an original, and ultimately capable of representing nothing but a deception of truth and a representation of "nothing"'.[97] Kleist negated the possibility of truth through representation by undermining the conceptual rationality of the classical sentence and introducing epistemological gaps within his sentence structure:

> […] he then addressed the lady politely in French, offered his arm and led her into the other wing of the palace which the flames had not yet reached and where, having already been stricken speechless by her ordeal she now collapsed in a dead faint. Then – the officer instructed the Marquise's frightened servants, who presently arrived, to send for a doctor; he assured them that she would soon recover, replaced his hat and returned to the fighting.[98]

Through the use of a simple dash (or suspension points in some other editions), Kleist shows a whole world of possibilities and thereby interrogates the reliability of the narrative.

[96] 'A wagging tongue bites itself.' [My translation, ZTZ]
[97] Grant Profant McAllister Jr, *Kleist's Female Leading Characters and the Subversion of Idealist Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 58.
[98] Heinrich von Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, trans. David Luke and Nigel Reeves (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 70.

It is precisely through this temporal ellipsis, which occurs between the moments when the Russian officer accompanies Giulietta (aka the Marquise of O.) back to the castle and when he leaves the fainted woman with the servants, that Kleist draws the enigmatic strength of the narrative. Through this stylistic device, Kleist turns the Marquise of O. (who, in the aftermath of the war, finds herself unaccountably pregnant) into either a heroine subjected to miracles or a victim of a heinous crime. Kleist creates a tension between the epic and the sordid by focusing on the universality of the classical sentence over the subjectivity and creativity of the romantics: 'What Kleist does is to call into question the easy rationality of the classical sentence, which gains its victories by keeping out unfitting details – the streaks of the tulip that Samuel Johnson forbade the artist to paint'.[99] In *Die Marquise von O…*, the impact the Napoleonic conquests had on Kleist's imagery is evident; the operational tempo to which he was accustomed whilst spending his youth at the Prussian military academy is the very motor of his syntax:

> The state articulated Prussia, not as statement articulates feeling or experience, but as syntax articulates a sentence. No richly fraught words were admitted, no rhetoric of pomp and circumstance, nothing that would make the harsh voice of authority fall more melodiously, more insinuatingly and majestically on the subjects' ear. In Prussia, order did not express a higher harmony beyond it: It was – and, by being – it lifted incoherence into meaning.[100]

According to Kleist's contemporaneous critic, Otto Ludwig, one of the reasons that prevented him from success was the writer's disinclination to express passion: 'Si la passion, chez Shakespeare se montre spirituelle, chez Kleist, c'est la raison qui se montre à nous sous forme de passion'.[101] The propensity to exclude any form of sentimentality is, interestingly, what links Kleist's *Die Marquise von O…* to Rohmer's film theory.

To illustrate my thought, it is required to examine Rohmer's understanding of universalist aesthetics in the realm of cinema. In the early 1950s, Rohmer was very critical

[99] Sigurd Burckhardt, *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 106.
[100] Burckhardt, *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist*, 102.
[101] 'If passion, in Shakespeare, presents itself as spiritual, reason, in Kleist, is what takes the form of passion' [My translation, ZTZ]. Otto Ludwig quoted in Roger Ayrault, *La légende de Heinrich von Kleist, un poète devant la critique* (Paris: Nizet et Bastard, 1934), 21.

of the aesthetic particularisms reflected by national cinemas and praised, in turn, the classical aesthetics of Hollywood narrative films. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that Rohmer ranked directors like D.W. Griffith, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Howard Hawks and Alfred Hitchcock in the same lineage as the Greco-Roman writers of antiquity.[102] Rohmer's neoclassical bias in terms of criticism and filmmaking prevailed throughout the decades, as shown in his doctoral thesis on *L'organisation de l'espace dans le Faust de Murnau* (1977). In this academic work, Rohmer argues that Murnau's aesthetics reveal a certain degree of knowledge of the classical, baroque, gothic and romantic traditions.[103] Murnau's ability to create an aesthetic that moves beyond the expressionist tendencies of national German cinema in the 1920s is, for Rohmer, the most irrevocable proof of the universalism of *Faust* (1926) – a work which he believes attained the same level of monumentality as Goethe's eponymous play or other compositions by Mozart and Beethoven.[104] In more technical terms, the universalism Rohmer ascribes to Murnau's adaptation resides in the director's treatment of cinematic space. According to Rohmer, Murnau managed to reveal the hero's spiritual life by using the entire scope of the cinematic frame as well as accentuating the exteriority and strength of his characters' movements and gestures. In addition to Murnau's cultural knowledge, his mise-en-scène conveys an acute awareness of the deictic power of photography and, thereby, strengthens the bond between the film and the play. About *Faust*, Rohmer declared: 'Jamais œuvre cinématographique n'a spéculé si peu sur le hazard'.[105] It can therefore be deduced that Rohmer's penchant for aesthetic unity finds its antinomy in the realms of the personal, the emotional, the spontaneous, the irrational, the imaginative and the subjective – all of which are complementary components of the romantic identity. And yet, Rohmer adapted Kleist

[102] Marco Grosoli, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of the "politique des auteurs"', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 37.
[103] Rohmer liked to point out Murnau's continuous use of natural landscapes throughout his career. In contrast with Robert Wiene or Fritz Lang, Murnau's cinema had a romantic quality which transcended the expressionist style of his contemporaneous filmmakers. The influence of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings in the mise-en-scène of *Nosferatu* is a famous example. For an in-depth study of Murnau and Rohmer's use of painting in their cinematic adaptations, see Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting. How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 81–106 and 161–196. See also Laura Laufer, 'Entretien avec Éric Rohmer à propos de Murnau', *lauralaufer.com* (2010), Accessed November 18, 2014, http://www.lauralaufer.com/spip/spip.php?article42
[104] Éric Rohmer, *L'organisation de l'espace dans le Faust de Murnau* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977), 35.
[105] 'No filmmaker has ever left so little room to chance' [My translation, ZTZ]. Rohmer, *L'organisation de l'espace dans le Faust de Murnau*, 10.

in a period in which the surge of interest in romantic writers was provoked by a vivid criticism of the Goethe cult in West Germany and France.[106] Goethe's hostility toward Kleist and known persistence in discrediting his plays and short stories was brought to the forefront through, for instance, Günter Kunert's controversial 'Pamphlet für K.' (1975) and his radio play *Ein Anderer K*. (1977). Kunert suggested that Goethe's disastrous production of Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug* (1808) and unwillingness to contribute to his literary journal *Phöbus* were factors that needed to be considered when analysing the motives of Kleist's suicide.[107] In a sense, the greatness of Goethe and his alleged contempt for Kleist fed the myth of the misunderstood Prussian poet.[108] Whereas Rohmer's contemporaries saw Kleist's profound scepticism of language as an opportunity for the exaltation of counter-discursive aesthetics, the director of *Ma nuit chez Maud* adopted an ascetic attitude which, I believe, moves closer to Barthes' interest in denotative writing: 'On dit qu'à force d'ascèse certains bouddhistes parviennent à voir tout un paysage dans une fève'.[109] Rohmer's logic when adapting *Die Marquise von O...* was to preserve the unity of classical narrative cinema in order to highlight the plurality of possible interpretations implied by the Kleistian prose. From a literary perspective, Kleist evoked his doubts towards the possibility of representing knowledge by creating a narrative style that deceptively reveals the characters' beliefs and, at the same time, the incongruity emanating from their system of reasoning. I would suggest that Rohmer's literal faithfulness to Kleist's novella succeeds in preserving the author's desire to narrate a story, which, ultimately, generates a diversity of possible readings. In fact, in *Die Marquise von O...*, scenes which possess a

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106 Herminghouse, 'Trends in Literary Reception, Coming to Terms with Classicism: Goethe in GDR Literature of the 1970s': 181–182.

107 Ibid.: 280–281.

108 The ease with which Goethe granted himself the power to condemn the weak through sacred and natural imagery could be associated, in the 1970s, with the authoritarian state, with Goethe almighty. See Elystan Griffiths, *Political Change and Human Emancipation in the Works of Heinrich von Kleist* (Rochester: Camden house, 2005), 32.

109 'There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean'. See Roland Barthes, *Oeuvres complètes, vol.3: Livres, textes, entretiens 1968–1971* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 121. Claude-Jean Philippe had already mentioned the ascetic dimension of Rohmer's cinema in his review of *La collectionneuse*: 'Il accepte de tendre au monde et aux êtres le "pur miroir" de l'objectif. Pureté esthétique autant que morale. Il y a dans *La collectionneuse* une volonté d'ascèse qui apparaît plus nette encore à chaque vision'/ 'He wishes to show the world and its inhabitants a "pure" and objective reflection of themselves. It is a form of aesthetic and ethical purity. There is, in *La collectionneuse*, a desire for asceticism that becomes more apparent each time I watch it' [My translation]. See Claude-Jean Philippe, 'Les affinités sélectives', *Cahiers du cinéma* 188 (March 1967): 62.

high degree of literalness interact with images that call for the spectators' metaphorical and varied interpretations. To illustrate my thought, I will firstly enquire into Rohmer's understanding of textual literalness.

When preparing *Die Marquise von O…*, Rohmer's directing method consisted in giving to his German comedians a copy of Kleist's short story. The lack of a film script adapted from the novella led the technical and artistic crew, and by extension, the spectators, to become familiar with the original text as well as to understand the artfulness of Kleist's ambiguous sentences. Whether it is *Die Marquise von O…* or *Perceval*, Rohmer attached a non-negligible importance to preserving the sonority and particularisms of archaic and foreign languages, to the point where Fabrice Luchini himself created parallelisms, in his later stand-up shows, between Barthes' concept of the pleasure of the text and Rohmer's directing methods.[110] In this regard, de Baecque and Herpe wrote:

> Un an et demi à l'avance, entre deux livraisons de pizzas, Luchini s'exerce à la diction versifiée, à l'équitation, au maniement des armes. Un an à l'avance, Rohmer supervise des répétitions où se met au point l'harmonie entre les parties parlées, chantées et récitatives.[111]

In *Perceval le gallois*, the spoken, sung, instrumental and recitative parts become as important as the visual and architectural medieval world. The sound becomes an autonomous space which is characterised by a meticulous attention to the neatness of the voices and sound effects as well as the uninterrupted duration of the spoken dialogues and monologues. Jean-Pierre Ruh, Rohmer's sound operator, described the sophistication of the sound recording system in *Perceval le gallois* by evoking the nuances of his microphones, which were capable of suggesting the warmth and coolness of spring and winter.[112] The search for a noticeable clarity and tangibility of sound, which picks up all variations of

[110] Chantal Guy, 'Fabrice Luchini: Quand Robert rencontre Roland', *LaPresse* (September 12, 2009), Accessed April 18, 2016, http://www.lapresse.ca/arts/spectacles-et-theatre/200909/12/01-901093-fabrice-luchini-quand-robert-rencontre-roland.php

[111] 'One and a half years in advance, between two pizza deliveries, Luchini takes some elocution lessons, learns how to horse ride and to handle weapons. At least one year in advance, Rohmer supervises rehearsals which seek to establish harmony between the spoken, the sung and the recitative parts' [My translation, ZTZ]. De Baecque and Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: biographie*, 281.

[112] Jean-Pierre Ruh, 'Le son direct a été une révélation', in *Rohmer et les autres*, ed. Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 208–209.

tones and textures contrasts with the depthless surface and abstract dimension of the décors. The interplay between sound and image therefore becomes an alienation effect.

Similarly, in *Die Marquise von O...*, the sound components function as an index of theatricality. The clarity and minimalism of a first detonation marks the end of the opening scene in which villagers, gathered in a dark and sober tavern, discuss the Marquise's startling pregnancy announcement in the local newspaper. Rohmer emphasises the narrative power of sound and dialogue through a bombing noise that cuts the townsmen's mumbling short. There is little time for the villagers' mockery and speculation in Rohmer's rendering of early nineteenth-century Northern Italy. In fact, Rohmer added Russian officers among the pub's clientele so as to re-establish the latent order expected from a besieged territory. The sound of the cannon is preceded by a fade to black which acts as a flashback and situates the narrative within the temporality within which Kleist's story takes place: 'Here, she [the Marquise of O.] had for the next few years lived a very secluded life, devoted to art and reading, the education of her children and the care of her parents, until the – War suddenly filled the neighbourhood with the armed forces of almost all the powerful European states […]'.[113] These film editing techniques (the fade to black and the bombing sound) participate to the creation of aesthetics of *tableaux vivants*, whose static and geometrical dimension hardly allow space for impromptu actions. Rohmer's geometrical arrangement of the cinematic space thus reproduces the same rigid and repressed narrative structure of the novella, and by analogy, of Prussia's oppressive social order. Indeed, the sequence of the war, which, from a narrative perspective, represents the night in which the Marquise was assaulted by the Russian troop and saved by the Count F. appears as a chaotic moment within the peaceful life of the Commandant's family. The Marquise of O.'s state of drowsiness following the ordeal of the enemy invasion, which is suggested through the pre-romantic imagery of Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, strongly contrasts with Rohmer's ensuing portrayal of the family's return to daylight leisure activities **(fig. 2.3.)**. Following this eventful night, Rohmer introduces film cards that reinforce the transition from the excesses of the war to the appeasement attempts brought by the occupation. The card 'Die Familie mußte das Kommandantenhaus räumen und bezog ein Haus in der Stadt' is followed by another black board stating 'Alles kehrte nun in die alte Ordnung der Dinge

[113] Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, 68.

zurück'.[114] From a visual perspective, the sense of a re-established order is created through an emphasis on predominantly vertical, static and solid forms.[115] In the case study of Rohmer's *Die Marquise von O…*, Angela Dalle Vacche explains Rohmer's desire to 'reproduce the period's conception of itself' by comparing his mise-en-scène with a wide range of paintings that must have exerted a considerable influence on the choice of camera angles, colours, lighting, costumes, props and characters' movements. She states that Rohmer's neoclassical aesthetics when representing Giulietta's occupations recall the sculptural stillness of Jacques-Louis David's classical style, which portrayed the moral grandeur and sober qualities of the antiquity. Surely, the resemblance between David's *Madame Récamier* (1800) and Giulietta's off-white linen dress, porcelain features and hairdo, is striking. The composure and innocence that emanates from Rohmer's propensity to filter the sunlight with cream linen textiles evokes the quietness and docility of Prussian society, which, according to Burckhardt, leaves no place to the open expression of emotions:

> Consider the potency of names of countries: of sweet France and Mother Russia, to say nothing of Greece and Rome. Even to the stranger, names like these call up a rich penumbra of meanings, feelings, and memories: of landscape and climates, art and architecture, song and legend and history; the names are distillates of abundant and colorful national being. Prussia, by contrast, has about it an abstractness, a univocal poverty of connotation, which forbids us to speak of it as the *Song of Roland* speaks of France or as Shakespeare's John of Gaunt speaks of England […]. Prussia means not earth nor realm, even less a precious stone, it means a *state*.[116]

Since the opening credits, Rohmer accustoms the spectator to a narrative flow that resonates like a military march (the sound of the drum rolls properly sets the tone of the narrative). Rohmer's sequence shots are expeditious and mirror, as such, the rhythmical

[114] 'The family had to leave the castle and moved to an apartment in town' followed by 'And everything went back to normal again' [My translation, ZTZ]. *Die Marquise von O…*, DVD, directed by Éric Rohmer (1976; Les Films du Losange, 2007).
[115] For a detailed study of Rohmer's artistic influences whilst creating *Die Marquise von O…* refer to Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting, How Art is Used in Film*, 81–106.
[116] Burckhardt, *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist*, 101.

cadence of Kleist's concise sentences, which detail with great precision the exteriority of his characters' actions. In contrast with more dialogue-heavy features such as *Ma nuit chez Maud* or later films like *L'arbre, le maire et la médiathèque* (1993), the dialogues of *Die Marquise von O…* contain neither improvisation nor any type of additional speech that does not directly derive from Kleist's text. As a result, the accuracy with which Rohmer re-transcribed, in the present tense and first person singular, Kleist's recurrent use of passive voice reinforces the spectator's attention to dialogues, sounds and film cards which guide the narrative thread. For instance, the first scene of Rohmer's adaptation consists in exposing the social status of the Marquise of O. and the unorthodox circumstance of her pregnancy through a conversation between two villagers, whose speech repeats, word for word, the two first sentences of Kleist's novella. Like the source text, the film relies on written and spoken language as a vehicle of communication and disclosure. Indeed, Kleist stressed the efficiency of speech's informative value by building a sentence which reveals, rather bluntly and all at once, the paradoxical situation of the Marquise of O. (widow of the Marquis of O. and mother of two children), whom the narrator considers as an epitome of virtue and, at the same time, as a character prone to eccentricities: 'The lady who, under the constraint of unalterable circumstances, had with such boldness taken so strange a step and thus exposed herself to the derision of society, was the daughter of Colonel G–, the Commandant of the citadel at M–.'[117] In the film adaptation, Rohmer not only literally shows the newspaper column on-screen but also highlights the physical value of this textual instance through the character's assertive comment: 'Oui. Écoutez. C'est là textuellement' **(fig. 2.4.)**.[118] Rohmer's fidelity *au pied de la lettre* echoes, once more, Bazin's theory of photographic realism and review of Robert Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951) – a film in which the documentary reality of George Bernanos' novel is preserved through the recording of the priest's writing. Just as in Bresson's adaptation, Rohmer emphasises the literary reality of *Die Marquise von O…* and, in so doing, demonstrates the many ways in which language, despite its informative power, tells something at variance with the image: 'The sound never serves simply to fill out what we see. It strengthens it and multiplies it just as the echo chamber of a violin echoes and multiplies the vibrations of the

[117] Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, 68.
[118] 'Indeed. Listen. It is here, textually' [My translation, ZTZ].

strings'.[119] Indeed, Rohmer engages with the dissonant relationship between sound and image (which, by the way, was the greatest theme running through the revolutionary and counter-discursive aesthetics of Godard) through a narrative structure which follows a classical pattern. In this regard, the film, like the novella, can be divided into five acts: the expository scene, the disruptive factor, the *peripetiea*, the dénouement and the happy ending. However, despite the author and the director's commitment to conclude their story by restoring patriarchal moral order, the enigmatic quality of the narrative remains only superficially resolved. The following and final section will demonstrate the way in which the neoclassical quality of Rohmer's mise-en-scène paradoxically paves the way for the recovery of the evasiveness, irresolution and irony of Kleist's narrative.

2.6. *Die Marquise von O…* or the search for poetry

In *Die Marquise von O…* Rohmer frames, as usual, a large majority of his scenes through static American shots. It can be remarked, nonetheless, that passages where the camera is *felt* (through subtle tracking shots, low and high-angle shots, pronounced length, close-ups, etc.) punctuate the narrative. I submit that these passages represent textual instances where Kleist suspends all narrative certainties, such as the dash that precedes Giulietta's pregnancy.

Rohmer represents Giulietta's state of shock and unconsciousness, following the Russian group's assault, through a *tableau vivant* that embodies the very horizontality of the typography used by Kleist: the mysterious dash. This sequence, which corresponds to the disruptive factor of the narrative, strongly contrasts with the imposing verticality of the citadel's columns and the sobriety of the European flags and soldiers' postures in the wake of the invasion. The fact that Rohmer translated Kleist's ellipsis through the visual re-enactment of Fuseli's *The Nightmare* creates an ambiance which, contrary to the aforementioned 'return to order', evokes the realms of sensuality and lust. Through this pictorial reference, which foreshadowed the nineteenth-century revival of interest in medieval folklore in the realms of art and literature, Rohmer creates the same eerie and

[119] Bazin, 'Le *Journal d'un curé de campagne* et la stylistique de Bresson', 114.

dreamlike atmosphere by accentuating the soft, delicate and shiny properties of the Marquise of O.'s silk nightdress, and suggests intimacy and sultriness by matching the draped red curtains and the bed covers to the dark red and brownish colours that predominate the scenery **(fig. 2.5.)**. Rohmer's emphasis on the loosely pleated and voluptuous nature of the textiles draws the spectators' attention on the uncontrolled gestures of the Marquise of O., whose state of semi-unconsciousness reveals the unsuspected womanhood that remains, further in the narrative, repressed by her status of mother and widow. Rohmer's allusion to *The Nightmare* works as a 'pregnant moment' in every sense of the word:

> The fundamental rule for painting is the pregnant moment, *the rule of the pregnant moment is the sublation of painting by poetry*, a poetising of painting where the material object becomes the source for revealing, for bringing to mind its imaginary counterpart: the complete, temporally extended action.[120]

Rohmer accentuates the woman's curved and elongated movement through a ten-second shot that alludes to the moral chaos underpinning the life of the Commandant's family.[121] Rohmer's reproduction of *The Nightmare* loosens the diligent cadence of the narrative and focuses, instead, in awakening the audience's collective consciousness of this pictorial source and, at the same time, creating a purely sensuous experience, removed from verbal speech. While the demonic and surrealistic figures of the incubus and the horse are evidently missing in the *tableau vivant*, Rohmer's spatial organisation reproduces, as faithfully as possible, Fuseli's pictorial composition. The director's allusion to Fuseli's most famous painting not only situates *Die Marquise von O…* in its pre-romantic climate but its iconic status also guides the spectator's imagination. As a matter of fact, scholars interpreted the ambiguity of Fuseli's iconography, which shuttles between the erotic and the macabre, as the representation of the female protagonist's occult rape fantasy.[122] It is

[120] J.M. Bernstein, *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.
[121] Fuseli's credo was 'the forms of virtue are erect, the forms of nature undulate'. See Brian Lukacher, 'Visionary History Painting: Blake and his Contemporaries', in *Nineteenth-Century Art: a Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 112.
[122] Lukacher, 'Visionary History Painting: Blake and his Contemporaries', 111.

precisely in *The Nightmare*'s ability to convey paradoxical and puzzling imagery that Kleist meets Fuseli. Although both works challenged social order in very opposed manners, Rohmer associates Fuseli's obsession with dreams, magic, horror and female sexuality with Kleist's critical attitude towards the Enlightenment ideas of human progress and moral education. Indeed, Kleist's narrative style is characterised by strikingly visual and precise descriptions of exterior actions and gestures. Kleist's desire to emulate the rationality of the classical sentence leads, nonetheless, to a prosaic approach to reality which leaves no place for the poetic expression of the 'subtle rhythms of the hearts' nor mystical metaphors that could associate the Marquise's pregnancy to a 'divine epiphany'.[123] Fuseli, in turn, drew his inspiration in the works of William Shakespeare and John Milton, which were filled with the supernatural imagery of British folklore (fairies, witches and monsters).[124] According to Marina Warner, the esoteric and disinhibited dimension of *The Nightmare* evokes a subterraneous world where doppelgängers live a different life, far from the rules of property and religious moral standards. In a sense, *The Nightmare* embodies the wilder and obscure side of Kleist's classical imagery, which is concerned with restoring and, at the same time, subverting the balanced and harmonious surface of Prussian society.

Through his cinematic lens, Rohmer created a hybridized space, which, according to Bazin's theory of impure cinema, 'add[s] to the quality derived from the parents'.[125] In fact, Rohmer explored the semantic aporiae of *Die Marquise von O…* by choosing among his romantic repertoire the work of art that would most aptly translate Kleist's existential and profound malaise. *The Nightmare*'s whimsical and libidinous theme connects with Kleist's two-faceted protagonists, whose honesty and guilt are constantly put on trial. As we shall see, the camera angles and editing choices are indicative of Rohmer's revival of Kleist's narrative ambiguity.

In the dark and silent night that follows the Russian invasion, the Count F. enters the palace where Giulietta found refuge. In the hall, he illuminates the faces of the sleeping servants and the Marquise's children with a candlelight before reaching her room. At that

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[123] Burckhardt, *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist*, 101–105.
[124] Marina Warner, 'Invented Plots: The Enchanted Puppets and Fairy Doubles of Henry Fuseli', in *Gothic Nightmares, Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination*, ed. Martin Myrone (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 23–24.
[125] André Bazin, 'Pour un cinéma impur: défense de l'adaptation', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 88.

moment, Rohmer stops framing the Count F.'s trajectory and introduces his recreation of *The Nightmare*. It is therefore Count F. who stares at Giulietta like a trapped animal. The counter shot is composed of Bruno Ganz's face, which Rohmer films with a slow dolly movement. For this particular image, he chooses to lower the camera angle in order to insinuate Count F.'s position of dominance and to highlight the emotional charge of the scene. Interestingly, the location in which Rohmer shoots Leopardo, the groom, resembles the corner in which Count F. contemplatively stands. Rohmer justifies Leopardo's presence during the night of the Marquise of O.'s rape by assigning him the responsibility to administer the poppy seeds to the dismayed Marquise (an action which Rohmer conceals through another temporal ellipsis). The framing of both Leopardo and the Count F. in low-angle shots has the effect of prompting the spectator to a certain level of suspicion since the Marquise, situated off-camera, subsequently appears as a weaker and vulnerable character. Although the dialogues indicate that, in the beginnings of the storyline, the function of the Russian officer and groom corresponds to that of the saviour and the assistant, the insistence with which Rohmer films their faces during this fatal night opens the question as to whether these two characters possess instincts of predators that lie beyond the surface of their selfless and benevolent manners.

As this example indicates, Rohmer suggests the breaking of the rules of good behaviour by permeating the cinematic image with pictorial references which compensate for the epistemological uncertainties created by the compact and determined logic of Kleist's classical syntax. Indeed, Rohmer not only questions the Count F. and Leopardo's degree of guilt and implication in the Marquise's rape but also enquires into the innocence of the Marquise through the rococo imagery of the *fête galante*. In the source text, the Count F. visits the Marquise in her country house, following the newspaper announcement. He professes his unconditional love to the Marquise while the latter pushes him and runs away: '"I do not want to hear anything", she retorted, violently pushing him back; then she fled up on to the terrace and disappeared'.[126] In the film adaptation, the Count F. enters the garden clandestinely and joins the Marquise who quietly seats on a bench, reading. They are both dressed in cream linen clothes and framed together through a wide-angle shot that provides depth of field and highlights the green and bright features of the natural

[126] Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, 97.

environment. The following medium wide shot enhances, additionally, the boldness of the Count F.'s gestures of love. Frightened, Giulietta runs toward the wooden and barred door, looks back at the Count F. while shutting the gate and disappears inside the house. Rohmer's use of the door visually provides indices to that which the text refuses to answer: why does the Marquise stubbornly reject the Count F., whom she once considered as 'an angel sent from heaven'?[127] From a pictorial perspective, this sequence connects with the themes and aesthetic of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's libertine genre, which insinuated, through vivid, pastel colours and bucolic settings, the frivolous conduct of a decadent aristocracy (*Le rendez-vous* [1771], *Le verrou* [1780]).[128] In *Die Marquise von O…* the wooden door that separates her with the Count F. hints at the trespassing of territorial boundaries by the enemy. As regards the narrative, the Marquise's persisting rejections of the Count F. connote the contradictory nature of her behaviour. Despite her infinite gratitude toward the Count F., who presented himself as her saviour, despite feeling 'inconsolable at having missed the opportunity of throwing herself at his feet', the Marquise keeps turning down his marriage proposals. To this obstinacy, the reader and spectator cannot help but note that the Marquise could have saved herself a lot of trouble by simply marrying the man she appeared to be so devoted to. The fact that the Marquise wishes to remain ignorant of the Count F.'s motivations when claiming 'I do not want to hear anything', could be read as the manifestation of Giulietta's growing doubts on his (ergo mutual) innocence. Could the Count F. be the disturbing reminder of some intimate secrets?

These two scenes show that Rohmer transposed Kleist's narrative inconsistencies and contradictions by using the cinematic space as the meeting point between literature and painting. Through its intertextual relation with Kleist and Fuseli (among other paintings), *Die Marquise von O…* reveals the storytelling power of painting and highlights the physicality of text through the mythical resonances of the décors and the counterpointed clarity of the spoken foreign language.

However, the stylistic devices that characterise *The Nightmare* scene (such as the low angle shots, the dolly movements and the chiaroscuro type of lighting) are hardly signs of Rohmer's fanciful interpretation of the text. The Count F. and Leopardo's plausible guilt

[127] Ibid., 69.
[128] Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting. How Art is Used in Film*, 97–100.

has a semantic evidence in the novella. Kleist provided clues as to who could be the potential father of the illegitimate unborn child through, for instance, the passage where the Colonel's wife makes Giulietta believe that Leopardo confessed his crime, so as to push her to shamefully admit her consent.[129] Moreover, the haste with which the Count F. (whom the Commandant and his family believed dead) asks Giulietta's hand is questionable, especially in a society where rules are driven by strict codes of conduct, which ensure respectability and good reputation. In turn, the incestuous connotations of the reconciliation scene between the Marquise of O. and her father, which scholars only started noticing in the mid-1970s, were carefully underplayed in Rohmer's adaptation:[130]

> And when she [The Marquise's mother] finally opened the door she saw a sight that made her heart leap with joy: her daughter, with her head thrown back and her eyes tightly shut, was lying quietly in her father's arms, while the latter, with tears glistening in his wide-open eyes, sat in the armchair, pressing long, ardent, avid kisses on to her mouth, just like a lover! His daughter said nothing, he said nothing; he sat with his face bowed over her, as if she was the first girl he had ever loved; he sat there holding her mouth near his and kissing her.[131]

While many studies have suggested that this particular excerpt connotes the incestuous tendency of the Commandant and the voyeuristic nature of the Marquise's mother, the brevity and stillness that characterises Rohmer's sequence shot shows that he either ignored or disregarded such interpretation and treated the Commandant's hugging and kissing as a foreign and historically distant cultural norm that the contemporary spectator cannot fully understand. Indeed, Rohmer's film reproduces, line by line, and rather succinctly, Kleist's description of the scene and adds, as a dialogue, the mother's one and only sentence: 'Oh, what a face to make!' no more, no less.[132] The way in which the Commandant holds his daughter (the latter takes the position of a new-born in her fathers arms) as well as the sober and harmonious atmosphere undermines the overtones of malevolence and contrasts,

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129 Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, 104–105.
130 Michel Chaouli, 'Irresistible Rape: The Lure of Closure in 'The Marquise of O…'', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 17, 1 (Spring 2004): 59–60, Accessed March 30, 2016, doi: 10.1353/yale.2004.0002
131 Kleist, *The Marquise of O. and Other Stories*, 109.
132 McAllister Jr, *Kleist's Female Leading Characters and the Subversion of Idealist Discourse*, 48–49.

thereby, with Rohmer's representation of the mysterious dash. Rohmer's refusal to visually insinuate the father's guilt carries a certain logic: the director rigorously reconstituted passages in the most impartial and transparent cinematic style *provided that* these narrative sequences were syntactically assertive, intelligible and precise. In the case of sentences occluding significant narrative gaps, like the dash (which Dorrit Cohn called 'the most pregnant graphic sign in German literature'), Rohmer isolates the image from its verbal counterpart and invites the spectator to contemplate, through slightly more pronounced shot duration and intensified pictorial iconography, the metaphorical power of the photographic image.[133]

Surely, Rohmer's wish to remain a-political through, for instance, his disregard of the postmodern reading of the father and daughter incestuous scene, was, to say the least, problematic, and generated many misunderstandings. Indeed, at the heart of Rohmer's adaptation lies the idea that the photographic image holds the power to reveal a transcendental reality that words cannot conceptualise. The Marquise's search for a universal and divine moral law, Rohmer suggests, needs to be found in the anti-linguistic dimension of the recorded nature. In the context of the 1970s, Rohmer's anti-deconstructionist stance was clear. His faithfulness to realist and neoclassical aesthetics did not imply, however, that he was not sensitive to Kleist's rebellion against the Enlightenment values of reason, self-control, calculation and education. Rohmer's education background led him to create a film theory that equated realism with neoclassicism and was thereby inclined to understand the epistemological tragedy at the heart of Kleist's literature. Indeed, Rohmer's neoclassical style offered an extremely original alternative to counter-discursive aesthetic practices which, ultimately, shared a same objective: the failure of language to speak the truth. Like Kleist, Rohmer laid bare the occlusive system at the root of western morals and aesthetics by using the tool (reason) of the philosophical and literary traditions under attack.[134] About the Prussian poet,

[133] Dorrit Cohn, 'Kleist's *Marquise von O…*: The Problem of Knowledge', *Monatshefte* 67, 2 (Summer 1975): 129, Accessed March 30, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30154918

[134] It could be argued that the Marquise's need to put into words her state of extreme confusion and search for truth through the public announcement of her pregnancy mirrors Kleist's personal ill-being. Goethe himself said about Kleist: 'Il m'a toujours inspiré de l'effroi et de la répulsion, comme un corps pourvu de très beaux dons par la nature, et qui serait la proie d'un mal incurable'/'He [Kleist] always aroused in me terror and repulsion, as of a body intended by nature to be beautiful, but seized by an incurable illness' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Ayrault, *La légende de Heinrich von Kleist, un poète devant la critique*, 10.

Burckhardt claimed that: 'Every sentence almost of Kleist's mature prose style is a verbal re-enactment of the illegitimacy motif, a little victory of inclusion. His syntax is notorious, even in German, for its tense complexity, which strains at the limits of rational order'.[135] Rohmer's cinema interrogates the mechanism of bourgeois language from within the marble of representation and contrasts it with the ontological nature of the cinematic medium, which is supposed to 'show' and not to 'tell'.[136] It is precisely in Rohmer's attachment to western knowledge and refusal to deliberately attack classical reasoning by withdrawing cinema from the realms of the novelistic and the intelligible that, I believe, *Die Marquise von O…* remains ambiguous and modern. In a decade led by the banderol 'It is forbidden to forbid', what could possibly be more perplexing than the French versified translation of medieval story *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* and the rigorous adaptation of *Die Marquise von O…* in German language?

Rohmer did not privilege imagination and creativity over classical imitation. Instead, he searched for a certain degree of freedom within representational constraints. As explored in *Die Marquise von O…*, the visual alternation between sequences possessing a high degree of literality and instants of romantic connotations interestingly undermines the assertive power of language, as well as weakens the psychological consistency of the Rohmerian characters. Surely, Rohmer was extremely aware of the modernist techniques of de-synchronised sound and image and other disruptive editing devices which dominated the documentary landscape in the 1970s. However, the substitution of classical narrative cinema with self-reflexive and experimental aesthetics betrayed, according to Rohmer, the mimetic vocation of cinema:

> Avez-vous remarqué comment la beauté des images de Goethe ou de Balzac, pour en rester à mon exemple, a pour fondement une idée scientifique qui fait sourire nos modernes, le sentiment d'une affinité entre le corps et les esprits, puérile dira-t-on, mais qui garde des racines si profondes dans notre croyance, qui a si fort marqué notre langage, que je ne saurais blâmer le cinéma de lui

[135] Burckhardt, *The Drama of Language. Essays on Goethe and Kleist*, 106.
[136] Rohmer, 'The Classical Age of Film', 42.

> donner, par un recours tout simple à l'évidence, comme un nouvel et irréfutable fondement?[137]

In *Die Marquise von O…* Rohmer restored the affinity between body and soul by re-enacting Fuseli's romantic painting and transcended, as such, the secularity of the Kleistian sentence. While scholars can understand Rohmer's position as contradicting the anti-heroic dimension of Kleist's novella, which suggests feelings of profound disenchantment, failure and absurdity, Rohmer nonetheless re-established the author's stylistic strategies through a faithful script and an oppressingly classical and intelligible mise-en-scène. As this chapter has suggested, Rohmer's cultural erudition and faithfulness to Bazin's ontological realism led to an extremely versatile and two-edged film legacy that conjugates classicism with modernism and reverence with irony.

What could in fact be more ironic than the completion of a filmography composed of copious, philosophical, light-hearted and historically and linguistically foreign conversations, when, ultimately, Rohmer's main preoccupation was to say nothing? The representation of *l'heure bleue* in *Quatre aventures de Reinette et Mirabelle* demonstrates, as a conclusion, how the assimilation of nature to poetry is Rohmer's most tenacious theoretical principle. Reinette lives in the countryside and explains to her Parisian friend, Mirabelle, that the one and only moment nature becomes silent is during the 'blue hour' **(fig. 2.6.)**:

> Ce n'est pas une heure, c'est une minute. Juste avant l'aube, il y a une minute de silence. Les oiseaux de jour ne sont pas encore réveillés, et les oiseaux de nuit sont déjà couchés. Et là… Là, c'est le silence.[138]

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[137] 'Have you noticed how the beauty of Goethe and Balzac's images, which the moderns like to mock, has a scientific foundation? Although it has now become old-fashioned, the feeling of affinity between body and soul is still profoundly ingrained in our belief and has deeply marked our language. How could I then blame cinema for wanting to support this vision of the world? Through the simple act of recording, cinema gives this idea a new and irrefutable proof' [My translation, ZTZ]. Maurice Schérer, 'De trois films et d'une certaine école', *Cahiers du cinéma* 26 (August–September 1953): 21.

[138] 'It is not an hour, it is a minute. Just before dawn, there is a minute of silence. It happens when the daytime birds aren't still awake and the night birds are already asleep. At that precise moment… comes the silence' [My translation, ZTZ]. *Quatre aventures de Reinette et Mirabelle*, DVD, directed by Éric Rohmer (1986; Les films du Losange, 2007).

Despite her ability to accurately describe *l'heure bleue*, Reinette insists that one cannot understand such a phenomenon without having experienced it. By defining *l'heure bleue* as this frightening minute in which nature stops breathing, Reinette's speech bows before the superiority of nature, which, according to her, provides her with daylight and secures her existence. Likewise, in *La collectionneuse*, Rohmer captures the ineffable beauty of nature through shots of the crystal clear Mediterranean sea, while Adrien reflects on the notions of leisure and freedom. It is therefore in this very crack within the narrative (as shown through Kleist's ellipsis, Reinette's minute of silence, and Adrien's desire 'not to think') that Rohmer found his most powerful source of storytelling.

Figure 2.1.

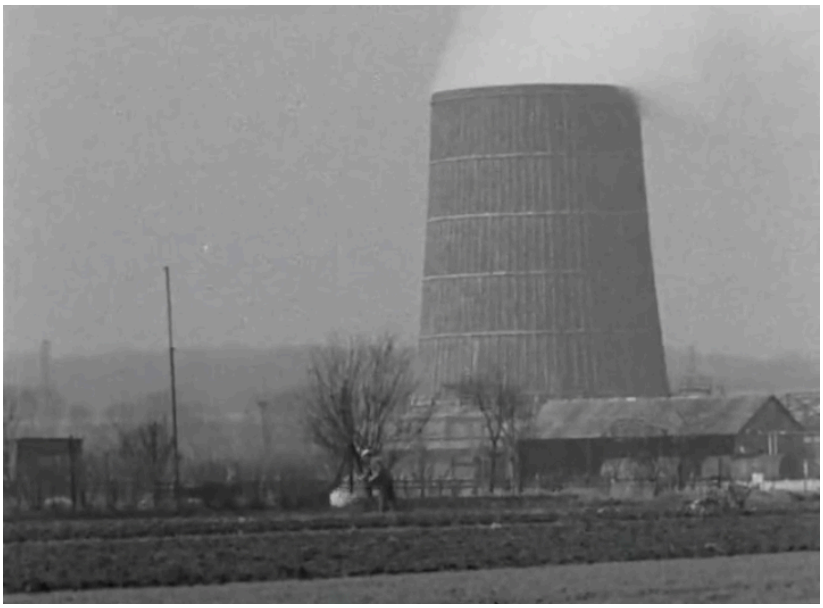
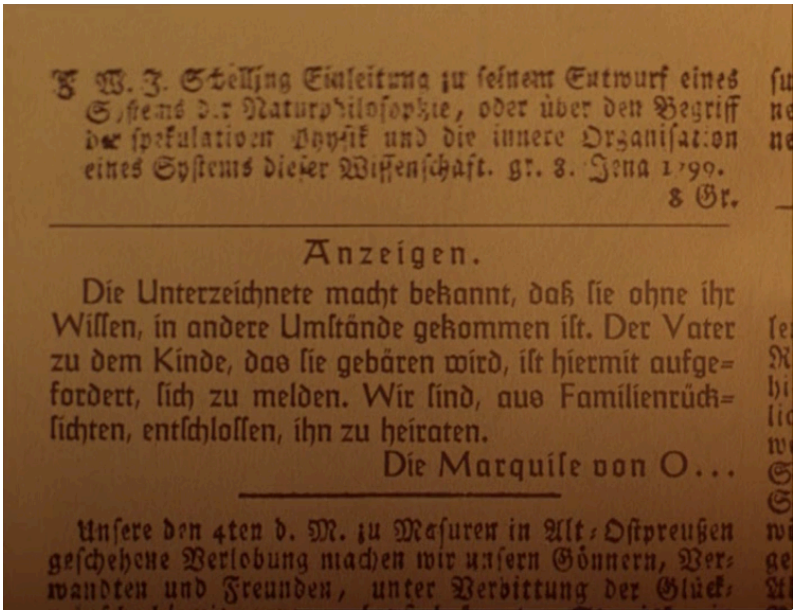


Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.4.



F. W. J. Schelling Einleitung zu seinem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie, oder über den Begriff der spekulativen Physik und die innere Organisation eines Systems dieser Wissenschaft. gr. 8. Jena 1799. 8 Gr.

Anzeigen.

Die Unterzeichnete macht bekannt, daß sie ohne ihr Willen, in andere Umstände gekommen ist. Der Vater zu dem Kinde, das sie gebären wird, ist hiermit aufgefordert, sich zu melden. Wir sind, aus Familienrücksichten, entschlossen, ihn zu heiraten.

Die Marquise von O...

Unsere den 4ten d. M. zu Masuren in Alt-Ostpreußen geschehene Verlobung machen wir unsern Gönnern, Verwandten und Freunden, unter Verbittung der Glück-

Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.6.

CHAPTER THREE

Le hasard est le plus grand romancier du monde;
pour être fécond, il n'y a qu'à l'étudier.

– Honoré de Balzac[1]

3.1. Introduction

If Éric Rohmer shared with André Bazin a missed vocation of academic teaching[2], Jacques Rivette can be regarded as the one who further explored the relationship of cinema with its founding myth, the flight of Icarus.[3] The interpretation of myths, according to Marc Eigeldinger, not only informs us of the social context of a given community but also depends on the individual's relation to the story's ethical and religious meaning.[4] Screened in its entirety between September 9th and 10th 1971 in *la maison de la culture du Havre*, the twelve hour forty minute long *Out 1: Noli me tangere* takes the conspiracy of the Dévorants, as portrayed by Honoré de Balzac in *L'histoire des Treize* (1833), as its central theme. Among Balzac's works, *L'histoire des Treize* is known for its misleading preface and deceptive content. Where the reader expects an epic tale on the heroic enterprises of the Thirteen, Balzac deviates from the preliminary intention of his prologue and offers, instead, a sentimental and female-centred psychological drama, which hardly alludes to the theme of conspiracy. Rivette's choice of building a film on a non-existent intrigue is of course deliberate. The enigmatic quality of his title as well as the complete rejection of any sort of commercial standards (through an unwillingness to follow distribution requirements and insubordination to any specific genre) cannot be considered, however, as an act of infidelity to Balzac.

To the contrary, *Out 1: Noli me tangere* embodies, through its puzzling plot and lengthy, unresolved development, the very Balzacian search for the Absolute. Those

[1] 'Chance is the greatest romancer in the world; we have only to study it'. Honoré de Balzac, 'Avant-Propos', in *Scènes de la vie privée*, vol. 1 of *La comédie humaine* (Paris: J. Hetzel et Paulin, 1842), 14. For the English version see Honoré de Balzac, *The Human Comedy: Introductions and Appendix* (Gutenberg Ebook, 2010), 36, Accessed May 11, 2016, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1968
[2] Jean Ungaro, *André Bazin: Généalogies d'une théorie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 20.
[3] André Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total' in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 24.
[4] Marc Eigeldinger, *Lumières du mythe* (Paris: Puf, 1983), 10.

who studied (if only to a small extent) Rivette's critical and filmic corpus have certainly come across terms like 'ascetic', 'austere', 'secret', 'fierce', yet 'frail', almost 'tragic', to describe our critic's personality and filmmaking attitude.[5] In order to trace the origin of Rivette's romantic characteristics, there is no need, in my opinion, to speculate on his ethical and religious beliefs. Rather, this chapter proposes to draw a parallel between Rivette and Balzac, by suggesting that both authors created a synthesis between *étude des moeurs* and the study of their French contemporaries' relation to the supernatural, magical power of myths. To explore Rivette's engagement with Balzac, I will therefore establish a bridge between Balzac's aspiration for totality in *La comédie humaine* (1830–1856) and Rivette's understanding of an aesthetic of reality, which draws its most basic principles from Bazin's ontological theory of cinema.[6]

Balzac's writings have consistently expressed a fascination with ancient and modern myths.[7] His novels, essays and secondary literature established associations between mythical figures like Pygmalion, Orphée, Don Juan, Faust and characters like Sarrasine, Frenhofer, Raphaël de Valentin in *La peau de chagrin* (1831), Étienne d'Hérouville in *L'enfant maudit* (1837) and don Juan Belvidéro in *L'élixir de longue vie* (1846).[8] In relation to *La recherche de l'absolu* (1834), Eigeldinger reflects on Balzac's romantic nature by comparing the novel's title to Icarus' attempt to escape from the traditional virtues of reason and restraint.[9] Brigitte Grente-Mera, for her part, describes *La comédie humaine,* this tremendous oeuvre composed of small tableaux and intrigues from nineteenth-century contemporary life, to 'un véritable programme mythographique'.[10] It could be argued that Balzac's ambition to merge the universality of the myth together with the modern developments of nineteenth-century French society foreshadowed Bazin's reflections on cinema as a point of contact between physical and metaphysical appearances. Indeed, the latter's ontological views on cinema suggested, more than any other film theorist and critic, that film's photographic

[5] Hélène Frappat, *Jacques Rivette, Secret compris* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 2001), 64.
[6] Francesca Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette* (La Madeleine: Éditions LettMotif, 2013), 237.
[7] Honoré de Balzac refers to mythological knowledge as the 'idées mères' of humanity. See Honoré de Balzac, 'De l'état actuel de la littérature', *Oeuvres diverses II (1831-1834)*, eds. Pierre-Georges Castex et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 1230.
[8] In relation to Étienne d'Hérouville, Balzac writes in *L'enfant maudit*: 'Ses regrets et sa douleur étaient comme des liens qui l'unissaient au monde des esprits; il y allait, armé de son amour, pour y chercher sa mère, en y réalisant ainsi par les sublimes accords de l'extase la symbolique entreprise d'Orphée'. See Honoré de Balzac, *L'Enfant Maudit, Gambara, Massimilla Doni* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1929), 72.
[9] Eigeldinger, *Lumières du mythe* (Paris: Puf, 1983), 97.
[10] Brigitte Grente-Mera, 'Balzac et le mythe. À propos du "Supplément mythologique" de la "Biographie Michaud"', *L'année balzacienne* 1, 2 (2001): 176, doi: 10.3917/balz.002.0169

mechanism was the culmination of man's tireless effort to experience the sacred and therefore secret reality of nature through representation. In this respect, Bazin, Rohmer and Rivette commonly agreed that cinema prolonged the realist and naturalist objectives of the nineteenth-century novel. The most significant difference separating a film like *Le genou de Claire* (1970) and *Out 1* resides, nonetheless, in the directors' personal positioning vis-à-vis the author of *La comédie humaine*.

As developed in chapter two, Rohmer consistently applied the Balzacian system of unity to his mise-en-scène through predominently bourgeois characters whose psychological and social status syntonise with the divine laws of nature. Balzac's ability to account for and unite the inner and outer nature of all forms of life places him as a classical model for Rohmer *to imitate* through a visual emphasis on harmonious natural and architectural forms which participate (via metaphors between man and nature) to a sociological survey on the French bourgeoisie. Although straightforward references to Balzac's textual corpus are lacking in *Les contes moraux*, *Comédies et proverbes* or in his 1970s period films, Rohmer mentions Balzac a dozen times in his 1950s film critiques, hence establishing a theoretical filiation between Balzac and himself.[11] In turn, *Out 1*, *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991) and, more recently, *Ne touchez pas la hache* (2007) derive from distinct literary sources (i.e., *L'histoire des Treize*, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* [1832] and *La duchesse de Langeais* [1834]) and have been the subject of Francesca Dosi's study on the notion of *rewriting* and *reinvention* of the Balzacian novel.[12] Her emphasis on the director's emancipation from the notion of 'adaptation' (which she summarises as a dichotomous system of comparison between filmic and literary texts) points out that Rivette reworked Balzac away from the narrative constraints of standardised cinematic language, i.e., the characters' psychological depth, cause and effect shot linkage, transparent montage, chronological coherence and narrative resolution. This chapter suggests that Rivette mirrors Balzac's writing process, which consists in establishing connections between artistic and philosophical developments of contemporary times and the experience of the sacred.[13] His thorough engagement with cinema and theatre as political spaces, which are able to subvert

[11] Dudley Andrew, 'Le fluide magnétique d'Éric Rohmer', in *Rohmer et les autres*, trans. Mireille Dobrzynski and Michelle Herpe-Voslinsky, ed. Noël Herpe (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 128.
[12] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 17.
[13] Arlette Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), 77.

cultural and aesthetic traditional boundaries, reproduce, as we shall see, Balzac's totalising embrace of the physical and mythical worlds.

Promoter and revered member of the New European Cinema, Rivette's life work expresses anti-establishment values inherited from the existentialist atmosphere of the post-war period. The dismissal of psychological realism in favour of a more primitivist approach to cinema is, indeed, at the core of Rivette's experimental films in the post-1968 period. Influenced by Antonin Artaud and the contemporary experimental theatre of Marc'O, as well as the anthropological cinema of Jean Rouch, Rivette's cinema envisioned new 'postures' for spectators, whose attentiveness and physical comfort was, according to Martin Even's account of the day-long viewing, greatly put to the test:

> Pause-café. On est un peu nerveux, on parle des autres, ceux qui ne sont pas venus (faute d'oser les envier): on parle du beau temps […] Le film s'interrompt comme une coupure, la lumière revient et une fille demande: 'C'est fini?'; peut-être déçue (de s'être ainsi livrée à quelque chose qui la rejette en un instant)[14]

More than a traditional screening, to watch *Out 1: Noli me tangere* is an act of mental and physical endurance that demands new forms of understanding spectatorship. The space given to 'coffee-breaks', to round tables with the film crew, and to more informal discussions, corresponds to Barthes' theory of reading; the reader experiences the text through interruptions, fragmentations and is freed from the responsibility of deciphering the 'true' meaning of the text.[15] The 'respectfulness' the reader maintains towards the author is, in the case of *Out 1*, replaced by playfulness: 'Ouvrir le texte […] c'est surtout, et bien plus radicalement, amener à reconnaître qu'il n'y a pas de vérité objective ou subjective de la lecture, mais seulement une vérité ludique'.[16] Therefore, Rivette's first engagement with Balzac not only solicited a 'new' type of spectator (which could be considered as a ramification of Barthes' 'active reader') but, more importantly, embodied liberationist 'social' aesthetics that were in tune with the

[14] 'Coffee-break. We are a bit tense, we talk about others, those who didn't come (we chose not to envy them openly): we just talked about the weather. […] The film stops as in the case of a power cut, the lights turn on and a girl asks: "Is it over?"; she seemed disappointed (was it because she gave herself to something that rejects her in a single instant?)' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Martin Even, '*Out 1* Voyage au-delà du cinéma', *Le monde* (October 14, 1971): 13.
[15] Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques IV: Le bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984): 34.
[16] 'To open the text […] is, above all, and more radically, to recognise there is no objective nor subjective truth in the reading, but only a recreational one'[My translation, ZTZ]. Barthes, *Essais critiques IV: Le bruissement de la langue*, 35.

revolutionary winds of the late 1960s. Just as the 2300 characters created by Balzac embodied and entered the history of the rising nineteenth-century bourgeois order instituted by the French revolution, the characters played by Bulle Ogier, Jean-Pierre Kalfon and Juliet Berto could be analysed as authentic products of the cultural upheavals of the 1960s. As such, *Out 1* will be analysed as the creative space in which Rivette gave rise to the authentically French figure of the *soixante-huitard*, of a new and influential stereotype whose lineage was not only about to dominate the intellectual and artistic scene to this day, but whose political impact also played a considerable part in the presidential election of 1981. *Out 1* prolongs the games of empty secrets so dear to Balzac by engaging with the conspiracy of the Thirteen through the anti-hermeneutic tendency inaugurated by neorealist cinema. In the 1970s, a return to epic endeavours, to heroic acts was, indeed, only possible through a process of return to a primitive, magical language.

Whilst *Out 1* explores the mystery surrounding the unresolved narrative of the Dévorants*, La Belle Noiseuse* refrains from providing any visual explanation to Porbus and Poussin's hesitant appreciation of Frenhofer's masterpiece and materialises, instead, Balzac's idea of 'total work of art' (or *Gesamtkunstwerk*) by deepening and elongating the web of relationships between glances, bodies, sounds and speech:

> – 'Apercevez-vous quelque chose?' demanda Poussin à Porbus.
> – 'Non, et vous?'
> – 'Rien.'[17]

Following his attempt at recovering the original function of speech through theatre rehearsals in *Out 1*, Rivette re-evaluated another Greek myth recounted by Ovid, namely, the myth of Pygmalion (a legend not too dissimilar from that of Icarus) in his adaptation of *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*. Whereas the experimental nature of *Out 1* aspires to compete with reality through the long anthropological observation of the phenomena of communitarian rupture and belonging, I will consider *La Belle Noiseuse* as this lengthy exercise whose quest is analogous to Balzac's and the fictional Frenhofer's: attaining truth in art through the materialisation of an ideal. Frenhofer incarnates the doomed romantic artist par excellence and achieved posterity thanks to

[17] '–"Can you see anything?" Poussin asked Porbus.
–"No. And you?"
–"Nothing at all."' See Honoré de Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu et autres nouvelles,* ed. Adrien Goetz (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994), 66.

Balzac's ability to endow the former's creative spirit with a mythical dimension. Balzac's novella raised questions about the power relationship between artist and muse; the description of a private, curious and alchemist-like atelier allows the reader to associate Frenhofer's artistic activity to a solitary process, to an individual retreat from society. Furthermore, Balzac consolidated the interconnectedness and conflict between artistic performance and sexual desire, just as Ovid compared Pygmalion's artistic creation to an act of love.[18] In *La Belle Noiseuse*, Rivette preserved the aura of mystery surrounding Frenhofer's creative act through the transposition of the protectiveness of the Balzacian studio in rural contemporary France. However, Rivette's treatment of time and space becomes the alternative to Balzac's ellipsis. Rivette's decision to base the majority of his shots in the enclosed and decentred atelier allows him to challenge Balzac's dismissal of Frenhofer and Gillette's artistic collaboration, hence implying the latter's submissiveness to the old master. The unbalanced relation between Pygmalion and his miraculous ivory statue is in fact renewed in *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* whilst being transcended in *La Belle Noiseuse*. Although the elderly features of Michel Piccoli suggest Rivette's acknowledgement of Balzac's association of the artist to an authoritarian male figure, the role of Marianne defies the myth of the passive, objectified female model. As a matter of fact, Rivette restored the egalitarian methods of *Out 1* by establishing a dialogue between painter and muse, hence criticising the patriarchal order suggested by Balzac's short story. The tears of Marianne become, from this perspective, the expression of confrontation and resistance, whereas the sobbing of Gillette, says much about the Balzacian representation of nineteenth-century women.

3.2. Allegories of totality: from Ovid to Rivette

In 'Le mythe du cinéma total' (1946), Bazin referred the reader to the Greco-Roman legend of Daedalus and his son Icarus to emphasise the demiurgic potential of the cinematic medium, which he understood as the long-awaited outcome of humanity's hope for transcendence:[19]

[18] Jon Kear, '"Frenhofer c'est moi": Cézanne's Nudes and Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre Inconnu'*, *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35, 4 (2006): 355, Accessed April 14, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42971760
[19] Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total', 24.

> So Daedalus flapped wings to guide his son.
> Far off, below them, some stray fisherman,
> Attention startled from his bending rod,
> Or a bland shepherd resting on his crook,
> Or a dazed farmer leaning on his plough,
> Glanced up to see the pair float through the sky,
> And, taking them for gods, stood in wonder.[20]

Besides being a reflection on the passing on of knowledge between generations, as illustrated by Ovid through the portrait of an impressionable Icarus whose face 'lit up by his father's skills', the flight of Daedalus' son is also a myth which suggests the confrontation between man and cosmic forces, as depicted by Renaissance and Baroque poetry. Bazin's mention of the fall of Icarus is certainly not surprising. His ontological analysis of cinema found its most valuable tools in the cultural heritage of prehistory and antiquity: 'the myth of Icarus had to wait on the internal combustion engine before descending from the platonic heavens. But it had dwelt in the soul of everyman since he first thought about birds'.[21] This particular legend allowed Bazin to efficiently illustrate man's long-lived desire to compete with gods through the mimetic representation of nature.[22] Although the figure of Icarus, in Ovid's moralistic poetry, is associated with the disobedience and excesses of youth, Bazin was more concerned with the idealistic dimension of the legend. His interpretation of the myth, whose search for the Absolute mirrors the fate of the cinematograph, shared similarities with Philippe Desportes' sonnets, which refer to Icarus as the very image of man's potential greatness.[23] In contrast with Desportes' 'neo-platonic poetry', nineteenth-century writers such as Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire emphasised the tragic aspect of the myth: the inevitable failure of man's attempt at a 'total and complete representation of reality'.[24] According to Eigeldinger, the romantics approached Icarus' legend by taking a pronounced interest in the bodily and earthly obstacles of the idealistic enterprise. In this regard, Rodin's sculptures revolved around a wide range of Icarian themes (such as

[20] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), 212.
[21] André Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *What is Cinema, Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 22.
[22] Alongside the myth of Icarus, the 'mummy complex' is another example that helped Bazin problematizing man's relation to time and memory and its consequence in the history of arts. See André Bazin, 'Ontologie de l'image photographique', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 8–17.
[23] Eigeldinger, *Lumières du mythe*, 95–96.
[24] Bazin, 'Le mythe du cinéma total', 22.

the metamorphosis and the fall) and were indebted to Balzac.[25] To fulfil Icarus' dream, both artists aspired to compete with life through perseverance, patience, and a rigorous knowledge of the world's surface and of the human body.[26] Rodin's sculptures to Balzac have indeed proven the sculptor's admiration for *La comédie humaine*, a Promethean project which acquired the status of self-overcoming myth: 'He believed like Balzac in the reality of his world and he became for a time a part of it'.[27] Far from limiting itself to a mimetic representation of reality, Balzac's realist theory prolonged, according to Arlette Michel, the Aristotelian will to establish a dialogue between idealism and sensualism:[28]

> Dans *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, Frenhofer aspire à une peinture qui soit aussi poésie, et qui puisse traduire l'Idée et non la réalité; Gambara rêve d'un absolu musical, d'un art total, capable d'exploiter les ressources de l'harmonie et de la mélodie. L'opéra, plus que tout autre genre, illustre la correspondance des arts, puisqu'il fait la synthèse de la musique, de la poésie et de la peinture dans un spectacle complet. Cette ambition de totalité hantera toujours Balzac.[29]

Nearly one century later, the Balzacian idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not only at the heart of Bazin's realist film theory but challenged, in addition, the idea of opera as the sole paroxysm of synthetic art. In the aftermath of the debates on cinematic specificity (led in the interwar years by film directors and critics like Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier and art historian Élie Faure) Bazin distinguished himself from these different and opposing schools by rejecting the search for cinema's so-called 'uniqueness'. Instead of building his film criticism and theory on the prevailing oppositions between the cinematic medium and other forms of artistic

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[25] Philippe Junod, 'Rodin et les métamorphoses d'Icare', *Revue de l'art* 96 (1992): 31–39, Accessed March 28, 2015, doi: 10.3406/rvart.1992.347983

[26] Marc Eigeldinger, 'Le mythe d'Icare dans la poésie française du XVIe siècle', *Cahiers de l'association internationale des études françaises* 25 (1973): 261–280, Accessed March 28, 2015, doi: 10.3406/caief.1973.1037

[27] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, trans. Jessie Lemont and Hans Trausil (New York: Sunwise Turn Inc., 1919), 74–75.

[28] Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 149.

[29] 'In *The Unkown Masterpiece*, Frenhofer not only aspires to a painting which competes with poetry but also to a painting which translates the Idea and not reality; Gambara dreams of musical absolute, a total art, capable of using the resources of harmony and melody. Opera, more than any other art, illustrates the correspondence between arts through the synthesis of music, poetry and painting in a complete spectacle. This ambition for totality always haunted Balzac' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Anne-Marie Baron, *Balzac cinéaste* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1990), 39.

expression, the 'diversity and complexity' of Bazin's writing style reveals an inherent affinity with romantic aesthetics, through the conjugation of literature with history and philosophy.[30] Bazin's way of writing mirrored his own belief in the impurity of cinema: notions of incommensurability and indefinability are, indeed, at the basis of both the German romantic tradition (as argued by Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy) and Bazin's theory of cinematic realism.[31] In 'Le mythe du cinéma total', Bazin endowed the photographic mechanism of cinema with a mythical meaning, which allowed him to virtually envision cinema's future: 'Every new development added to the cinema must, paradoxically, take it nearer and nearer to its origins. In short, cinema has not yet been invented!'[32] Bazin's taste for mythological fables over the more ideological and technical explanations of Georges Sadoul consolidates the romantic characteristics of the former's theoretical grounds: 'De toute manière, le romantisme se définit fondamentalement par un retour au mythe, qu'il identifie avec un mode de la connaissance poétique et de la représentation métaphorique'.[33] As this thesis will show, Rivette and Godard returned to nineteenth-century myths in very diverse ways.

In the 1950s, Rivette drew inspiration on Bazin's ontological theory and contributed to the Rohmerian definition of cinema as a novelistic art[34] through writings that associated mise-en-scène with an organism in perpetual motion and transformation.[35] The Aristotelian bias of the Young Turks' criticism which, briefly speaking, bet on cinema's capacity to reveal the director's personal worldview, despite

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[30] Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 184.

[31] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute. The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 6–7.

[32] Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', 21.

[33] 'In any case, romanticism is fundamentally defined by a return to myth, which is identified to a mode of poetical knowledge, of metaphorical representation' [My translation, ZTZ]. Eigeldinger, *Lumières du mythe*, 97.

[34] In his review of Alexandre Astruc's *Les mauvaises rencontres* (1955), Rivette stated: 'le roman du XXe siècle, on le sait, a échoué à prendre la succession de celui du XIXe; on sait aussi que cette succession, c'est le cinéma qui l'a assurée. Comme Hitchcock continue le roman anglais, ou Hawks Stevenson, Astruc réussit ici la moderne *Éducation Sentimentale* que la plupart des romanciers contemporains ont failli à écrire'/ 'we all know that the twentieth-century novel failed to succeed that of the nineteenth century; we also know that cinema ensured its succession. Just as Hitchcock continued the English novel and Hawks continued Stevenson, Astruc successfully created the modern *Sentimental Education* that most contemporary novelists failed to write' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Jacques Rivette, 'La recherche de l'Absolu (*Les mauvaises rencontres*)', *Cahiers du cinéma* 52 (November 1955): 46.

[35] Douglas Morrey developed a comparison between Hegelian dialectics and Rivette's film criticism, which tended to refer to cinema as a dialectical art that shuttles between temporality and crystallisation, necessity and contingency. See Douglas Morrey, 'To Describe a Labyrinth: Dialectics in Jacques Rivette's Film Theory and Film Practice', *Film-Philosophy* 16, 1 (2012): 30–51, Accessed April 17, 2015, http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/f-p/article/view/227/823

production and technical constraints, was nonetheless questioned and challenged in the 1960s. While the literary references that guided their criticism in the 1950s consisted of the French classic novels, from the mid-1960s onwards the *Cahiers* critics broadened and diversified the magazine's bibliography by quoting and elaborating on Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Blanchot, Pierre Klossowski, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Gérard Genette, Georges Bataille and so on.[36] Rivette's editorial leadership was indeed marked by a desire to bring film criticism and filmmaking in contact with political engagement, socio-cultural debates and solidarity with Third-World countries.[37] Exploring the ways Rivette's 1960s films grew away from the neoclassicist and apolitical bias of the *École Schérer* will shed light on his interpretation of *L'histoire des Treize* in the early 1970s.

Recently, a few scholars have discussed Rivette's predilection for Parisian *flâneries*. In relation to *Out 1: Noli me tangere*, Francesca Dosi associated Colin and Frédérique's trajectories with Pierre Loubriet's definition of the Balzacian *flâneries*. As such, the purpose of their wanderings would be the search of 'l'extase, mais une extase à la fois charnelle – une sorte de jubilation sensorielle, phénoménologique – et désincarnée, d'ordre mystique, proche d'une activité sublimatoire'.[38] In the more marginal and experimental period of the late 1960s, it is however problematic to associate Rivette's characters with Balzac's desire to reflect on the metaphysical dimension of urban environment. While it is certain that Rohmer restored Balzac's poetic associations between edifices and nature throughout his filmmaking career, Rivette's first feature film, *Paris nous appartient*, was more likely to be inspired by an existentialist-type of wandering. Contrary to the law student in *La boulangère de Monceau*, Anne's university life cannot be broken down according to daily habits. Since the beginning of the film, Rivette's camera angles multiply points of views which do not belong to any predominant and individual gaze. Indeed, the director's camera circulates around groups to capture fragments of discussions, impromptu and seemingly disconnected events (such as the car accident) that Anne understands as clues towards the revelation of a worldwide and mysterious conspiracy. Therefore, Rivettian characters appear threatened and lost, as shown, for instance, in the night time sequence

[36] Antoine de Baecque, *Les cahiers du cinéma histoire d'une revue. Tome II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1991), 141.
[37] Rivette promoted, for instance, the Brazilian *cinema nôvo* when he was in charge of the editorial team of *Cahiers* in the early 1960s. See de Baecque, *Les cahiers du cinéma histoire d'une revue. Tome II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981*, 168–169.
[38] Pierre Loubriet quoted in Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 126. See also Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Modernes flâneries au cinéma* (Le Havre: De L'incidence, 2009), 11.

where Anne and Philip Kaufman walk in the deserted streets of a dark and unrecognisable Paris. In this regard, Rivette mentioned to *Cahiers* that the itineraries of his characters could be compared to the idea of mice circulating inside a labyrinth and getting occasionally stuck in cul-de-sacs.[39] This analogy implies that the world of science, politics and trade has replaced the pre-existing belief in a higher and divine order responsible for man's destiny. Throughout his career, Rivette continuously subverted the romantic belief in a spiritual transcendence through its simultaneous acknowledgement and criticism: in later films like *Le pont du nord* (1981), the copper lion statue in Denfert-Rochereau, the demolition tractor or the fantastic scrap dragon refer to the oppressive atmosphere of complots and political scandals of Giscard d'Estaing's government.[40] Contrary to the Rohmerian protagonists, whose social appearances are in sync with their urban or rural environment (and who therefore echo Balzac's concerns with nineteenth-century physiognomy), Rivette's characters denounce the bourgeois social order through the marginality, extravagance, if not absurdity, of their speech and actions. The analogy between Baptiste's imaginary fight against the scrap dragon and the image of Don Quixote fighting windmills is not only the perfect example of Rivette's deviation from Balzac's *flâneries*, but also becomes an open form of political commentary **(fig. 3.1.)**.

Instead of Balzacian *flâneries*, I suggest that it is, above all, Rivette's experimentation with space and time, as well as taste for conspiracy and fantasy, that brings his cinema close to Balzac's demiurgic aspiration. Indeed, both Rivette and Balzac worked towards an extended, generous and incomplete reflection on the political, social and cultural stakes of a period of profound and rapid change. Rivette belonged to this generation of directors who witnessed the way in which neorealist cinema broke with classical continuity editing inherited from D.W. Griffith. As evoked by Rivette himself, World War II modified the perception of temporality and, as such, undermined the pre-war tendency to rationalise time through harmoniously structured film narratives.[41] This moment of 'shock' caused temporality to disconnect from the

[39] Jacques Aumont et al., 'Le temps déborde. Entretien avec Jacques Rivette', *Cahiers du cinéma* 204 (September 1968): 16.
[40] Just as in *L'avventura* by Michelangelo Antonioni (which was released a few months before *Paris nous appartient*), Rivette's camera becomes a search tool that struggles to put meaning on objects found along the route. Antonioni beautifully expressed the relativity of time and thereby demonstrated that the recording of duration was (and still is) one of the greatest challenges for filmmakers. See Roland Barthes, 'Cher Antonioni', *Cahiers du cinéma* 311 (May 1980): 10.
[41] *Jacques Rivette, le veilleur*, DVD, directed by Claire Denis (1990; CNC, 2007).

logical linking of shots and, in turn, emerged 'as a force distinct from movement and space'.[42] Gilles Deleuze associated a few Nouvelle Vague films like *À bout de souffle* (1960), *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and *Pierrot le fou* (1965) with the 'film-ballade': 'Godard begins with some extraordinary ballads, from *Breathless* to *Pierrot le fou*, and tends to draw out of them a whole world of opsigns and sonsigns which already constitute the new image'.[43] Surely, since his first feature film, Rivette shared the taste for 'trip'/'ballad' situations. However, whereas Godard cherished for a long time the relation of cinema to 'strip cartoon at its most cruel and cutting' through editing techniques that disrupted narrative unity, Rivette filmed characters who relentlessly circulate within the cinematic frame with the perspective of an artistic revelation.[44] Thus, Rivette distinguished himself from his Nouvelle Vague companions through a pronounced interest in experimental theatre and the imaginary atmosphere of fables and children's games. These thematic consistencies show Rivette's desire to rework and update the politique des auteurs' precept of cinema as an epiphanic experience.[45] In *Paris nous appartient*, Rivette's characters seek the cause of their sufferings by ascribing meaning to images, actions, surroundings and speech. In his review, Michel Delahaye wrote: 'Avons-nous affaire à des mythomanes réalisant leur délire d'organisation ou à une organisation réalisant, grâce à eux, son mythe?'[46] Rivette conveyed the sense of aimlessness through the principle of vagary of the filming process: the camera follows the characters' movements, who themselves follow narrative 'signs' spread in the city.[47] Far from solely representing the main décor, Paris becomes the labyrinthine space that triggers narrative action. This aesthetic principle provokes a tension in the perception of Rivette's recorded reality: are the characters

[42] Matilda Mroz, *Temporality and Film Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 37.
[43] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9.
[44] Deleuze, *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*, 10.
[45] Paul Willemen described the politique des auteurs as such: 'The whole argument around realism hinges on a discourse of revelation just as the whole *Cahiers du cinéma* auteur polemic basically was a discourse of revelation, the revelation of the soul. Whether it was the soul of the viewer being projected onto the screen, the soul of the actress being revealed in Rossellini's *Stromboli* or the soul of Hitchcock being revealed in *I Confess*, there was always a discourse of revelation under it all in different modalities'. See Paul Willemen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 232.
[46] 'Are we dealing with mythomaniacs who are fulfilling their delirious organisation or with an organisation achieving its myth through them?' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Michel Delahaye, 'L'idée maîtresse ou le complot sans maître', *Cahiers du cinéma* 128 (February 1962): 43.
[47] Douglas Morrey and Alison Smith, *Jacques Rivette* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 55.

projecting the image of their madness over the world, or is the world projecting its madness over them? Hélène Deschamps characterised Rivette's films as 'impressionistic' due to the director's capacity to suggest collective and social symptoms (anguish, paranoia, boredom) through a filmic texture that frees itself from the temporal segmentation of classical narrative films and the pre-established organisation of bourgeois society.[48] Rivette's deliberate will to 'mould' his own reality through lengthy films that intensify the physical and aural dimension of everyday life cannot, nevertheless, be interpreted as a plain rejection of the classical heritage that informed his film criticism in the 1950s.[49] Alternatively, this chapter suggests that Rivette's desire to testify of contemporaneous artistic trends and movements in *Out 1: Noli me tangere* derives from Balzac's commitment to embrace the totality of the modern living experience.

The status of Balzac, in the post-war period, is complex. The life work of M. de Balzac (like that of Hugo or Gustave Flaubert) had long been canonised and displayed among the 'classics' in schools. The Nouveau Roman acknowledged, either directly or indirectly, the tremendous historical and aesthetic impact *La comédie humaine* had on the evolution of French literature and criticism by the very fact that Robbe-Grillet encapsulated the whole of the nineteenth-century tradition in Balzac's writings. The post-war desire to (re)invent the novel by breaking with the traditional association between Being (in the sense of 'biography') and Language could clearly only exist as a reaction to 'cette intériorité suspecte qu'un essayiste a nommée "le cœur romantique des choses"'.[50] The author of *Le Père Goriot* was indeed regarded as this 'tyrant of signification' against whom novelists and filmmakers had to radically renew themselves. As a result, only four of forty-nine of Balzac's works were adapted during the second half of the twentieth century.[51] Of course, the emergence of television altered such statistics through the release of twenty-four television adaptations, from Jean Vertex's *Vautrin* (1957) to Alexandre Astruc's *Une fille d'Eve* (1988).[52] However, Anne-Marie Baron's inventory shows that there was a gradual disinterest, from the film

[48] Hélène Deschamps, *Jacques Rivette: Théâtre, amour, cinéma* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 8.
[49] Morrey also wrote about the relationship of Rivette's criticism and the aesthetics values of antique tragedy. See Douglas Morrey, 'The Lost Art of Keeping a Secret: Jacques Rivette's Film Criticism for *Arts*', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 51–64.
[50] 'this suspicious interiority which an essayist once called 'the romantic heart of things'' [My translation, ZTZ]. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1961), 20.
[51] Baron, *Balzac cinéaste*, 183–190.
[52] The time frame of Baron's inventory needs however to be updated; published in 1990, her work does not include more recent adaptations like *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991) or *Ne touchez pas la hache* (2007).

industry, in adapting Balzac in the wake of World War II. To clarify the reasons Rivette transposed this literary source in the 1970s, examining the plurality of readings *La comédie humaine* has generated since its inception is useful.

Balzac's life work has been subject to an immense corpus of 'Balzacian studies', which, according to Paul Barrière, make manifest Balzac's capacity to embody classicism and modernism all at once.[53] Like Rohmer, Barrière privileged Balzac's strong affiliation with the classical literary tradition:

> Ce sera précisément le but de notre travail que de montrer comment malgré certaines apparences, ce qui appartient en propre à Balzac, ce qui fait le fond de sa philosophie et de son art relève non pas du romantisme, mais bien de la tradition littéraire telle que l'ont élaborée les maîtres du XVIIe et du XVIIIe siècles. C'est à notre tradition nationale qu'il faut demander compte de la *Comédie Humaine*.[54]

In contrast, Rivette re-situated Balzac in the tradition of modern novelists. In the preface of *Les paysans* (which was posthumously published in 1855) Balzac quoted Jean-Jacques Rousseau: 'J'étudie la marche de mon époque, et je publie cet ouvrage'.[55] In this unfinished project, Balzac expressed his desire to write an entertaining and didactic history of contemporary morals, which would resist the test of time. Although Robbe-Grillet and Barthes criticised, since the late 1950s, the authoritarian and educational dimension of Balzac's representation of his French contemporaries, scholars like Thomas M. Kemple have demonstrated the extent to which *La comédie humaine* was influential in the constitution of Karl Marx's critique of political economy.[56] By considering Balzac and Marx's writings as symptomatic and key-examples of a same bourgeois social and cultural historical order, Kemple suggested to envision *Capital* as complementary to *La comédie humaine*. He thus comments Marx's reading of Balzac as such:

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[53] Paul Barrière, *Honoré de Balzac et la tradition littéraire classique* (Paris: Hachette, 1928), 14.
[54] Barrière, *Honoré de Balzac et la tradition littéraire classique*, 2.
[55] 'I have studied the march of my epoch, and I publish this work' [My translation, ZTZ]. Pierre Laubriet, *L'intelligence de l'art chez Balzac: d'une esthétique balzacienne* (Genève: Slatkine, 1980), 75.
[56] Thomas M. Kemple, 'Les illusions spéculaires du capitalisme: Balzac et Marx sur les fictions critiques de l'économie', *Cahiers de recherche sociologique* 26 (1996): 40, Accessed April 1, 2015, doi: 10.7202/1002341ar

> In a society ruled by capitalist production, even the non-capitalist producer is dominated by capitalist conceptions. In his last novel, *Les Paysans*, Balzac, who is generally remarkable for his profound grasp of actual conditions, aptly describes how the little peasant, in order to retain the good will of his usurer, performs many small tasks gratuitously for him and fancies that he does not give him anything for nothing, because his own labor does not cost him any cash outlay.[57]

While Balzac's oeuvre unquestionably expressed nostalgia for the Absolutist regime, his lengthy, detailed descriptions of social and daily realities transcended pure mimesis. Balzac's imagery could serve as cartography in which social and economical categories, as well as their interest-based interactions, intermingle. In this sense, Pericles Lewis' remark on Balzac's awareness of the world as an 'irretrievably fallen space in which the individual is condemned to be judged by the meaningless categories of society' adds up perfectly to the reflection on Balzac's romantic bias.[58] The mourning of a lost era, however, gives place to the creation of a new social structure, of a new man. It is this 'new man', actor and result of the moral and cultural revolution of May 1968 that Rivette's cinema attempts to portray in the 1970s. Yet, to document the spectator on the conditions of the *soixante-huitard*, a return to myths was inevitable.

In *Out 1*, two different theatre groups work on Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (467 BC) and *Prometheus Bound* (415 BC). Described by Thierry Jousse as a disproportionate and Promethean project, *Out 1* is composed of eight episodes in which the myth of Prometheus and the Balzacian motifs of totality and conspiracy run alongside and, eventually, meet. In the same way that Thomas, the leader of one of the two theatre groups, can hardly see the connection between Prometheus and *L'histoire des Treize* when asked by Colin (a newcomer), the spectator is being led to seek explanations, points of reference throughout the duration of Rivette's project. Far from the more realistic and, in Rivette's terms, 'cellulaire' adaption of Denis Diderot's *La religieuse* (1796), which privileged the idea of tableaux and maintained a certain stillness and distance between the spectator and the spectacle through very limited camera movements and long shots, the montage of *Out 1* escapes any logical order and

[57] Karl Marx, *Capital: a Critique of Political Economy, Vol. III – Part I, The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole*, ed. Friedrich Engels (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 52.
[58] Pericles Lewis, *Modernism, Nationalism and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 21.

is often compared to an association game, specific to mosaic.[59] Already in 1968, the montage of *L'amour fou* was characterised by its patchwork-like technique through the combination of 16mm and 35mm films. In *Out 1*, Rivette alternates rehearsal scenes of *Seven against Thebes*, led by Lili's group, and performances from *Prometheus Bound*, led by Thomas' collective, with the trajectories of two 'outsiders', Colin and Frédérique.[60] The latter are distinctly framed as detached from both theatre families. The solitary journeys of these two marginal figures hardly ever coincide but share, nonetheless, the same mission: updating the contemporary reality of the Balzacian Thirteen by projecting their fantasy of a collective conspiracy on the members of the theatre troupes. The contrast between the extra-textual reality of Lili, performed by Michèle Moretti, and Thomas, interpreted by Michael Lonsdale (who had just finished collaborating in one of Peter Brook's plays), and the more fictional and erratic roles of Colin and Frédérique, played by Nouvelle Vague actors Jean-Pierre Léaud and Juliet Berto, interestingly shows how Rivette transcended the boundaries of cinematic genres. Rivette's aesthetic of hybridization transposes to cinema Balzac's novelistic style, which involved and revised every traditional literary genre: epic, lyrical poetry, popular and historical drama.[61] Instead of creating a fictional universe in which the Balzacian plot unfolds (through a well-determined beginning and end), Rivette reconstructed the narrative void of *L'histoire des Treize*.

In fact, Balzac introduced the Thirteen by connoting the eminently epic spirit of its members – a collective attribute which mirrors the Promethean themes of defiant force and poetic creativity:

> In Paris under the Empire thirteen men came together. They were all struck with the same idea and all endowed with sufficient energy to remain faithful to a single purpose. They were all honest enough to be loyal to one another even when their interests were opposed, and sufficiently versed in guile to conceal the inviolable bonds which united them. They were strong enough to put themselves above all law, bold enough to flinch at no undertaking; lucky enough to have succeeded in their designs […][62]

[59] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 74.
[60] Likewise, Rivette introduced two types of narrative in *L'amour fou*.
[61] Laubriet, *L'intelligence de l'art chez Balzac: d'une esthétique balzacienne*, 143.
[62] Honoré de Balzac, *History of the Thirteen*, trans. Herbert J. Hunt (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 21.

This preface, however, left the readers' expectations on hold. That which they thought was meant to trace the adventures and criminal actions of the Thirteen becomes three distinctive novels on the tragic fate of individual sentimental drama, grouped under the titles of *Ferragus*, *La duchesse de Langeais* and *La fille aux yeux d'or*. Balzac's abandonment of the Thirteen's adventures in favour of a thorough analysis of sentimental psychology and social behaviours suggests the inadequacy of Promethean (and, correspondingly, Icarian) endeavours, of the fantastic and supernatural powers of myth in modern everyday life: 'D'autant plus que les actions du groupe aboutissent pour la plupart à des échecs'.[63] The pessimistic and melancholic tone with which Balzac describes nineteenth-century society is further developed in *L'envers de l'histoire contemporaine* (1848). In this novel, Balzac defines the concept of association as such: 'L'association, une des grandes forces sociales et qui a fait l'Europe du Moyen-Âge, repose sur des sentiments qui, depuis 1792, n'existent plus en France, où l'individu a triomphé de l'État'.[64] Similarly, Rohmer, in the role of the Balzacian expert in the third episode of *Out 1*, regards the possibility of a contemporaneous association, which would share the chivalric ideals of the Thirteen, with great scepticism. He thus encourages Colin to 'stick to the text' as the unique alternative to understand Balzac (here, the extra-textual dimension matches the classicist bias of Rohmer's fictional character). Colin nonetheless persists in pursuing his 'chasse aux Treize', which is soon assimilated to Lewis Carroll's epic tale *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) – the Snark being a folkloric creature. It could be argued that Rivette's faithfulness to Balzac went against the academic (and typically Rohmerian) advice to remain as close as possible to the literary text.

Rather, Rivette positions Balzac in this long chain of free transmission where legendary and modern figures merge together, from Aeschylus to Carroll. Rivette associates *L'histoire des Treize* with the thirteen Snark hunters imagined by Lewis Carroll and, as such, establishes an affinity between Balzac's interest in the enigmatic language of alchemists and Carroll's nonsense poetry, which hinders hermeneutic logic

[63] 'Especially since the actions of the group mostly end up in failures' [My translation, ZTZ]. Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 161.
[64] 'Association – one of the greatest social forces which was the making of Europe in the Middle-Ages – is based on feelings which have ceased since 1792, to exist in France, where the individual is now supreme over the State'. See Honoré de Balzac, *Scènes de la vie politique, L'envers de l'histoire contemporaine* (Paris: Alexandre Houssiaux, 1855), 242.

through the transgression of classical rationality.[65] Colin ends the silence which characterised him throughout the first two episodes through loud-spoken repetitions of cryptograms mixing mystical and religious formulae with extracts from Carroll, hence highlighting the playfulness of the Carrollian sonority: 'Treize pour chasser le Snark; ils n'auraient rencontré le Boojum qui les vit s'évanouir; passe le temps qui les gomma; d'autres treize ont formé un étrange équipage'.[66] In the scenes preceding these outdoor elocutions, Rivette films Colin in a Parisian studio, decrypting coded messages in front of a black board. These apparently isolated and senseless scenes call the spectator for an active participation: like Colin, the viewer engages in a deciphering exercise that goes from the mechanical stamping of notes to mysterious arithmetical calculations **(fig. 3.2.)**. According to Baron, the alchemist tradition exerted a significant influence on Balzac's desire to introduce magic to his novels. By creating a narrow connection between the ancient theology of Zoroaster, Hermes, Pythagoras and Egyptian symbols of enigmatic language (such as hieroglyphs), Balzac not only attempts to transcend Christian dualism, but also erects his authorial mission to the level of the universal 'passeur' of a divine and occult message.[67] It is through the poetic language of myth (the vitality of myth being opposed to the inherent hypocrisy of language), as illustrated by the mysterious and Baroque Parisian universe in *La peau de chagrin* (1831), that Balzac expresses the power of the idea, hence the 'beauty of reality' in Arlette Michel's words.[68]

Just as Balzac seeks reality in the fictional property of mythological fables, *Out 1* becomes a battlefield in which legends progressively conquer reality (through a game of reinvention or *bricolage*). Indeed, Rivette aims to recover the original dimension of human relationships as well as the fundamental function of speech through a collective reflection on the myth of Prometheus and, thereby, of Icarus. For instance, the same Thomas who, at the beginning of the fifth episode, looks overtaken by Colin's appearance and interrogations on *L'histoire des Treize*, develops, later on, a theory on the relation that unites the Balzacian Thirteen to his work on Aeschylus' play. Prometheus, according to Thomas, is none other than the symbol of *L'histoire des Treize*: despite his tragic destiny, Prometheus believed in men's capacity to progress

[65] John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 148.
[66] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 110.
[67] Anne-Marie Baron, 'Balzac et la tradition alchimique', *L'année balzacienne* 14 (2013): 231–242, Accessed April 7, 2015, doi: 10.3917/balz.014.0231
[68] Michel*, Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 211.

beyond their present condition.[69] Therefore, the legend of Prometheus represents the life of a rebel, who is not only responsible for the coming miseries of mankind, but who also embodies an 'ongoing battle against tyranny and authoritarian regimes of all kinds'.[70]

3.3. Opening Balzac to modernist theories: redefining the 'New Man' in post-1968 France

Interviewed by Delahaye and Rivette in September 1963, Barthes established a semiological comparison between literature and cinema: 'Imaginez-vous une littérature-vérité, analogue au cinéma-vérité? Avec le langage, ce serait impossible, la vérité est impossible avec le langage'.[71] The time in which the *Cahiers* critics introduced Barthes as 'le premier de nos hôtes d'honneur' corresponds to the advent of Jean Rouch's cinéma-vérité which, apart from fascinating 'the ancients' and 'the moderns' (namely, the group Rivette and the clan Rohmer) during the transitional year of 1963, is also a key-phenomenon to understand Rivette's experimental filmmaking practices.[72] As indicated by François Thomas, the ethnographic cinema introduced by Rouch in the 1950s had a strong impact on the genesis of *Out 1*.[73] Rouch's nine hour long film, *Petit à petit* (1970) and its anthropological methods of film reporting pushed, according to Rivette, the core principles of Renoir's realist cinema to the extreme. In September 1968, following the release of *L'amour fou*, Rivette assumed that Rouch couldn't only be considered as an extension, a variation of Renoir, but that Renoir already contained the seeds of Rouch's cinema-vérité:[74]

> Donc, j'ai voulu faire un film non pas inspiré par Renoir, mais essayant d'être conforme à cette idée du cinéma incarné par

[69] Prometheus gave fire to men hence showing humans the creative knowledge of craft and technique. As an act of revenge, Zeus condemned the Titan to eternal torture. See Carol Dougherty, *Prometheus* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 75.
[70] Dougherty, *Prometheus*, 19.
[71] 'Could you imagine a literature-vérité, analogous to the cinéma-vérité? With language, it would be impossible, truth is impossible with language' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Michel Delahaye and Jacques Rivette, 'Entretien avec Roland Barthes', *Cahiers du cinéma* 147 (September 1963): 22.
[72] de Baecque, *Les Cahiers du cinéma histoire d'une revue. Tome II: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981*, 27–28.
[73] François Thomas, 'Les jeux du solitaire: *Out 1*', *Positif* 367 (1991): 14.
[74] Aumont et al., 'Le temps déborde. Entretien avec Jacques Rivette': 20.

> Renoir, c'est-à-dire un cinéma qui n'impose rien, où l'on essaie de suggérer les choses, de les voir venir, où c'est d'abord un dialogue à tous les niveaux, avec les acteurs, la situation, avec les gens qu'on rencontre, où le fait de tourner le film fait partie du film.[75]

Through the creation of a situation of equality between the director, the actors, the camera, the technical and the stage-management team, Rivette put into question the authority assigned to the filmmaker; a position that was paradoxically consolidated through the advent of the politique des auteurs. Following the teachings of Barthes, Rivette's idea of 'non-intervention' on the part of the filmmaker becomes a political statement on the aesthetic clichés of bourgeois culture and endows the concept of the author with paternalistic, if not dictatorial, connotations.[76] However, whereas Barthes saw literature as incompatible with the idea of an objective reality (due to its subjective, culturally constructed textual system), Rivette understood documentary-like recording as a possibility of creating art and making it sensible through a process of collective 'excavation'. The analogy between the filmmaker and the archaeologist's mission can illuminate the readings of *Out 1* and *La Belle Noiseuse*. In his interview with the *Cahiers* team in 1968 as well as with Denis in 1990, Rivette described filmmaking as the delicate and long operation of digging up a buried object:

> Je crois de plus en plus qu'il n'y a pas d'auteur dans les films; qu'un film, c'est quelque chose qui préexiste. Ça n'est intéressant que si on a ce sentiment que le film préexiste et qu'on s'efforce d'aller vers lui, de le découvrir, en prenant des précautions pour ne pas trop l'abîmer, le déformer.[77]

Since *Paris nous appartient*, Rivette's working practices and the ensuing abnormal duration of his films aimed to distinguish his work from the standardisation of Hollywood cinematic language which, from a poststructuralist perspective, proved the

[75] 'So, I decided to make a film that is not inspired by Renoir, but which attempts to be consistent with Renoir's views on cinema; that is to say, a cinema that does not impose anything on anyone, a cinema that suggests and sees coming possibilities, where dialogue, at all levels, becomes a priority (with actors, situations, people we meet), where the filming process becomes the film' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid.: 8.
[76] Ibid.: 9.
[77] 'I believe more and more that there is no author in films; that a film is a pre-existing thing. Filmmaking only becomes interesting when we feel that the film pre-exists, and that we want to go and get it, to discover it, with the necessary precautions no to damage or deform it too much' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid.: 19.

assimilation/integration of cinema to western bourgeois culture. Not coincidentally the chosen colonial word 'assimilation' echoes the nineteenth-century republican and patriotic dogma led by the French state over its colonies during the wars of independence. It is in unison with the movements and struggles for the liberation of oppressed nations that the new aesthetics of Rivette's cinema, along with other liberal-humanist intellectuals, like Rouch, or the more radical leftist, Marc'O, aimed to offer alternatives to western-centric and reactionary expectations about filmmaking, such as the establishment of the dramaturgic mechanisms of 'exposition', 'heart of the action' and 'conclusion'.

In this respect, Rivette only begins suggesting the existence of a fictional plot after three hours of film in *Out 1*, through the first encounter between Lily and her old friend Lucie, played by Françoise Fabian. The two first episodes, in turn, are merely composed of lengthy theatre rehearsals which could be understood as an abnormally elongated exposition, in which the spectator is introduced to two different but soon interrelated realities; Lili's group, which is mirrored by Thomas' company, and Colin's world, whose alter ego is embodied by Frédérique. Rivette's interest in creating binary networks not only allowed him to explore alternative fictions through, for instance, the parallel trajectories of Colin and Frédérique, but also contributed to dialectical relations between the notions of 'community' and 'outsider', between the cinema-vérité technique of Lili and Thomas' experimental rehearsals and Colin and Frédérique's more playful and 'fabricated' engagement with Balzac's text. The characters circulate through a variety of self-contained walls, hence duplicating and elongating the film's spatial reality. The seaside villa remains indeed 'open to the use of the thirteen friends who know of its existence', with no host to orient its narrative, and no predetermined drama to take place in it.[78] The renewal and subversion of strongly connoted spaces, such as the bourgeois family home in the South of France, or the secrecy surrounding the artist studio, will be closely explored in *La Belle Noiseuse*. For now, it is necessary to specify that Rivette posits temporal and spatial unfolding as cinema's only way of revealing the totality of the real, and therefore, situates himself in direct line with Bazin's ontological project.[79] To achieve this, *Out 1* explores the new bonds that connect man with the

[78] Morrey and Smith, *Jacques Rivette*, 90.

[79] Here again, Rivette's engagement with Bazin contrasts with Godard's, who, as early as September 1952, detached himself from Bazin's defence of the long-take and the depth of field, and privileged, instead, the *découpage classique* of Classical Hollywood cinema. See Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), 26–30.

camera, in the aftermath of May 1968, through the influence of famous ontologist, Antonin Artaud, and from the perspective of Rouch's sociological and anthropological experiments. Starring comedians from the Marc'O troupe, like Ogier and Michèle Moretti, the mise-en-scène of *Out 1* (like the previous *L'amour fou*) is informed by the avant-garde aesthetics of the Theatre of Cruelty and Rouch's ethnographic documentary methods.

Rouch opposed his cinema to the bourgeois grammar of classical Hollywood montage by understanding filmmaking as an 'unrepeatable adventure'; he was in fact one of the few directors who wielded the camera himself, with synchronised sound, and hardly ever did second takes.[80] In fact, he worked as an ethnologist with different communities in West Africa such as the Songhay migrants in *Les maîtres fous* (1956) or in *Yenendi de Ganghel* (1968), films which aimed to reveal the invisible relation between men and gods through possession ceremonies. As developed by Brice Ahounou, Rouch's capacity to capture the moment in which men metamorphosed into gods was essentially due to the Songhay society's acceptance of his presence. Rouch's coexistence with the villagers was indeed based on dialogue, respect and collaboration: 'his presence in the villages did not bring with it deep troubles but seemed rather to be a bearer of wellbeing to these communities. This earned him a privileged status and his lasting integration extends across two or three generations of Nigeriens'.[81] The fascination for African rituals shared by Rouch and theatre director Peter Brook could be considered, in the beginning of the 1970s, as a common desire to revive and prolong the modern primitivism of the interwar period, which inspired Dada and the Surrealist movements as well as poets and writers such as Blaise Cendrars, Tristan Tzara, Georges Bataille, Jean Paulhan, without forgetting the paintings of Pablo Picasso.[82] Clearly, the connections between Rivette and Rouch's filmmaking techniques are crucial to understand the modernist aesthetics of *Out 1*. However, this study would not be complete without a few considerations on Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which was the main point of convergence between Rivette, Rouch, Brook and Marc'O.

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[80] Vittorio de Sica and John Cassavetes also became their own chief cameramen. See Philo Bregstein, 'Jean Rouch, Fiction Film Pioneer: a Personal Account', in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 170–171.

[81] Brice Ahounou, 'Jean Rouch and the Great Sahelian Drought: Visual Anthropology and the Wrathful Gods at Ganghel', in *Building Bridges, The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 65.

[82] Marie-Denise Shelton, 'Primitive Self: Colonial Impulses in Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique Fantôme*', in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, eds. Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 326.

Artaud's relation to the Absolute involved hostility to the western spoken word, which he repudiated for its utilitarian foundation. Alternatively, Artaud turned to another form of language which possessed bodily, affective, magical and incantatory qualities.[83] Inspired by the Tarahumaras in Mexico as well as the Balinese theatre, which performed for the first time in Paris at a colonial exhibition in 1931, Artaud worked on 'a return to the source', or to paraphrase Ross Murray, on the recovery of a primeval form of communication, anterior to the post-Enlightenment in modern European thought.[84] In this sense, Artaud's observation and theorisation of the Balinese possession trance in *Le théatre et son double* aspired to the recovery of a lost spirituality in western theatre. Similarly, the Songhay religious rituals filmed by Rouch were a reaction against the hegemony of western psychological realism. Rivette applied, for his part, the Artaudian maxim in *Out 1*: 'Le théâtre est le seul endroit au monde où un geste fait ne se recommence pas deux fois' and thereby claimed descent from Artaud, as well as confirmed links of brotherhood with Rouch's cinéma-vérité.[85]

In parallel with Colin's mysterious assemblage game and Frédérique's clumsy, if not childlike, extortions (which punctuate and gradually adjust Rivette's narrative to Balzac's theme of the Thirteen), the first episode of *Out 1* introduces *Seven Against Thebes* through a ritual dance performed by Lili's group to the rhythm of the drum beat. On the other side of Paris, Thomas' troupe differentiates itself through collective hysteria: bodies move convulsively around a red mannequin supposed to represent a chained Prometheus, followed by agitated growling, barking and incomprehensible groaning **(fig. 3.3.)**. Only at the fifty-first minute of the film, Rivette's characters begin talking together, intelligibly, in relation to the trance attempt described above – which occupies almost half of the 85-minute episode. As mentioned by Dosi, the theatrical experience is understood by both groups as an event divided into two complementary processes. Theatre is firstly envisioned as a virginal space in which the collective unconscious is given rise through physical and vocal improvisation. The classical text here becomes a challenge; it is not a question of communicating Aeschylus' play, but a matter of expressing the tragedy through spontaneous, immediate and impulsive sensations.[86] Secondly, in sharp contrast with these rehearsals, theatre is also composed

[83] Ros Murray, *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 68.
[84] Murray, *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul*, 75.
[85] 'The theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made in the same way twice'. Ibid., 65.
[86] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 89.

of long moments of intellectual exchange, in which each member shares and conceptualises his or her emotional experience in regards to the performance. Moreover, as proved by Thomas' haggard face, their work on *Prometheus Bound* needs to be confronted to and oriented by external critique, as embodied by newcomer Sarah, played by Bernadette Lafont. A writer in lack of inspiration, Sarah lives close to the sea and is invited by Thomas to Paris with the fair intention of recovering fresh ideas as well as adding a new dimension to Aeschylus' play through her collaboration with the group. The strength Thomas' play needs to gain is not, however, provided by Sarah's participation. The notion of social disruption is experienced from episode 4 to 7 through Sarah's unwillingness to ignore her own personal emotions during the rehearsals and therefore inability to submerge herself entirely in the collectively created fiction. The exclusion of Sarah becomes, in the cases of both Thomas and Lili's theatre practices, necessary. The search for a unitary experience, a common and unique energy that can only be created in the theatre stage (a sort of cocoon, away from the alienation of modern society) requires human relations that are exclusively led by a phenomenon of deep attention and availability between each and everyone of the group.

This strength, which according to the group's conversations, the play misses (as Thomas comments to Étienne [aka Jacques Doniol-Valcroze] at the end of episode 5) is interestingly brought by the merging of Colin and Frédérique's enigmatic activities with the two theatre communities. By casting doubts on the existence of a secret society of which Thomas, Lili, and the rest of their confrères belong, the two peripheral figures of Colin and Frédérique introduce the required energy for these two groups to begin acting 'in a Promethean sense'. In his conversation with Étienne, Thomas interprets Prometheus as the symbol of that which is repressed, enchained. It is Thomas' role, along with other theatre members, to surpass the limitations imposed by Aeschylus' written text (and in a larger scale, by the immobility which represents the bourgeois State of de Gaulle and Pompidou) through actions that are freed from any finality, removed from any goal:

> Thomas: 'Si tu veux, Prométhée symbolise pour moi ce qui est empêché, quoi… Et nous, nous pouvons, avec le groupe, trouver suffisamment d'énergie pour faire bouger les choses…'

> Etienne: 'Oui… Est-ce que tu n'as pas l'impression que ce groupe il existe dans l'air, en suspens, sans avoir trouvé de point d'impact, et que c'est la visite de ce jeune homme là je sais pas quoi, qui t'as remis sur la voie de quelque chose? Enfin… le fait d'être soupçonné, crée le délire…'[87]

The mimetic and therefore illusory nature of theatrical representation is abandoned in favour of the emergence of pure, unbounded and fortuitous actions, whose patterns can only evoke the secrets of nature itself. In other words, the characters of *Out 1* seek to establish a metaphysical connection between Promethean strength and modern human condition and mirror, as such, Frenhofer's desperate attempts to compete with the hand of the Creator in *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* and *La Belle Noiseuse*.

If many scholars and critics have hardly managed to achieve a consistent interpretation of Rivette's longest and rarest film, as already remarked by Morrey, it is probably because they got themselves caught in the reference game played by Colin. How to establish a cogent link between Rivette's unaccountable literary associations, from Carroll to Aeschylus? My reading of *Out 1* opted for deepening our viewing angle through the alignment and comparison of Balzac's relation to the self-overcoming myth of Icarus and Rivette's own conception of cinematic totality, of the multiple cinematic possibilities to reach the Absolute. By studying *Out 1* in the light of the myths of Icarus and Prometheus, we come to the conclusion that all references, all words and image associations, are emptied of any ulterior motive, of any machination from the part of the film director. Rather, the filmmaker calls for a collaborative work toward the revelation of an unconscious and rebellious energy, which finds its roots in both Icarus' will to transcendence and Prometheus' insurrectional spirit. Moreover, this present section has demonstrated that a complete analysis of *Out 1* not only requires an extensive engagement with Rivette's relation to his contemporaries but also needs to be historically developed by establishing a communication point between Greek mythology and post-1968 experimental cinema.[88]

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[87] 'Thomas: "How can I put this; I think Prometheus symbolises that which is forbidden, you see… And, we, the group, we can gather the needed energy to start moving things…"
Etienne: "Yes… But, don't you have the feeling that the group only exists on hold, in the air… with no point of impact to refer to. And that it is the visit of this young man or whatever, that brought you back on track of something? I mean… The very fact of being suspected of something creates hallucinations…"' [My translation, ZTZ]. See *Out 1: Noli me tangere*, DVD, episode 6, directed by Jacques Rivette (1971; Carlotta films, 2015)

[88] *Out 1: Noli me tangere* is, on the one hand, related to Artaud by engaging with the playwright's 'followers': namely, Marc'O and Brook's theatre. On the other hand, *Out 1* is, from a cinematic perspective, closely connected to Renoir and to the anthropological work of Rouch.

In fact, the interpretation of myth, in *Out 1*, can no longer be reduced to a mimetic performance but understands the theatre stage as a space of 'passage' in which actors search for a possible incarnation, as shown through the trance-like states generated by the rehearsals. By re-invigorating the documentary aspect of *Out 1* with epic energy, as portrayed by the groups' relapse into the realm of the irrational (as well as Colin and Frédérique's obsession with supernatural and mythical conspiracies), Rivette echoed the aesthetic hybridity of *La comédie humaine*, whose historical and aesthetic importance resides in this very movement of overcoming the borders of literary genres: 'Balzac se montre sensible à l'aspect fondamental du mythe: il formule, dans une image historiquement fidèle au génie d'une époque et d'une ère géographique, l'idée qu'un peuple se fait de son rapport à l'absolu'.[89] Thomas' inability to finalise his play (or to *prométhéiser* his theatre partners) as well as the financial problems experienced by Lili's team, however, remove from the spectator any response to the enigmatic quest initiated by Colin and Frédérique. Instead, Rivette puts an end to *Out 1* through the image of a rebellious but powerless Thomas who violently rolls himself over the sand beach and cries hysterically and repetitively 'Laissez moi!' as if the spectator was witnessing the tortured Prometheus. In between tears and laughter, Thomas finally lets himself fall on his back, in a Christ-like pose. The sentiment of solitude emanating from this penultimate hand-held sequence shot can only remind us of the Oedipian cry staged by Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1968. On the Mount Etna, the father of a typically bourgeois Italian family crosses the volcanic desert naked, ending *Teorema* in a primal and catastrophic scream, accompanied by the 'Introitus' of Mozart's *Requiem* (1791). For Rivette as for Pasolini, mythology is none other but the tool of choice for measuring the collective mood and conditions of modern life.

3.4. Circulating around *La Belle Noiseuse*: space as narrative

To paraphrase Eigeldinger, the philosophy of painting Frenhofer defends in *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* posits the idea at the origin of the form.[90] The finalised artwork

[89] 'Balzac was sensitive to the fundamental aspect of myth: he formulates the idea people have about their relation to the absolute, through a historically faithful picture of genius in a specific geographical area and period' [My translation, ZTZ]. Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 77.
[90] Marc Eigeldinger, *La philosophie de l'art chez Balzac* (Genève: Slatkine reprints, 1957), 75.

therefore becomes the phenomenological incarnation of the painter's prior mental image or thought. Foreshadowing Baudelaire's art criticism who, in his *Salon de 1846*, claimed that 'un tableau doit avant tout reproduire la pensée intime de l'artiste', Balzac's definition of painting participates at the creation of the mysterious halo surrounding the genius' artistic endeavour through an emphasis on the inimitable and elusive characteristics of Frenhofer's masterpiece.[91] In fact, Frenhofer theorises his ideal artwork by establishing a list of what painting should precisely not do: 'La mission de l'art n'est pas de copier la nature mais de l'exprimer! Tu n'es pas un vil copiste, mais un poète!'[92] However knowledgeable and scrupulous an illustration of nature can be, Frenhofer advises against those painters who rely on imitation instead of seeking to penetrate the mystery of God's creation.[93] The lecture Frenhofer gives to Porbus and Poussin proves, additionally, his interest on the ontological study of painting, through recurrent references to the mythical figures of Prometheus, Pygmalion and Orpheus:

> Ta création est incomplète. Tu n'as pu souffler qu'une portion de ton âme à ton œuvre chérie. Le flambeau de Prométhée s'est éteint plus d'une fois dans tes mains, et beaucoup d'endroits de ton tableau n'ont pas été touchés par la flamme céleste.[94]

Enunciating his art theory with the same religious fervour as a profession of faith, Frenhofer expresses his artistic certainties through metaphors and lyrical declamations, which are reminiscent of the particularly liturgic vocabulary with which Rivette and his *Cahiers* fellows wrote about cinema.[95] According to Morrey, the style of Rivette's early film criticism, which shaped the notions of authorship and mise-en-scène at the core of the politique des auteurs, was characterised by a rhetorical tone that came to be 'regarded as betraying a somewhat exaggerated faith in the authority and coherence of directorial signatures'.[96] In contrast with Godard, whose ninety-five cinematic works consolidated the idea of his cinema as a scientific tool for knowledge, Rivette's oeuvre

[91] 'a painting should, above all, reproduce the artist's intimate thought' [My translation, ZTZ]. Eigeldinger, *La philosophie de l'art chez Balzac*, 75.
[92] 'The mission of art is not to copy nature but to express it! You're a poet, not some paltry copyist!' Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu et autres nouvelles*, 43.
[93] Ibid., 46.
[94] 'Your creation is unfinished. You were able to breathe only a portion of your soul into your cherished work. The torch of Prometheus has gone out more than once in your hands, and many parts of your picture have not been touched by the celestial flame.' Ibid., 42.
[95] Dudley Andrew, 'Preface', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 7.
[96] Morrey, 'The Lost Art of Keeping a Secret: Jacques Rivette's Film Criticism for *Arts*': 52.

is more limited in number but considerably extended in space and time. The consistency of Rivette's themes since the early 1960s points to the director's sustained desire to work the visual and aural matter of film through repetitive storylines (theatre rehearsals, secret societies, conspiracies, snakes and ladders, and other games of chance).[97] If theatre is Rivette's life-long predominant pattern, the representation of pictorial art becomes, in turn, the rarest motif yet the 'greatest accomplishment' of Rivette's career.[98] Indeed, it is only after thirty years of film criticism and practice that Rivette found himself ready to engage with the medium of painting, through a free adaptation (or what Thibault would more appropriately call a 'transposition') of *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* in contemporary settings.[99] Analogically, Balzac's novella suggests that Frenhofer struggled, for thirty years, to realise *La Belle Noiseuse*.[100] The difficulty of taking action or, in other words, to transpose the myth of Pygmalion to modern day, is problematized by both *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* and *La Belle Noiseuse*, in the respective realms of literature and cinema. Although these works are spatially and temporally distant from each other, I argue that both authors refused to unveil the mystery surrounding the metamorphosis of Pygmalion's statue, by deviating the narrative from the feared but coveted object: the finished masterpiece.

To do this, Balzac starts enhancing the enigma of Frenhofer's creative act through mythical imagery; Raphael's brush is compared to the finger of God, whilst Prometheus represents the successful handover of power, of this flaming torch which enables the artist to discover the truth in painting and overcome the temptation for deathly pale imitations. Moreover, Balzac reflects on the didactic reach of this myth by accentuating the gap between man's condition and the supremacy of Greek deities. While Poussin marvels at Mabuse's *Adam*, Frenhofer evaluates his Master's painting in the following terms:

> – Il y a de la vie, dit-il, mon pauvre maître s'y est surpassé; mais il manquait encore un peu de vérité dans le fond de la toile. L'homme est bien vivant, il se lève et va venir vers nous. Mais l'air, le ciel, le vent que nous respirons, voyons et sentons, n'y sont pas. Puis il n'y a encore là qu'un

[97] Aumont et al., 'Le temps déborde. Entretien avec Jacques Rivette': 15.
[98] Marie-Anne Guérin, 'Le peintre et son modèle', *Cahiers du cinéma* 447 (September 1991): 16.
[99] Bruno Thibault, 'La transposition dans *Prénom Carmen* de Jean-Luc Godard et dans *La Belle Noiseuse* de Jacques Rivette', *The French Review* 79, 2 (December 2005): 332–342.
[100] Kear, '"Frenhofer c'est moi": Cézanne's Nudes and Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre Inconnu*': 346.

> homme! Or le seul homme qui soit immédiatement sorti des mains de Dieu, devait avoir quelque chose de divin qui manque.[101]

Likewise, during his first negotiation with Porbus (alias Balthazar) and Poussin, Rivette's Frenhofer qualifies his past attempt at fulfilling his masterpiece as a catastrophic experience; the painter categorises *La Belle Noiseuse* in the domain of the 'unfinished project', of the idea. Furthermore, Frenhofer describes the activity of painting by comparing it to nature: 'c'est comme la mer, le bruit fossile de l'univers, c'est le bruit des origines, la forêt et la mer mêlées, c'est ça la peinture'.[102] On the second day of work with his new muse, the painter calls upon the Promethean torch to get Gillette (alias Marianne) out of her carcass, to get 'le feu, le sang, la glace' out of her body, to steal it from her, and to put it on his frame.[103] As the exhaustion of Marianne becomes more evident, through the growing shadows that suggest nightfall as well as the introduction of increasingly elaborated poses, Frenhofer confesses out loud his own helplessness: 'Plus de seins, plus de ventre, plus de cuisses, plus de cul! Les tourbillons… Les galaxies… Le flux et le reflux… Les trous noirs! Le grand tohu-bohu des origines… Vous en avez entendu parlé? C'est ça que je veux de vous'.[104] Contrary to Ovid, who described the metamorphosis of Pygmalion's ivory statue in three concise verses, through the combination of religious and natural vocabulary, neither *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* nor *La Belle Noiseuse* provide a clear description or frame the completed picture, which would testify of this divine transmission of knowledge.[105] However much Frenhofer inherited from Mabuse the mastery to breathe life into forms, Michel remarks that Balzac prevents the former from communicating such a secret,

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[101] '"There is life in it", he said. "My poor master surpassed himself in this. But some part of truth is still lacking in the background. The man is alive, he stands up and is about to walk towards us. But the air, the sky, the wind we breathe, see and feel, are missing. So far there is nothing but a man there! Now, the only man who came straight from God's hands must have something divine about him – which is missing here"'. Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu et autres nouvelles*, 49–50.

[102] 'It's like the sea. It's the fossil sound of the universe. It's the sound of origins. The forest and the sea mixed together. That's what painting is' [My translation, ZTZ]. See *La Belle Noiseuse*, DVD, part one, directed by Jacques Rivette (1991; Artificial Eye, 2009).

[103] 'the blood, the fire, the ice'.

[104] 'No more breasts, no more stomach, no more thighs, no more buttocks! Whirlwinds! Galaxies, the ebb and the flow… Black holes! The original hubbub, have you never heard of it? That's what I always wanted from you!'

[105] 'Three times his altar burned in whitest fire; three times its flames leaped floating into air, Six friendly omens of her good intentions'. See Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, 279.

through the inevitable misjudgement of his artistic realisation – if not artistic failure.[106] By encircling the birth of *La Belle Noiseuse* with a narrative void, Balzac turns the readers' attention from the masterpiece itself, and focuses instead in portraying the *effects* Frenhofer's artistic enterprise produces on each character. It is precisely these incidents of life, caused by *La Belle Noiseuse*, which Rivette's film proposes to explore: 'Les personnages en passent tous par là: ils se cognent physiquement les uns aux autres, comme par accident. Ces cognements, ces collisions répétées, marquent pour chacun des personnages le point de non retour de sa relation à l'autre'.[107] In the novella, Balzac creates a tension between the more open and social space, which characterises Frenhofer's salon, and the secluded, 'off stage' room, representing the painter's atelier. In so doing, the reader is denied access to the long-awaited moment in which the painter's canvas metamorphoses into a woman: 'Le jeune homme avait la main sur la garde de sa dague et l'oreille presque collée à la porte. Tous deux, dans l'ombre et debout, ressemblaient ainsi à deux conspirateurs attendant l'heure de frapper un tyran'. [108] Unlike the punctilious description of Frenhofer's euphoric and almost mystical appearance when exposing his *Belle Noiseuse* ('[ses] cheveux étaient en désordre, [son] visage était enflammé par une exaltation surnaturelle'), the highly prized object is vaguely depicted as 'des couleurs confusément amassées et contenues par une multitude de lignes bizarres qui forment une muraille de peinture'.[109] Just like Balzac, Rivette refuses to give the spectator the access to a harmonious and total representation of *La Belle Noiseuse*.

Rivette furtively unveils a 'delicious' and 'living' foot, which corresponds to Balzac's fragmented description of the finished tableau (Frenhofer praises his own masterpiece by emphasising the liveliness and roundness of a cheek and, further on, of a breast).[110] After three hours and thirty minutes, *La Belle Noiseuse*'s foot becomes the only detail the attentive spectator is allowed to grasp. In fact, Rivette kept Balzac's secret intact by concealing *La Belle Noiseuse* behind a brick wall, which echoes

[106] Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 86.
[107] 'All characters go through this: they bump into one another, as if by chance. These knockings and repeated collisions mark the point of no return in the characters' relationship to each other' [My translation, ZTZ]. Guérin, 'Le peintre et son modèle': 19.
[108] 'Poussin gripped the hilt of his dagger firmly and his ear was almost glued to the door. The two men, as they stood in the shadow, resembled two conspirators awaiting the hour to strike a tyrant down'. Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu et autres nouvelles*, 64.
[109] 'his hair was dishevelled, his face was animated by an extraordinary exaltation'/ 'confused masses of colours contained by a multitude of strange lines, forming a high wall of paint'. Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 67.

Poussin's reaction when associating the masterpiece to an unintelligible 'wall of paint' in the novella.[111] However, whereas the literary Frenhofer raised the issue of time when comparing himself to Pygmalion ('Voilà dix ans, jeune homme, que je travaille'), Rivette's interpretation of the mythical metamorphosis is concerned with the exploration of space.[112] Indeed, Rivette's adaptation centres on representing the various stages of development behind the definitive picture; this point of focus revives the sketch practices of the Renaissance, a tradition that bloomed during the first half of the nineteenth century.[113] By doubling the amount of Balzacian characters, originally composed of a group of five (*La Belle Noiseuse* included), Rivette not only multiplied narrative lines, but also heightened the spatial attributes of Le Château d'Assas, which actively participates in preserving the secret cult of art. While Rivette's camera filmed the process of pictorial composition in Frenhofer's studio, which I consider as the narrative nucleus of *La Belle Noiseuse*, the scenes developing outside the atelier/barn inform us of the state of advancement of the masterpiece, through narratives that capture the character's emotional responses to the painter's enterprise:

> C'est pourquoi sans doute l'essentiel des descriptions balzaciennes concerne moins les objets eux-mêmes que les lieux: paysages, descriptions de quartiers, de maisons, d'appartements. Plutôt que la singularité de l'objet considéré en lui-même, elles privilégient le spectacle d'une réalité complexe, organisée, magnétisée secrètement par la présence des personnages qui vont jouer leur vie, leur drame – dira-t-on dans ce 'cadre'?[114]

Similarly to Balzac's Poussin who, driven by the desire to possess the secret of painting, loses Gillette once the masterpiece is exhibited, Rivette prolongs the drama between Nicolas and Marianne as an emphasis on the transformative power of art over human relations. Far from evading the irretrievable conflict threatening the couple's relationship, Rivette restores the mystical aura surrounding Frenhofer's painting by

[111] Ibid., 66.
[112] 'I have been working for ten years, young man!' Ibid., 52.
[113] Sophie Eloy et al., *Esquisses peintes de l'époque romantique: Delacroix, Cogniet, Scheffer…* (Paris: Musée de la vie romantique, 2013),16.
[114] 'This is probably why Balzac's descriptions are essentially less concerned with objects themselves than with places: landscapes, descriptions of districts, houses, apartments. Rather than privileging the singularity of the given object, Balzac's descriptions are interested in the spectacle of a complex, organised reality. Balzac's reality is secretly magnetised by the presence of characters who will play the part of their live, of their drama – within the "frame", one might say' [My translation, ZTZ]. Michel, *Le réel et la beauté dans le roman balzacien*, 153.

accentuating the impact *La Belle Noiseuse* has on the lives of the painter, Porbus and Nicolas. By opening Balzac's cloistered atmosphere to the sunny and rural landscapes of the Languedoc-Roussillon region, Rivette aims to realise Frenhofer's aesthetic ideal, that is, to highlight the totality of space through the effect of light and shades, in order to 'walk around' *La Belle Noiseuse*.[115] Developed in relation to *L'Amour Fou* by Hélène Deschamps, but also applicable to the entirety of Rivette's filmography, the idea that his actors can only be held through movement demonstrates how the director attempts to achieve the very roundness and relief of nature – through sequence shots and, when necessary, the multiplication of camera angles.[116] The depth and space that Frenhofer reproaches Porbus for neglecting when delineating the silhouette of Marianne is precisely what Rivette is determined to amend.

Repetitively taking off their shoes and walking bare foot on the warm and rocky Mediterranean streets as well as on the cold marble of Frenhofer's property, both Marianne and Liz appear, at first glance, as mobile and unpredictable figures. Rivette introduces Frenhofer's muses with light linen dresses that emphasise the agility of their movements and contrast with the rigid physiognomy of the art dealer, Balthazar, or with the more withdrawn nature of Nicolas. As described by Laurence Giavarini, Liz can be seen as the guardian of Frenhofer's temple; she is in charge of opening the gate, showing the guests around corridors, serving fruit tart, healing the wounds of both Porbus and Nicolas, closing doors and turning the lights off.[117] In addition to representing the unfinished project of *La Belle Noiseuse*, Liz's demeanour gives her the look of a Vestal virgin whose life has been devoted to Frenhofer's artistic aspirations. In contrast with the 'delicious' and 'living' foot of what later becomes Frenhofer's unknown masterpiece, Liz incidentally leaves her footprint on one of the painter's nude sketches of Marianne, the new model. This trace not only implies the replacement of Liz by Marianne, who renewed Frenhofer's lost inspiration, but also elevates, symbolically, Frenhofer's artistic creation to a question of life and death. By covering an old portrait of Liz by Marianne's naked body, Frenhofer signs the death of his artistic collaboration with the former. As Liz confronts Frenhofer in the bedroom, later on, the spectator learns that the painter failed to achieve his *Belle Noiseuse* ten years ago, despite spending everlasting nights working on his idea. The cruelty of art, which shamelessly

[115] 'divine painter of the universe'/'To walk around her' [My translation, ZTZ]. Balzac*, Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu et autres nouvelles*, 41–52.
[116] Deschamps, *Jacques Rivette: théâtre, amour, cinéma*, 26.
[117] Laurence Giavarini, 'Liz à la trace', *Cahiers du cinéma* 447 (September 1991): 20.

destroys the face of the loved one and substitutes it for buttocks, also affects Marianne, whose love is sacrificed for Nicolas' personal glory. Similarly to Liz, Marianne's fate depends of the eye of the painter, who makes of his model his prey. Fleeting beauty, the character of Marianne arouses the painter's creative imagination, just like Baudelaire described his 'Passer-by':

> Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
> Moi je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
> Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
> La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.
> Un éclair… Puis la nuit! – Fugitive beauté
> Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
> Ne te verrais-je plus que dans l'éternité?[118]

Extraneous to the painter's family and friends circle, Marianne's attitude is more precipitate; the abruptness of her movements when being approached by Frenhofer or Liz can be associated with a self-defence mechanism. Untameable, Marianne becomes a natural force who captivates the artist's eye. Unlike the fixedness of Pygmalion's ivory statue, Marianne is presented as this passing stranger whose impending departure from Frenhofer's estate intensifies the painter's desire to possess her, by abducting her soul and immortalising it on the canvas. In turn, Liz is confined to Frenhofer's property and walks like an injured bird, hence revealing the consequences of domestication. Indeed, the supplementary plot Rivette builds around the character of Frenhofer's wife, participates to the filmmaker's allegory of hunting and thereby death. In the highest tower of the castle, the spectator discovers Liz's taxidermist skills; the way in which she hangs stuffed birds upside down reminds Balthazar of Jean-Baptiste Oudry's naturalistic series of dead animal paintings. While Frenhofer works on extracting the truth from the living material, i.e. Marianne's body, Liz's activity aims to preserve and embellish death by embalming lifeless birds.[119] The art of taxidermy therefore serves as a metaphor on the dangers artists face when measuring their work to nature: either the painter simulates life through crude and false lines, as commented by Frenhofer when improving Porbus' painting in Balzac's text, or he devotes his time and energy to expressing the overflowing fullness of life, should the artist die in the attempt. The

[118] Charles Baudelaire, 'À une passante', in *Les fleurs du mal* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961), 103–104.
[119] Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 335–336.

power of Frenhofer's artistic ideal is such that the notion of sacrificial ritual haunts the castle.

As suggested by Dosi, references to alchemist and religious practices, in *La Belle Noiseuse*, reflect the magical aspect of Frenhofer's creative process. For example, Liz asks Balthazar about the dangers of using arsenic soap as an insecticide for her taxidermy activities when waiting for Frenhofer in the garden.[120] Liz's question not only revives Balzac's interest for the alchemist tradition, as developed earlier, but also establishes a link between Frenhofer's wife and Porbus, who appears as a chemist and collector. The arrival of Balthazar Porbus at the hostel where Nicolas and Marianne reside is in fact described, by the latter's voice-over, as follows: 'Above all, Porbus is a chemist. A simple formula can sometimes bring much money. That's a way to start collecting houses, women, paintings. Yes. It's going to be about paintings.' Besides being characterised as a mediator between the two separate worlds of Frenhofer and Nicolas, Balthazar instigates the pact dictating the exchange of Marianne for La Belle Noiseuse. Framed in a medium wide shot in the atelier, the three men (Nicolas, Frenhofer and Porbus) sit around a wood table, drinking wine. While the camera slowly retreats in a travelling shot, Porbus suggests Frenhofer to paint Nicolas' partner, and imperiously concludes: 'C'est elle!' Noting doubts on the face of Nicolas, Porbus stands up from his chair, pours more wine in the young man's glass and moves away, towards the back of the studio, in order to let the two painters deliberate. Represented as an opportunist who, in Liz's words, 'picks up the pieces when it's all over', Balthazar collects paintings while the former collects stuffed protected species. Discarded by both her husband and Porbus, Liz expresses isolation and abandonment by recounting to her young assistant, Magali, her first voodoo experience. Whilst attaching a white bird to a perch, Liz tells the young girl how she created a small clay effigy of her first love, glued a piece of her lover's hair on it and started inserting needles on the figurine until reaching the count of thirty three. When Liz concludes her story by suggesting that the boy died at the age of Jesus Christ, Rivette's medium shot starts to dolly out and, at the very moment the bells start ringing, pans to the right, hence revealing a church tower inlayed into the Southern landscape. This sequence shot carries on with long scenes of Marianne posing naked in the darkened studio. Lasting little more than eight minutes,

[120] Following Liz and Balthazar's conversation, Frenhofer appears for the first time holding a dead rabbit. This can be interpreted as a reference to Jean Renoir and his famous rabbit-hunting scene in *La règle du jeu* (1939).

this session of poses shows Frenhofer twisting Marianne's body in long and tortuous positions which convey to the spectator a sense of fatigue and discomfort, to paraphrase Jean Roy.[121] The transition from Liz's voodoo story to Marianne's silent suffering is not without significance. The last pose Frenhofer imposes on his model involves her sitting against a bench seat, her arms stretched along the headrests, as if offering herself to a sacrificial rite. As developed by Morrey and Smith, the theme of Marianne's skin is representative of the frontier between visible surface and invisible depth. Frenhofer's painting activity is not so different from Liz's voodoo practices. The painter models Marianne's body to seek for the secret of incarnation **(fig. 3.4.)**. In fact, to penetrate the metaphysical essence of the universe, Frenhofer can only return to the surface, 'by endlessly staring at, and sketching Marianne's body.'[122]

In *La Belle Noiseuse*, the incarnation phenomenon differs, to a certain extent, from the one sought in the theatre groups in *Out 1*. In the former, Rivette tackles the theme of the metamorphosis phenomenon by involving Marianne in an intimate and active collaboration with Frenhofer. In the latter case, Rivette stimulates the metamorphosis through a collective emotional experience (closely linked to the notion of trance) that seeks to establish contact with the unconscious. Either way, Rivette remains loyal to the representation of art as a mode of rebellion, confrontation and, ultimately, dialogue between nature and culture. This final section explores how *La Belle Noiseuse* proposes to defy the traditional power relation between painter and muse, by ending Frenhofer and Marianne's face-to-face in a draw.

3.5. Cinema and painting: the politics of the gaze

As demonstrated through *Out 1*, theatre captures the crossbreed nature of cinema through the creation of fiction and non-fiction dialectics. The confrontation of cinema with painting poses, in turn, a different challenge. Bazin suggested that the difficulty directors face when dealing with painters comes from the profoundly antagonistic nature of both media. The sequence film progresses according to a geographical and therefore horizontal pace, whereas the pictorial frame detaches itself from temporal

[121] Jean Roy, 'Rivette au tableau d'honneur', *L'Humanité* (May 1991), Accessed May 7, 2015, http://www.humanite.fr/node/22102
[122] Morrey and Smith, *Jacques Rivette*, 219.

reality and only creates effects of time through the dynamics of its plastic composition.[123] To prevent the cinematic frame from distorting the experience of painting by, for instance, fragmenting the creative gesture in favour of narrative logic, Rivette undertook a documentary work in collaboration with modern figurative painter Bernard Dufour. Indeed, Frenhofer's atelier is constituted of Dufour's old paintings, made during the 1960s, as well as more recent works which helped Rivette contextualise the artist's career and private life. In parallel with the shooting in which Dufour 'lends' his hand to Michel Piccoli and draws the first sketches of Marianne in one single shot, the painter is also confined to the 'atelier off'. This particular office is none other than the fictional bedroom of Frenhofer in Château d'Assas, which saw the creation of several portraits and nude paintings of both Jane Birkin/Liz and Emmanuelle Béart/Marianne:

> Le 21 mai Rivette et Piccoli viennent au Pradié, dans l'Aveyron, m'observer, voir l'atelier. (Cet atelier sera le 27 juin intégralement déménagé et constituera l'atelier de Frenhofer à Assas, dans une immense grange, reflet de la mienne: j'y serai chez et je n'y serai pas chez moi). Ils me posent des questions sur mon travail, sur ma vie de peintre, mon emploi du temps, les modèles nues. Le jeu du Piccoli-peintre vient de mes réponses et de certaines mises en garde.[124]

More than a shooting, the project of *La Belle Noiseuse* soon became a site for research, in which the character of Frenhofer is enriched by Bernard Dufour's personal story. In the absence of a second camera, Rivette asked a photographer to capture Dufour's slightest activity – when the latter was not requested on the film set. Dufour's creative methods interestingly echo Frenhofer's philosophy of painting; his works belong to the new figurative tradition whose aesthetics overthrew the breach between abstraction and figuration. As regards Frenhofer, his aesthetic ideals aim at an 'absolute painting', which is defined by Eigeldinger as 'un mode de connaissance qui recherche la fusion

[123] André Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', in *What is Cinema, Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 165.

[124] 'On May 21st, Rivette and Piccoli come to observe me at Pradié, in my atelier, located in the Aveyron. (On June 27th, this atelier will be integrally moved to Assas and become Frenhofer's studio, in an immense barn, similar to mine: I will feel at home and as a foreigner all at once). They ask me questions about my work, my life as a painter, my timetable, and the nude models. Piccoli's performance comes from the answers and warnings I gave them' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Bernard Dufour, 'Questions au peintre', *Cahiers du cinéma* 447 (September 1991): 26.

de la cause et de l'effet'.[125] Inspired by the sorcerers of the ancient Orient who practiced the science of magism, Frenhofer envisions painting as the only way to reach complete knowledge of the principles ruling the universe. If wizardry aims to discover the enigma of cosmos, Frenhofer's paintings intend to express the beauty of God's creation. In order to express pure beauty, Balzac offers no other alternative than intellectual mediation. For this reason, the process of painting surrounding *La Belle Noiseuse* begins with the idea and ends up in a result very close to abstraction. Frenhofer's excessive emphasis on the theoretical aspect of what painting should do gives way, nonetheless, to infinite doubts and uncertainties at the time of creative action. The abundance of science is precisely what jeopardises Frenhofer's capacity to paint. Balzac describes his masterpiece as a chaos of colours and lines, which blurs the borders between the conceptual and the representational, and foreshadowes, as such, the aesthetic tendencies of the works of Dufour, but also Jean Fautrier, Willem de Kooning and Francis Bacon.

Frenhofer's desire for synthesis is indeed present in Dufour's sketches, which he creates with different painting utensils: the sharp, dry and precise lines of the traditional dip pen contrast with the thick wet traces left by the large brush. This last technique places great importance to contingency since the surface of the sketch is partially soaked in the moistened paint. Rivette's obstinate emphasis on framing the diverse phases that precede the completion of La Belle Noiseuse could be read as a hint at Balzac's hard work when writing *La comédie humaine*. As a matter of fact, Rivette gave importance to the framing of the painter's hand, which becomes the very incarnation of the artist's thought. The hand, to quote Balzac, 'trahit tout à la fois les secrets du corps et ceux de la pensée'.[126] In *Physiologie du mariage* (1829), Balzac dedicates an entire page to the hand, which he considers as the artist's main working instrument. Its description alternates between moments of physiological observations and allegorical images. The hand is conceived as the passage between theorisation and realisation: it is an act of synthesis. To master the art of painting, the artist needs, therefore, to maintain and persevere with his working efforts, as demonstrated through the unedited framing of real-time drawings and paintings in Rivette's four-hour long film. Additionally, the

[125] 'a mode of knowledge which seeks the fusion between cause and effect' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Eigeldinder, *La philosophie de l'art chez Balzac*, 59–60.
[126] 'betrays the secrets of both body and mind'[My translation, ZTZ]. Honoré de Balzac, *Physiologie du mariage ou Méditations de philosophie éclectique sur le bonheur et le malheur conjugal* (Paris: Charpentier, 1847), 214.

Balzacian artist requires a space outside social, political, sentimental and leisure activities.[127] Unlike Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le mystère Picasso* (1956), which shields Picasso from any dramatic setting that is not the moment of artistic creation, *La Belle Noiseuse* emphasises the division between Frenhofer's atelier and the rest of the property. Contrary to the studio, which in Marianne's words 'looks like a Church', Le Château d'Assas is dominated by nature. The castle is made up of French windows which open on to the garden and give great luminosity. The contrast between the brightness of the French Southern environment, reminiscent of Paul Cézanne's landscapes, and the more obscure and private space of creation, reinforces the romantic association of the artist with a marginalised and solitary character.[128] In fact, in *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, Balzac compares Frenhofer with the legendary figure of Rembrandt: 'Vous eussiez dit une toile de Rembrandt marchant silencieusement et sans cadre dans la noire atmosphère que s'est approprié ce grand peintre'.[129] Allusions to Rembrandt were, in the first half of the nineteenth century, far from being an uncommon literary instance. As developed by Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau, the nineteenth century not only rehabilitated the figure of Rembrandt through extensive research, critical debates and European exhibitions, but also erected the Dutch painter as subject of reference, inspiration, allegory and illustration in the fields of German philosophy (Hegel, Karl Rosenkranz), popular theatre (the vaudeville *Rembrandt ou la vente après décès* [1801], Josh and Dumur's drama *Rembrandt: Drame en cinq actes et neuf tableaux* [1896]), French literature (Aloysius Bertrand, Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, George Sand, Théophile Thoré-Burger, Émile Zola) and history of art (les frères Goncourt).[130] Although Rembrandt embodied the myth of the genius painter through the constant association of his working methods with a 'kind of Magic',[131] the aura of mystery surrounding the Master of chiaroscuro was nonetheless stained, since the eighteenth century, with rumours on his venal, heartless and vain nature.[132] In *La Belle Noiseuse*, the role of Michel Piccoli restores the dialectic between the narcissistic, uncompassionate husband

[127] Eigeldinger, *La philosophie de l'art chez Balzac*, 52.
[128] To learn about the relation between the Balzacian character Frenhofer and the life and work of Paul Cézanne see Kear, '"Frenhofer c'est moi": Cézanne's Nudes and Balzac's *Le Chef-d'oeuvre Inconnu*': 345–360.
[129] 'a Rembrandt walking slowly, outside its frame, in the dark atmosphere eternally associated with that great painter'. Balzac, *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, 39–40.
[130] Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau, *Rembrandt, l'artiste au fil des textes. Rembrandt dans la littérature et philosophie européenne depuis 1669* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 108–119.
[131] Chalard-Fillaudeau, *Rembrandt, l'artiste au fil des textes,* 40–41.
[132] Ibid., 288–289.

and the passionate yet humble painter, who bows before the supremacy of nature. To accentuate this personality trait, Rivette not only develops and extends Frenhofer's family and sentimental background through the introduction of Liz, but also focuses on representing the emotional tension between the figures of painter and model. Again, contrarily to Clouzot, who represents Picasso's working methods through the binary relation between painter and canvas, *La Belle Noiseuse* involves the representation of the triangle relationship that unites the traditionally dominant figure of the painter, the blank canvas, and the source of inspiration, the muse.

Writers and art critics like Rebecca West and Michel Leiris conceptualised the muse as, on the one hand, the personification of life, beauty and nature, and, on the other hand, as this 'other' defiant entity that the painter must face and tame. The latter has in turn been compared with the mythical image of the centaur, the minotaure and with the symbol of the conquering torero.[133] In his representations of *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, Picasso centred on imagining and illustrating the face-to-face encounter between Frenhofer and Gilette by reflecting on the distance and contact point which separates (and eventually unites) the painter with the model. The theme of nudity (as expressed by Cézanne and, later on, Picasso in homage to Balzac's novella), poses nonetheless another sort of problem when meeting the voyeuristic character of narrative cinema. By its very photographic mechanism, cinema reinforces the impression of reality and stimulates emotional identification through the analogical connection between camera angle and spectatorial gaze.[134] As Rivette observed in his renowned critique of Gillo Pontecorvo's *Kapò* (1960), filmmakers are ethically responsible for every viewing angle they select and subsequently screen. The cinematic frame not only conveys the author's political position, but also becomes object of judgment on the part of the spectator.[135] In this sense, the cinematic representation of Frenhofer's painting process presents two major risks: the filmmaker could either falsify the painter's mechanism of creativity in order to conform to narrative unity and time restrictions, or he could choose to represent Marianne as a passive sexual object. Both concerns, as we shall see, are matters of morality.

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[133] Murielle Gagnebin, *L'irreprésentable ou les silences de l'oeuvre* (Paris: Puf Écriture, 1984), 113–114.
[134] Jan Campbell, *Film and Cinema Spectatorship: Melodrama and Mimesis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 180.
[135] Jacques Rivette, 'De l'abjection', *Cahiers du cinéma* 120 (June 1961): 54.

Rivette's camera submits to a 'moral' distance which prevents any trickery from intruding the creative act and thereby remains faithful to Bazin. Like *Le mystère Picasso*, the shooting schedule of *La Belle Noiseuse* follows a chronological order:

> On a tourné d'abord quinze jours, en gros, ce qui correspond à la première heure du film, le prologue, pour faire connaissance les uns avec les autres. Ensuite, on est entrés dans l'atelier où on a tourné chronologiquement tout ce qui s'y passe, pour avoir cette progression des dessins, des rapports Frenhofer/Marianne, des rapports de Michel tant avec Bernard qu'avec Emmanuelle.[136]

The alternation of scenes in which Piccoli 'performs' as a painter and the documentary nature of Dufour's hand coming into action adds a supplementary spatial dimension to the film, which is none other than that of the painting itself. Rivette's camera immerses the spectator in the very own life of the painting by penetrating the virginal unmarked frame **(fig. 3.5.)**. To paraphrase Bazin's critique of *Le mystère Picasso*: Dufour's drawings 'exist in time, have their own duration, their own life and sometimes – as shown in the end of the film – their own death'.[137] However, Clouzot decided to accompany Picasso's creative act with what Bazin considered as a poorly chosen musical soundtrack, whereas Rivette offers the spectator a rich sensory experience through the amplification of direct sound, such as the nib scratching across the sketchbook, the determined and stringent noise of the fusain on the thick paper, and the clinking of the paintbrush on contact with water. As Morrey and Smith suggested, Rivette's use of sound adds a depth of field to the visual image and, consequently, allows the spectator 'to identify at once both with Marianne's being-a-body and with Frenhofer's sensual appropriation of this body for his art.'[138] In fact, the noise of the nib and the charcoal over the paper acts as the binding element between the shot of Dufour's hand and the reverse shot of Emmanuelle Béart's body. By composing *La Belle Noiseuse* of nude scenes that occupy nearly half of the screening time, Rivette

[136] 'It began with fifteen days of shooting, which correspond, roughly, to the first hour of the film, the prologue, which also allowed the cast to know each other. Then, we entered the atelier and we shot everything that was happening chronologically so as to have a real progression of the drawings, of the relationship between Frenhofer and Marianne and Michel's relation with both Bernard and Emmanuelle'[My translation, ZTZ]. Jacques Rivette, 'Conférence de presse (extraits): Cannes 1991', *Cahiers du cinéma* 445 (June 1991): 34.
[137] André Bazin, 'Un film bergsonien: *Le mystère Picasso*', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 195–196.
[138] Morrey and Smith, *Jacques Rivette*, 220.

succeeds in liberating Béart's body from erotic fascination and turns Frenhofer's painting scenes into an opportunity to educate the spectator's gaze. To this end, Rivette refuses to fragment Marianne's body and builds, instead, a circular path for the camera, which slowly rotates around the model's body and captures her through different angles. Moreover, Rivette's camera movements preserve the same focal length, which place Marianne into perspective and prevent flatness and 'cut out' impressions (the semi close-ups of Béart's face are an exception to the rule). Contrary to the iconic status of women in Hollywood mainstream cinema, whose visual presence, according to Laura Mulvey, 'freezes the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation', Rivette structures the film around a main controlling figure who is none other than Marianne/Gillette. [139]

Marianne is in charge of framing the narrative through opening and ending voice-overs. It is Marianne, indeed, who disrupts Frenhofer and Liz's daily life by gaining entry to their kitchen earlier than scheduled. As a result, Marianne progressively takes control of Frenhofer's agenda and draggs him out of his comfort zone. When Frenhofer is about to give up, on the second day, Marianne tells him 'No. There's me. I count too'.[140] In Balzac's novella, Gillette is not entitled to comment on Frenhofer's painting. At this turning point, Rivette's film consolidates the idea (already suggested in the first scene) that *La Belle Noiseuse* is not all about Frenhofer and, by extension, Bernard Dufour. This moment of rebellion in which Marianne regains control over her own body is all the more significant since Rivette, according to Béart, did not expect this turn of events.[141]

In the mid-1970s, journalist Jean Delmas wrote that the interest of *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* (1974) resided in the director's desire to erect his female protagonists to the rank of subjects.[142] Contrary to more popular films like *Emmanuelle* (1974) or *Les valseuses* (1974), whose female characters conform to the normative representation of women as sexual objects, an important part of Rivettian heroines do not embody male fantasy. Rather, Guy Austin suggested that it is precisely Céline and

[139] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Leo Baudry and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 713–714.
[140] *La Belle Noiseuse*, DVD, part two, directed by Jacques Rivette (1991; Artificial Eye, 2009)
[141] Antoine de Baecque, 'Entretien avec Emmanuelle Beart', *Cahiers du cinéma* 447 (September 1991): 22.
[142] He also stated that *Céline et Julie* was, certainly, 'the most authentically surrealist film ever made' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Jean Delmas, '*Céline et Julie vont en bateau* un film de Jacques Rivette', *Jeune cinéma* 80 (July–August 1974), Accessed October 9, 2015, http://www.iletaitunefoislecinema.com/critique/2033/celine-et-julie-vont-en-bateau

Julie's 'own fantasies which dynamise and direct the film they inhabit'.[143] The narrative was indeed co-created between Rivette, the leading female protagonists (Berto, Dominique Labourier, Marie-France Pisier) and the scriptwriter, Eduardo Gregorio. Ogier, another important character of both *Céline et Julie* and *Duelle*, collaborated many times with Rivette, notably in *Le pont du nord* and *La bande des quatre* (1989). These later films also focused on the trajectories of different groups of women trying to uncover a secret, which, in each case, is held by an indefinable and threatening man. Hence, Rivette approached the theme of the female quest from various angles: from the perspective of theatre communities, of secret conspiracies, playful fantasies and memory, literary adaptations, historical dramas, and so on. The Rivettian women are nonetheless characterised by their complexity and are hardly comparable. Rivette's remarkable capacity to play with different genres results in characters that evolve in diametrically opposed universes. Whereas the personality traits of the Rohmerian woman can easily be defined through terms like idealistic, innocent, curious, stubborn and sometimes talkative, a Rivettian woman is very difficult to read. Despite the distance that separates characters like Haydée in *La collectionneuse* (1967) and the Marquise in *Die Marquise von O…* (1976), both protagonists still possess a much-fantasised body, bearer of this penetrable depth much sought by the male gaze. Both films are indeed centred on the male characters' attempt to decipher what lies beneath the coveted yet mysterious woman's body, regardless of Giulietta's literary dimension or Haydée's modern qualities. In *La Belle Noiseuse*, the role of Marianne reconnects, in the first two hours of the film, with the muse's mythologised body: the statue in Ovid and the model in Balzac enclose within themselves a hidden secret. However, while Frenhofer still hopes to tear Marianne away from her own body in the first part of the film, the other half enhances the underlying power conflict between male and female characters. This means that, on the one hand, Rivette shaped Frenhofer's personality according to the self-obsessed and cruel nature of his literary surrogate, as shown through the violence exerted against Marianne: 'We'll see what's left of you… when you forget everything. Don't worry, you'll get it back, if you still want it'. On the other hand, the figure of Marianne corresponds to Phil Powrie's analysis of Rivette's *Jeanne la Pucelle* (1994): 'Bonnaire's performance oscillates between woman-as-resistance to

[143] Guy Austin, *Contemporary French Cinema: an Introduction. Second edition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 73–74.

enigma (her "human-ness", her calculated "ordinariness"), and woman-as-enigma ("what does the woman want?")'.[144]

In fact, Rivette and Béart built the character of Marianne in accordance with two very distinct, if not opposed, ways of acting. First, the film opens light-heartedly on a scene of *marivaudage* – a term which designates 'un type de dialogue amoureux raffiné et volontairement artificiel dont les comédies de Marivaux offrent le modèle'.[145] This 'artificial' (or anti-naturalistic) way of acting allows Marianne to conceal her emotions under a theatrical performance, which, interestingly, only occurs in public spaces or in large group events (the exposition and closing scenes). Second, Rivette gives the opportunity to Béart to adjust Marianne's character according to her own emotional experience: 'Au bout d'un moment l'activité passe du côté du modèle. Au départ Jacques ne le voyait pas tout à fait comme ça, mais j'ai éprouvé une telle violence devant cet état d'abandon du modèle que je me suis instinctivement révoltée'.[146] In the private space of the studio, Béart offers a more intimate, biographical approach to Marianne, whose personality moves from moments of seriousness and intense commitment, to phases which vary between anger, sarcasm, seriousness and laughter **(fig. 3.6.)**. The question whether Marianne takes *La Belle Noiseuse* seriously remains, in this sense, unresolved. When meeting Nicolas after her first day of work with Frenhofer, Marianne comments ironically: 'I've never seen that. This guy's a magician. He goes straight to the point. What happened to me is unique'. Similarly, Marianne's burst of laughter (during day two) alternates between tears of fatigue and desire to disconnect from the intensity of Frenhofer's artistic experience.

Additionally, Marianne's conflictive personality served Rivette as a tool to disorient the spectator through the ambivalency of her status as model and artist. Far from being one-sidedly 'looked at' by the painter and the spectator, Marianne possesses the authority to return the gaze. In fact, Rivette overthrew, since the exposition scene, the passivity of Gillette by introducing Marianne with a photo camera. The rivalry between the latter and Nicolas runs throughout the narrative: when conversing with Liz

[144] Phil Powrie, 'Transtitial Woman: New Representations of Woman in Contemporary French Cinema', *L'esprit créateur* 42, 3 (Fall 2002): 89, Accessed October 9, 2015, doi: 10.1353/esp.2010.0429

[145] 'a type of refined and voluntarily artificial dialogue between lovers, in the way of Marivaux's comedies' [My translation, ZTZ]. Dosi, *Trajectoires balzaciennes dans le cinéma de Jacques Rivette*, 258.

[146] 'After a while, the activity moves to the side of the model. At the beginning, Rivette didn't see it exactly that way, but I felt such a violence when experiencing this state of abandonment that I saw the need to rebel against it' [My translation, ZTZ]. de Baecque, 'Entretien avec Emmanuelle Beart': 22.

after clearing the table, Marianne distinguishes herself from Frenhofer's wife through a strong desire to fulfil her artistic and professional career, independently from her partner. At the end of the film, Rivette assigns Béart with the final say by framing her face in a semi close-up while she rejects Nicolas' reconciliation attempt with a blunt 'No'. In contrast with Balzac, whose Gillette appears 'weeping in a corner, forgotten' once the masterpiece is achieved, Rivette associates Marianne's gaze to that of a potential artist, who is capable of aesthetic judgement: 'Je l'ai vu. Une chose froide et sèche. C'était moi'.[147] The complexity of Marianne's gaze is all the more shown in that particular moment when the model is left alone in the studio contemplating Frenhofer's drawings. Marianne's reaction, which consists in running her hand over the line of the sketched buttocks, could be attributed to either a gesture made out of boredom, or to a sign of artistic appreciation. Although Frenhofer appears in Balzac's novella as the ultimate painter (closely followed by Nicolas Poussin), Rivette turns Gillette into an artist *en devenir*.

In *La Belle Noiseuse*, Rivette recounts a new story by giving a voice to Gillette, and, therefore, chooses not to keep the title of the original novella: *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*. By focusing on the painting process, Rivette moves the role of Gillette to the foreground. In fact, upon Marianne and Nicolas' arrival to the studio, the painter mentions his concerns about meeting them; he associates the couple to a forthcoming misfortune which will eventually interrupt the stability of his relation with Liz. The character of Marianne, through her stubborn nature, embodies the disruptive quality of the word 'noise', whose entire expression 'chercher noise' designates a quarrelsome person, 'a pain in the arse' in Frenhofer/Piccoli's words.[148] More importantly, Marianne's wildness stimulates Frenhofer's expectations of La Belle Noiseuse, which should express the same intense 'sound' as the one of the forest and the sea. On the third day, Marianne tells Frenhofer a riddle: 'What is it that walks in a hollow track, never goes to sleep and never goes back in time?' Frenhofer answers 'is it you? Is it me?' hence implying they are both equally involved in the creative process. Like a river, the creation of *La Belle Noiseuse* is in fact a point of no return for both characters and their

[147] 'I saw it. A cold and dry thing. It was me' [My translation, ZTZ].
[148] Although the origin of the French word 'la noise' is uncertain due to different suggestions regarding its Latin root (*Nausea* being one of the probabilities), its signification, in old French, referred to a din, disturbance, or uproar. By the early thirteenth century, the English word 'noise' was associated with a loud outcry, clamour or shouting. See François Juste Marie Raynouard, *Lexique Roman ou Dictionnaire de la langue des Troubadours, comparée avec les autres langues de l'Europe latine*, vol. 4 (Paris: Chez Silvestre, 1842), 329.

entourage. Although Rivette hides the masterpiece from the spectator (as well as from Nicolas and Balthazar), the fulfilment of Frenhofer's painting affects each character during the process and significantly alters the reigning order in the aftermath. The return to more conventional conversations between characters and wanderings around the garden buffet hint at the superficiality of social formalities that frame our viewing experience, and act as a counterpoint to Frenhofer's totalising and boundless artistic aspirations. In contrast with Truffaut's adaptation, *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971), which refers to Balzac through images of the Rodin Museum, Rivette highlights the artificiality of bourgeois codified settings and restrictive genres. Alternatively, Rivette's reinvention of *L'histoire des Treize* and *Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* shares with Balzac the romantic mission of accounting for the totality of human nature, in its most material and mysterious forms, by believing in reality as the author's main experimentation instrument. The teachings of Bazin were, in this respect, essential in realising and enhancing cinema's potential as *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[149]

[149] Scholars have argued that *La Comédie humaine* inaugurated the totalising aesthetics of the *roman-fleuve* and announced the novelistic experiments of the late century. The impact Rivette's 'cinéma-fleuve' had on the emergence of specific art house trends (such as the long film and slow cinema) could be another valuable way to approach his largely unexplored filmic legacy. See Aude Leblond, *Poétique du Roman-Fleuve de Jean-Christophe à Maumort* (PhD diss., Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III, 2010), 100–101.

Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.2.

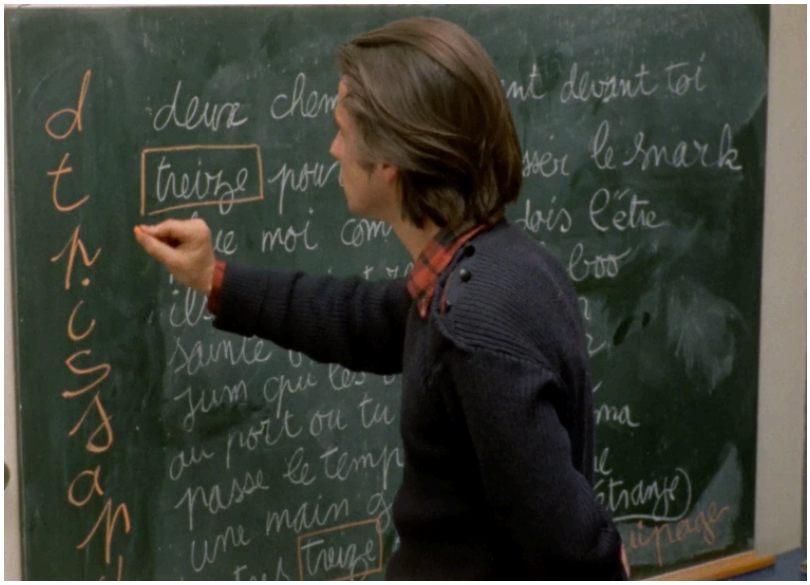

Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.5.

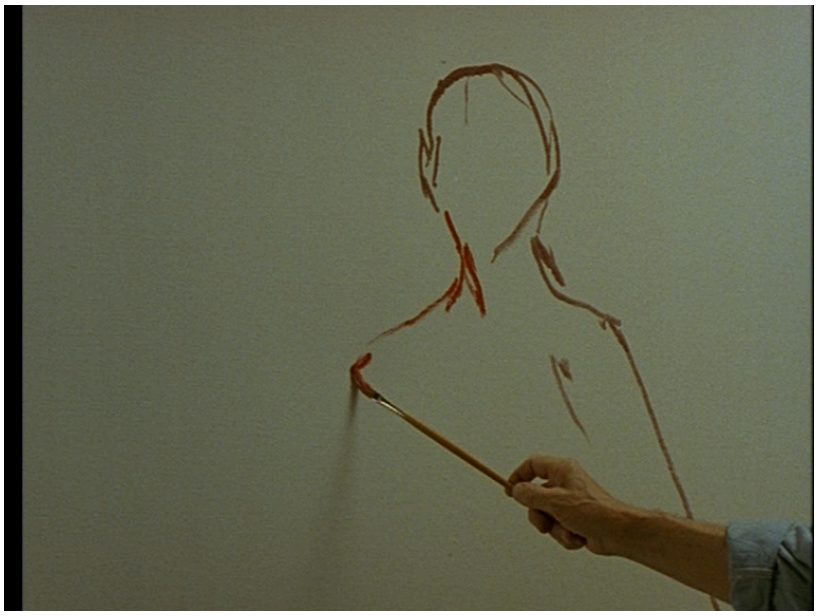

Figure 3.6.

CHAPTER FOUR

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.

– Charles Dickens[1]

4.1. Introduction

At *Les mistons*' release (1957), Jacques Rivette described François Truffaut's first cinematic work as the first episode of a future large format film, of which the notions of freedom and childhood occupy the central place.[2] The release of *Les 400 coups* (1959) confirmed Rivette's prediction. Its successful reception established Truffaut as a modern director whose autobiographical approach to the representation of French youth brought the promise of future works which, in the image of the author, would grow, develop and mature. In the course of the 1970s, Truffaut developed personal responses to issues on memory, literary heritage, education, loss and sacrifice by creating period dramas set in the nineteenth century and whose source texts belong to Jean Itard's memories on the Aveyron feral child, Henri-Pierre Roché's love triangle novels, Adèle Hugo's journal and the ghostly *Altar of the Dead* (1895).[3] In relation to Truffaut's recurring themes, many scholars have suggested that his filmic career can easily be divided into broad tendencies such as the Doinel saga, the childhood, detective and period films. This chapter, however, does not study Truffaut's approach to nineteenth-century sources as a thematic category but examines, instead, the ways in which these film adaptations reflect a broader understanding of cinema's relationship with nineteenth-century literary culture.

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1 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Nina Burgis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.
2 Jacques Rivette, 'Premier prix à la Joconde d'Henry Gruel', *Arts* 646 (November 27, 1957): 8.
3 Jean Itard, 'Mémoire sur les premiers développements de Victor de l'Aveyron (1801)', in *Les enfants sauvages, suivi de Mémoire et rapport sur Victor de l'Aveyron, par Jean Itard*, ed. Louis Malson (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1964), 125–188; Jean Itard, 'Rapport sur les nouveaux développements de Victor de l'Aveyron (1807)', in *Les enfants sauvages, suivi de Mémoire et rapport sur Victor de l'Aveyron, par Jean Itard*, ed. Louis Malson (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1964), 189– 246; Henri-Pierre Roché, *Deux anglaises et le continent* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1956); Adèle Hugo, *Le journal d'Adèle Hugo*, ed. Frances Vernor Guille, vol. 1 & 2 (Paris: Minard, 1968, 1971); Henry James, 'The Altar of the Dead', in *Ten Short Stories of Henry James*, ed. M. Swan (London: John Lehmann, 1948), 210–241.

As chapter one suggested, the auteurist discourse of *Cahiers* was, in the 1950s, indebted to the romantic belief on art as the expressive bearer of an author's inner morals and personality. Analysing Rohmer's vision of realism has nonetheless demonstrated that the politique des auteurs had a subtler relation to nineteenth-century thought; it is, indeed, one than challenges the misconceived idea of purely original, innovative and modernist aesthetic forms and techniques and strengthens, instead, cinema's hereditary attachment to the nineteenth-century realist novel. This chapter suggests that, in the light of the 1960s French authorship debates, Truffaut created a variant discourse on authorship which emphasised the intimate connection between author and spectator and thereby emulated the nineteenth-century biographical approach to literature.[4] About Honoré de Balzac's novels, Sainte-Beuve wrote: 'la personne de l'écrivain, son organisation toute entière s'engage et s'accuse elle même jusque dans ses œuvres; il ne les écrit pas seulement avec sa pure pensée, mais avec son sang et ses muscles'.[5] The inseparability of the matter and the idea was at the heart of the politique des auteurs and Truffaut reappropriated this romantic trope by creating films that, unlike Rohmer's or Rivette's, invite biographical interpretations. [6]

In the year of *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*'s release, Truffaut suggested that American critics welcomed his films in a more favourable light because they ignored or disregarded the film's extra-textual references and the director's personal context.[7] In contrast, French critics were increasingly irritated by Truffaut's customary taste for self-references (i.e., a mix of autobiographical references on his private life and visual/sonic allusions to his pantheon of literary and film authors). About *L'enfant sauvage*, Serge Daney concludes a bittersweet review by suggesting that, to analyse the film, we need to pay attention to Truffaut's role as Itard, because 'c'est toujours à lui que Truffaut revient'.[8] To understand the political implications of Truffaut's parallelism between the realist novel and cinema, this chapter will firstly examine the director's pantheist

[4] To learn about the evolution of literary and art criticism from Sainte-Beuve to Roland Barthes, see Eugen Simion, *The Return of the Author,* trans. James W. Newcomb and Lidia Vianu (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

[5] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Mes chers amis* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2006), 56─57.

[6] In this regard, Martin Lefebvre suggested that Truffaut's cinema 'demands and rewards a very singular form of experience, one based on the accumulation of personal details drawn from his life, from the films he loved, and increasingly from the universe that those films seem to have been constructing from beginning to end'. See Martin Lefebvre, 'Truffaut and his "Doubles"', in *A Companion to François Truffaut*, eds. Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 35.

[7] François Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 22.

[8] 'he always refers to himself' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Jean-Pierre Oudart and Serge Daney, 'L'Enfant Sauvage', *Cahiers du cinéma* 222 (July 1970): 31.

approach to book culture through the science-fiction case of *Fahrenheit 451* (1966). This preliminary study supports the thesis' comparative framework by discussing Godard and Truffaut's opposed approaches to the concepts of language, memory and literature. Analysing the modernist style of *Alphaville* (1965) and *Fahrenheit 451* will bring forth the political differences between the two filmmakers and explain the aesthetic contradictions of Truffaut's unchallenging and traditional discourse on western knowledge and culture.

To further examine Truffaut's reverence for the nineteenth-century bourgeois world-view and social order, I will secondly draw some analogies between the narrative workings of *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971) and the narrative methods of the realist and naturalist novels. Moreover, considerations on the antagonistic receptions of *Jules et Jim* and *Les deux anglaises* will demonstrate that critics regarded Truffaut's anti-documentary bias and growing taste for period drama as a manifestation of an anachronistic vision of cinema and, as such, political irrelevance in the Marxist period of *Cahiers du cinéma*. Truffaut's nostalgic references to the 'classical way' films were made will be thirdly explored through *L'enfant sauvage* (1970), a trendy nineteenth-century *fait divers*. Similar to *Fahrenheit 451*, Truffaut chose a theme with great contemporary significance and turned it into an old-fashioned, universal and self-referential discourse on the notions of solitude, rebellion and education. Some indications on Truffaut's biographical background will shed light on the paternalistic dimension of his 1970s films and subsequent animosity between the director and Godard.

The understanding of the relationship of cinema with the notion of sacrifice, as developed in the politique des auteurs era, will finally clarify Truffaut's aesthetic choices in *L'histoire d'Adèle H*. (1975) and *La chambre verte* (1978). Despite the historical dimension of *L'histoire d'Adèle H*., the minimalistic allusions to nineteenth-century history demonstrate Truffaut's wider theoretical principle, that is, the privileging of individual and fictional storylines over the documentation of reality: 'On discute souvent à propos de ce que doit être le contenu d'un film, doit-il s'en tenir au divertissement ou informer le public sur les grands problèmes sociaux du moment, et je fuis ces discussions comme la peste'.[9] In fact, these two period films develop, in the

[9] 'People usually talk about what a film should contain, should it only entertain or should it inform the public about the social problems of the moment? I always avoid these discussions like the plague' [My translation, ZTZ]. François Truffaut, *Le plaisir des yeux* (Malesherbes: Champs arts, 2008), 271.

most evident way, Truffaut's life-long idea of cinema as a subjective space of worship and self-inscription: Adèle Hugo and Julien Davenne's obsessions with memory and loyalty mirror Truffaut's own preoccupations. It is therefore through the honouring of nineteenth-century forgotten faces and stories that Truffaut changed his status of modern filmmaker for self-appointed guardian of western cultural heritage.

4.2. The sacrosanct community of books: the case of *Fahrenheit 451*

Prior to analysing the means with which Truffaut extolled the virtues of nineteenth-century literary culture and, subsequently, of a biographical type of authorship, it is important to lay out the themes and concerns that were expressed, in the early and mid-1960s, by three other Nouvelle Vague directors. A brief sketch of Chris Marker, Alain Resnais and Godard's way of representing memory and language through science-fiction will clarify the ways in which Truffaut's vision of literature in *Fahrenheit 451* clashes with the aesthetic expectations instigated by Nouvelle Vague science fiction films.

In the 1960s, science fiction became a privileged genre for Nouvelle Vague directors to comment on the relationship of cinema with notions of memory and politics.[10] As a matter of fact, Marker, Resnais and Godard's science fiction films indirectly questioned the historical discourse of classical cinema through alternative film aesthetics that intensified post-war modern society's feelings of uncertainty, disbelief and trauma towards history. In Marker's *La jetée* (1962) and Resnais' *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968), both directors established a dialogue between the futuristic and surrealistic present and the subjective and evasive past that their characters sought to remember through a time-travel experience. The subjective space of memory is, in the case of Marker's main character, intertwined and blurred with present space through multiple temporalities (past, present and future), which do not follow any objective historical chronology but, as suggested by Patrick Ffrench, restore the concept of

[10] According to Keith M. Johnston, these three films, along with Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), contributed to the intellectualisation of science fiction through hybrid aesthetics which borrowed sci-fi tropes (totalitarian futuristic societies, the computer dictatorship, the mad scientists) to articulate a wider political commentary on cinema. See Keith M. Johnston, *Science Fiction Film: A Critical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 86–87.

Proustian reminiscence.[11] In fact, Marker's experimental film mirrors the cerebral mechanisms of involuntary memory through a discontinuous and fragmented photo-montage. Similarly, memory (as opposed to the linear causality of the recollection-image) is, according to Gilles Deleuze, the explicit theme that binds together the large majority of Resnais' cinematic works:

> For memory is clearly no longer the faculty of having recollections: it is the membrane which, in the most varied ways (continuity, but also discontinuity, envelopment, etc.), makes sheets of past and layers of reality correspond, the first emanating from an inside which is always already there, the second arriving from an outside always to come, the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter.[12]

In *Je t'aime, je t'aime*, Resnais explores the memory of a depressive individual by joining together fragmentary scenes from the past with present time narrative via the mediation of a time machine. In both films, scenes (and in the case of Marker, photographs) representing memory appear as fragmentary, detached and autonomous from present temporality. Past and future images follow each other without any causal linkage and break with the viewer's coherent sense of space and time through multiple narrative structures and disruptive editing techniques.

As regards Godard's incursion into science fiction, it is the very experience of memory that is forbidden to the inhabitant of Alphaville. In contrast with Marker and Resnais, Godard creates a universe in which past and present cease to exist, where automata replace human emotions. The spiritual impoverishment Godard's characters experience in the dystopian city of Alphaville, which is ruled by the artificial intelligence of computer Alpha 60, is expressed through a language that has become purely functional. Upon the film's release, Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier suggested that, by representing the negation of poetry, Godard's science fiction film embodied a poetic enterprise: 'Si bien que ce monde de mutants, au lieu de préfigurer la mort future d'une société actuelle, arrache au contraire cette société à sa mort présente, en la lançant

11 Patrick Ffrench, 'The Immanent Ethnography of Chris Marker, Reader of Proust', *Film Studies* 6 (Summer 2005): 88.
12 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 207.

dans un espace imaginaire qui renoue avec un univers oublié'.[13] Following this logic, Godard reconnects with the past, with the founding myths of humanity, through the creation of a technocratic dictatorship whose banning of emotions has the effect of intensifying the power of language. The robotic dimension of Godard's characters produces, in this regard, poetic effects of repetition: 'Pendant que la radio débitait son programme de circulation, Natasha me parlait de sa voix de joli Sphinx. De joli Sphinx. De joli Sphinx. De joli Sphinx. De joli Sphinx'.[14] Science fiction, as a genre which is concerned with time-travel and disaster scenarii, gave Godard the perfect opportunity to ask the spectator: What is the function of language, in a world emptied of feelings? How is poetry to be sought? In *Alphaville*, Godard tells a story that deviates from to the narrative expectations of the genre: fragmented references to contemporary history and art, to modern and mythical literature are muddled in unison through image associations and the hoarse, if not guttural, voice-over of the Alpha machine. Such caution given to the physicality of sound interestingly coincides with Roland Barthes' vision of cinema, which is the only medium able to rehabilitate the ancient art of elocution:

> Il suffit en effet que le cinéma prenne de *très près* le son de la parole (c'est en somme la définition généralisée du 'grain' de l'écriture) et fasse entendre dans leur matérialité, dans leur sensualité, le souffle, la rocaille, la pulpe des lèvres, toute une présence du museau humain […], pour qu'il réussisse à déporter le signifié très loin et à jeter, pour ainsi dire, le corps anonyme de l'acteur dans mon oreille: ça granule, ça grésille, ça caresse, ça rape, ça coupe: ça jouit.[15]

It is indeed no accident that Alphaville's school institution is named 'Institut des sémantiques générales' and functions, in Alain Bergala's terms, as a 'lecture without lecturer'.[16] Godard's critique of capitalist modernisation and its subsequent devaluation of human life through the prophetic dimension of *Alphaville* shares with *La jetée* and *Je*

[13] 'Instead of announcing the future collapse of the present world, this world of mutants wrings death out of society by creating an imaginary space that reconnects with a forgotten universe' [My translation, ZTZ]. Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, 'La perte du langage', *Esprit* 33, 9 (September 1965): 316.
[14] *Alphaville*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1965; Optimum Home releasing, 2008).
[15] 'Cinema captures the sound of speech close-up and makes us hear in their materiality, their sensuality, the breath, the gutturals, the fleshiness of the lips, a whole presence of the human muzzle […], to succeed in shifting the signified a great distance and in throwing, so to speak, the anonymous body of the actor into my ear: it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss'. Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973), 105.
[16] Alain Bergala, *Godard au travail: les années 60* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2006), 244.

t'aime, je t'aime a profound distrust of the bourgeois representation of reality as a transparent and universal access to knowledge. While Godard's science fiction film is to be understood as an ode to poetry, which is a literary form able to reach the mythical and 'inalienable meaning of things' through the primacy of form, Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* is to be read, by contrast, as an apology to the myth of the author.[17] It is necessary to position Truffaut's aesthetic bias within the 1960s debates on classicism and modernism to understand this point.

The place of Truffaut's Franco-British production is equivocal in that it rejects the experimentation of *Alphaville* (influenced, to a certain extent, by *Tel quel* critics and writers like Barthes and Philippe Sollers) for something more 'classical', in the filmic sense. Michel Delahaye expressed the ambivalent feelings produced by this (new) New Wave science fiction as follows: 'Trop brûlant ou trop froid, trop réaliste ou trop irréaliste, trop distancié ou trop le contraire, et trop anglais, bien sûr, ou trop français, c'est selon'.[18] Truffaut's adaptation of Bradbury's eponymous novel tackles an anti-authoritarian theme, which appeared very a-propos in the context of the Cold War and French cultural crisis of the 1960s. Along with USSR and Japanese sci-fi productions, *La jetée*, *Alphaville* and *Je t'aime, je t'aime* offered an alternative aesthetic approach to Hollywood science-fiction entertainment.[19] Truffaut's artistic choices, however, could not be more different from Godard's. While the limited budget of *Alphaville* was Godard's opportunity to explore the enigmatic quality of the chiaroscuro lighting (which is not without reminding us of the German expressionist cinema of Robert Wiene and F.W. Murnau), Truffaut's adaptation of Bradbury was shot in colour and became, at that time, Truffaut's most expensive film.[20] Truffaut, who considered himself to be a storyteller with a distrust of fashion, showed his taste for vintage objects and décors through, for instance, Montag's 1920s antique wall telephone and the architectural look and internal decoration of Montag's neighbourhood: its traditional

[17] Barthes cited in Martin McQuillan, *Roland Barthes (Or the Profession of Cultural Studies)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 86.
[18] 'Too ardent or too cold, too realistic or too unrealistic, too distant or too much the reverse, and too English, of course, or too French, it all depends' [My translation, ZTZ]. Antoine de Baecque, *Cahiers du cinéma, histoire d'une revue: Cinéma, tours détours 1959–1981* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1991), 134.
[19] For more details on the emergence of post-war literary science fiction and its role as social criticism, see Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 109–119. See also Johnston, *Science Fiction Film: A Critical Introduction*, 89–90.
[20] As stated by de Baecque and Toubiana, shooting in colour was a commercial requirement. See Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana, *Truffaut*, trans. Catherine Temerson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 214.

triangular rooftops, its embroidered curtains, its Persian carpets, its wooden attics and furnitures. Even the hairstyles of Linda Montag's friends looked anachronistic. In contrast, Godard's dystopian world was easily identifiable with contemporaneous Paris; many architectural 'non-places' composing the film took place in the new Parisian buildings constructed in the late 1950s. Moreover, the use of cigarettes and lighters, of photographic cameras and alcohol flasks create a causal link between capitalism and the robotization of human life. According to Allen Thiher, these props referred to the realm of 'fast living, modernism, amoral adventurism, to a rejection of provincial modes of life' and, like in pop art, denounced the artistic canons of bourgeois culture through the ironic glorification of popular imagery (i.e., advertising, popular films, sexual exploitation and other consumption practices).[21] Additionally, Godard's allusions to the narrative codes of film noir (not only through Eddie Constantine's acting role as the famous secret agent Lemmy Caution, but also through Godard's virtuous use of shadows and blinding lights) subvert the spectator's expectations by refusing to invest his characters' dialogues and actions with a clear psychological significance. This is a film, which, in Rohmerian terms, 'poetises cinema' as opposed to the more naïve vision of cinema which takes the world as the main subject and, by this very fact, eventually 'films poesy': '[…] Là, ce n'est pas l'univers [de Pasolini] qui est poétique, c'est le regard du cinéaste qui le poétise. C'est très net dans *Alphaville*, qui devient fantastique par la seule façon dont Godard prend un univers banal et le rend fantastique'.[22]

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Truffaut uses robotic type of characters to praise the novelist's power to awaken intellectual curiosity, provoke emotional responses and thereby shape the characters' psychology. If scholars and critics considered Truffaut's science fiction film as probably his most problematic work (in addition to being a box office flop, Truffaut described the shooting as a painful experience), it is precisely because of the contradictory aspect of the director's narrative and aesthetic workings.[23] Interviewed in 1966 by Pierre André Boutang in the context of the TV program 'Les Écrans de la Ville', Truffaut declared having intentionally looked for a hero whose

[21] Allen Thiher, 'Postmodern dilemmas: Godard's *Alphaville* and *Two or Three Things that I Know about Her*', *Boundary 2* 4, 3 (Spring 1976): 952, Accessed February 17, 2017, doi: 10.2307/302733

[22] '[…] Here, Pasolini's universe is not poetic. Rather, it is the director's gaze that poetises it. It is very obvious in *Alphaville*, which becomes fantastic by the very way Godard picks an ordinary universe and makes it fancy' [My translation, ZTZ]. Éric Rohmer, Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Bontemps and Jean-Louis Comolli, 'L'ancien et le nouveau: entretien avec Éric Rohmer', *Cahiers du cinéma* 172 (November 1965): 39.

[23] François Truffaut, 'Journal de *Fahrenheit 451*', *Cahiers du cinéma* 176 (March 1966): 18–32. See also de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut*, 220–221.

thoughts would not be discernable to the public, a 'poetic' actor, as portrayed by Oscar Werner's stern face and composed behaviour.[24] This modernist approach to acting, which avoids psychologism by concealing the characters' past or personal drama and places, instead, great emphasis on present action, was nevertheless intended to enhance the leading part attributed to books: 'Le sujet de *Fahrenheit*, l'amour des livres, est tellement positif qu'il n'était même pas question pour moi de le traiter mais simplement de l'illustrer. Certains attendaient un film à la Richard Brooks, c'est bien aussi, mais ce n'est pas ma nature'.[25] In fact, Truffaut replaces Guy Montag's introspective thoughts by the universal voices of Bradbury, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, Jean Genet, and a long, eclectic and far-ranging lineage of western writers. By characterising the childless married couple (composed of Linda and Guy Montag) through their daily inability to communicate, Truffaut implies their subsequent unhappiness. Linda's medication overdose, for instance, shows the idle and sterile nature of this futuristic community and stresses, at the same time, the human value of books, which, far from solely belonging to the realm of ideas, become the most valuable legacy of a man's existence. However, the discourse of Clarisse and the political refugee (or 'book people'), which consists in believing that literary fictions bring past human experiences back to life, is not interested in the historical and cultural specificities which distinguish one book from another, but genuinely praises, instead, writers (be they philosophers, poets, novelists, art theorists, and so on) as the only universal intelligentsia able to 'enlighten' the people in the context of fascistic regimes. The political concerns of Saint-Simon are, in this sense, uncritically aligned with the poetry of, for instance, Emily Brontë, or with the philosophy of Plato. Moreover, when Linda discovers Montag's illegal activity, the latter asserts: 'These books are my family. […] Behind each book stands a man, that's what interests me so. Leave me alone and go back to bed.' What matters in Truffaut's adaptation is to restore the idea of a certain *unity* between authors, belonging to different epochs and societies. To paraphrase Barthes, the myth of the author, of this human entity at the origin of the text (the book being nothing but the result of the writer's fears, dreams and passions), is fully revived in *Fahrenheit 451*.

[24] François Truffaut, 'Interview de François Truffaut par Pierre-André Boutang', *Fahrenheit 451*, collector's ed., DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1966; MK2 and Universal Pictures Video, 2002).
[25] 'The topic of *Fahrenheit*, the love of books, is such a positive theme that there was no question of dealing with it, but simply of illustrating it. Some expected a movie à la Richard Brooks, which is good too, but it's not in my nature to do so' [My translation, ZTZ]. François Truffaut, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, 'François Truffaut ou le juste milieu', *Cahiers du cinéma* 190 (1967): 27.

From a poststructuralist perspective, the modern myth of the author belongs, in short, to the bourgeois discourse on the universal essence of man. The expressive theory of authorship, which became the principal mode of writing about literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, defined the author as possessing 'ideas, feelings, intentions, and desires, which emerge in the act of composition and result in a linguistic artefact – a poem, play, novel, essay, or other literary work'.[26] Thus, the 'book people' take refuge into the lives of 'authentic' and 'human' authorial voices (as opposed to the inhuman, apsychological features of Montag's co-workers and neighbours) by uttering the words of R.L. Stevenson, Poe and others. In his review of the photography exhibition 'The Family of Man' (1956), Barthes precisely criticised the necessity of gathering men and women on the grounds of a single human community:

> True, children are *always* born: but in the whole mass of the human problem; what does the 'essence' of this process matter to us, compared to its modes which, as for them, are perfectly historical? Whether or not the child is born with ease or difficulty, whether or not he is threatened by a high mortality rate, whether or not such and such type of future is open to him: this is what your Exhibitions should be telling people, instead of an eternal lyricism of birth.[27]

In *Fahrenheit 451,* Truffaut preserves the idea of universal lyricism by creating a world that is not too distant nor too familiar to the spectator, hence downplaying any allusion to any specific political event. To echo Nicholas Harrison, Truffaut adds a copy of *Mein Kampf* (1927) among the books being burned so as to prevent the spectator from identifying the firemen to the Nazis and, as such, ensuring the a-temporality and universality of the film's statement.[28] Truffaut himself wrote in his journal of the shoot: 'J'espère que l'on ne cherche aucune intention dans le choix des livres cités dans

[26] Andrew Bennett, 'Expressivity: the Romantic Theory of Authorship', in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49.
[27] Roland Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man', in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday, 1991), 102.
[28] Nicholas Harrison, 'Readers as Résistants', *Studies in French Cinema* 1 (2001): 56, Accessed April 7, 2016, doi: 10.1386/sfci.1.1.54

Fahrenheit 451'.[29] Understanding what Truffaut retains and eliminates from Bradbury's novel will show that the film's supposed neutrality was considered, in the context of the 1960s, as a paradoxical and illusory effort.

Truffaut kept intact the world of dualities underlying *Fahrenheit 451*. In the novel, just as in the film, the supremacy of technology represents the obscure age of ignorance and conformism and, thereby, hunts down the very possibility of intellectual and critical skills. Truffaut's visual re-creation of the hunting of the 'book people', however, highlights the idea that intellectual knowledge goes hand in hand with a certain degree of material wealth. This statement requires further explanation. Bradbury describes the moment when Montag and his co-workers inquisitively invade an old woman's property in a rather minimalistic and informative way: 'It was a flaking three-storey house in the ancient part of the city, a century old if it was a day, but like all houses it had been given a thin fireproof plastic sheath, many years ago, and this preservative shell seemed to be the only thing holding it in the sky'.[30] Truffaut, in contrast, chooses to portray the old lady's house through a particularly bourgeois interior décor. This clear return to 'past' values becomes, in this case, a trip to a threatened contemporary bourgeois life; a candelabra towers over a dark large entrance, and the wooden carpeted stairs lead and open onto an old secret library, which is wrecked, and hand over to the auto-da-fé. This house of 'knowledge and culture', which corresponds (yesterday as today) to an upper middle-class living environment, satisfies the spectator's thirst for identification: the ornaments composing the house become traces of the character's personal life, memories, hobbies, taste, and correspond to the bourgeois curiosity to know the components of their literary heroes' daily routine: 'Pourquoi cette curiosité des menus détails: horaires, habitudes, repas, logements, vêtements, etc? Est-ce le goût fantasmatique de la "réalité" (la matérialité même du "cela a été")?'[31] Moreover, Truffaut permeates the persecution scene with medieval witch-hunting imagery and subsequently endows the woman with an esoteric dimension that contrasts with the 'soullessness' of the firemen. As a matter of fact, the landlady who commits suicide (she puts herself, her books and her house on fire before the eyes

[29] 'I hope people won't attribute any type of intentions to my personal selection of books in *Fahrenheit 451*' [My translation, ZTZ]. François Truffaut, 'Journal de *Fahrenheit 451*', *Cahiers du cinéma* 180 (July 1966): 18.

[30] Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 37–38.

[31] 'Why this curiosity for tiny details: schedules, habits, meals, clothes, and so on. Is it the fantasmatic taste of reality (the materiality of "this once existed")?' Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte*, 85.

of the firemen) appears from the top of the stairs, like a Hitchockian Marthe Herloff (the old woman condemned to the stake in Carl Theodor Dreyer's witch trial film, *Day of Wrath* [1943]), ready to face her own death **(fig. 4.1.)**. Her sarcastic laughter accentuates the idea of an enigmatic and inaccessible inner life that cannot be stripped away from her. Clearly, Truffaut insinuates that the value of a book transcends materiality through the direct impact the authorial voice has on the reader. Almost ten years from *Les mistons*, *Fahrenheit 451* revives Truffaut's analogies between cinema and literature: 'Le film de demain m'apparaît donc plus personnel encore qu'un roman individuel et autobiographique, comme une confession ou comme un journal intime […] le film de demain sera un acte d'amour'.[32] By emphasising the old-fashioned and ornamented aspect of the 'well-read' woman's house, Truffaut subtly deviates the spectator's attention from the principal cause of Bradbury's dystopian universe and develops, with great care, the intimate bond uniting authors and clandestine readers.

This example shows that Truffaut had no intention to comment on the problems concerning the book industry when filming the rain of volumes, manuscripts and magazines landing on the entrance threshold. And yet, the materiality of books (a major theme in Truffaut's filmography) is the result of a printing process, of technological advances and, what's more, of a political system that decides the criteria that will allow a book to be distributed – themes at the heart of Bradbury's critique of consumerist society. Although books depend on the publishing industry, which in turn belongs to a capitalist economic system (which regulates the consumer cycle), *Fahrenheit 451* is unsurprisingly devoid of any allusion to the history of book production.

Godard's 1969 letter to Paul Flamand, editor of Éditions du Seuil illustrates this Maoist critique of the bourgeois politics of culture:

> Quel rôle tu joues en abritant les théoriciens révisionnistes de *Tel Quel* dans ton tiroir de gauche, dans celui du milieu ces vieilles sorcières idéalistes style Raymond Aron ou Claude Lévi-Strauss, et dans celui de droite la biographie de Hô Chi Minh pour 15 francs? […] Bref, quel rôle jouent les éditions du Seuil dans le

[32] 'The film of tomorrow appears to me as even more personal than an individual and autobiographical novel. Like a confession or a diary [...] the film of tomorrow will be an act of love' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie,* 33.

> processus de transformation de la société capitaliste française?[33]

Rather than asking: who has access to literature, and why? Truffaut represents the idea of 'culture' through a universal, eternal and almighty light by creating a worshipping community of readers, whose freedom (even in death, as in the case of the old lady) is guaranteed by a complete and selfless submission to culture. From a Barthesian perspective, Truffaut's idea of 'culture' possesses the divine right to admonish 'ideology':

> Everything happens as if there were on one side, heavy, defective words (*ideology*, *catechism*, *militant*), meant to serve for the ignominious game of the scales; and on the other, light, pure, immaterial words, noble by divine right, sublime to the point of evading the sordid law of numbers (*adventure*, *passion*, *grandeur*, *virtue*, *honour*), words placed above the sorry computation of lies.[34]

To understand Truffaut's conservative stance, an overview of Godard's visual approach to the notion of bourgeois culture is instructive. Godard represents literature as an integral ideological component by, for instance, adding a Bible on the bedside table of Lemmy's hotel room in *Alphaville*. The Bible is no longer the compilation of Judeo-Christian sacred texts but symbolically becomes Alphaville's dictionary of permitted words. As such, Godard reflects on the enduring authority of Church in modern society through analogy: the 'word of God' becomes the 'word of Alpha 60'. On a similar note, Godard gave a critical account of Gustave Flaubert's unfinished novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881) in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967) through a scene in which two cataloguers randomly choose and copy out sentences from a high stack of books. These very Godardian characters (the role of compulsive collectors or compilers is a constant in his filmography) aim at the creation of 'the absolute book, the total encyclopaedia' through the extensive collage of excerpts from novels, food recipes, historical essays, English texts, philosophical thoughts, yellow pages, celebrity phrases,

[33] 'What role are you playing when compartmentalising the revisionist theorists from *Tel Quel* in your left drawer, when storing on the middle shelf the old idealist witches à la Raymond Aron or Claude Lévi-Strauss, and when putting Hô Chi Minh's biography in your right-hand drawer? […] In short, what kind of role the Éditions du Seuil play in the transformation process of French capitalist society?' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Antoine de Baecque, *Godard biographie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2010), 485.
[34] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 81.

etc.[35] By giving the two cataloguers the names of the Flaubertian anti-heroes, Bouvard and Pécuchet, Godard questions, just as his literary predecessor, the bourgeois discourse on knowledge; the need to connect knowledge to a cause and effect mechanism, to demonstrate knowledge through (Salon-type) conversations (which sometimes end up in tautological conclusions), to believe firmly in the 'bookish' transmission of knowledge, and so on. In the novel, just as in *Deux ou trois choses*, Bouvard and Pécuchet embody poorly assimilated information, the total absence of critical thought and intellectual conformism (they agreed that 'La métaphysique ne sert à rien. On peut vivre sans elle'). Correspondingly, Godard understands the mechanic and repetitive activity of a copyist as antithetical to the development of a critical mind – the copying process (re-transcription happens 'on the surface') reveals the lack of any sort of intellectual engagement with the text.

Just as Truffaut reckoned that Jacques Becker's *Arsène Lupin* was certainly not at the level of the ground-breaking *Nuit et brouillard*, *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé* or *Lola Montès* (all released between 1953 and 1954), I suggest that Truffaut's aesthetic choices were easily deemed 'simplistic'[36] in comparison with Resnais, Marker or Godard's sci-fi works.[37] In this historical turning point in French cinema, the latter raised the critics' expectations as regards film topics and, more importantly, the *way* topics were treated.[38] Far from challenging, like Godard, the assumed synchronicity between image and sound, as shown in *Alphaville* through the random (and unpleasing) irruptions of Alpha 60's crackling voice, Truffaut reinforces the unity between sound and image through, for instance, the close-up on the printed pages of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*. According to André Bazin, this cinematic technique not only highlights the willingly 'novelistic' origin of the film through the very marked visual presence of letters but also consolidates the emotional potential of the scene, which represents Montag's first encounter with Dickens' lyrical prose.[39] Therefore, the expression of the director's personal love of books, which also involves a dismissal of

[35] Thiher, 'Godard's *Alphaville* and *Two or Three Things that I Know about Her'*: 962.
[36] As recounted by Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana, Paul Newman (who had originally accepted to play the part of Guy Montag) gave up on the project due to Truffaut's disinterest in emphasising the political implications of Bradbury's novel. See de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut,* 214.
[37] Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, 199.
[38] As developed by Alison Smith, French cinema in the late 1960s was concerned with interrogating the relations between history and cinema: 'How, and why, should cinema represent the historical past, and what historical past should it represent?' See Alison Smith, *French Cinema in the 1970s. The Echoes of May* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 171.
[39] André Bazin, 'Le *Journal d'un curé de campagne* et la stylistique de Bresson', in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 123.

most of the novel's futuristic gadgets, has the effect of downplaying Bradbury's comment on science and technology.[40] Despite the film's pretension to universality, the representation of this 'paean to books' obviously concentrates its share of political innuendos. Indeed, Truffaut minimised the psychological and sentimental dimension of Bradbury's novel (as shown through Truffaut's commitment not to create a love relationship between Clarisse and Montag) so as to privilege the life of books, which are the only access to a much-longed-for psychological interiority. Considering the influence of poststructuralism in the 1960s and of the critical revaluation of classical texts, Truffaut's vision of authorship, as portrayed in *Fahrenheit 451*, contributed to the bourgeois idea of literature as the trace of an individual identity at the origin of the text. The association of his 'narcotised' characters' outlook with an 'existentialist' acting was, in my opinion, a means to ambiguously subvert the self-reflexive aesthetics of the European new cinema.[41] Montag and Clarisse's mission could be summarised, in this respect, as a quest for psychological depth through the unilateral and unequivocal act of reading.

From a narrative perspective, Truffaut preserves a sense of classical unity through a storyline that unfolds according to a well-determined beginning (the introduction of Montag in his work environment), a motivating factor (Montag's encounter with Clarisse), the development (Linda's betrayal; the persecution), and the conclusion (Montag and the 'book people' live on a marginal land to preserve the world's literary heritage).[42] By closing the film on the image of the 'book men' reciting the assigned texts while walking round and round in a secluded and snowy forest, Truffaut not only implies that Montag chose a life of sacrifice, but also suggests that the sacrifice can only be carried through an individualistic passivity – as opposed to collective uprising. The role of the 'book man' is exclusively that of a 'mediator' whose emotional life is entirely absorbed by the higher perspective of protecting the world's cultural heritage; there is indeed no hint at potential relationships between refugees outside self-absorbed recitation. Indeed, the 'book people' present themselves by

[40] Timothy J. Williams, 'Some Allusions to French Literature in François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*', *West Virginia Philological Papers* 54 (May 2011), Accessed April 7, 2016, http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-306240613/some-allusions-to-french-literature-in-francois-truffaut-s.
[41] James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 70–71.
[42] Moreover, the references to Hitchcock (Bernard Hermann's soundtrack structures the film by providing a good deal of tension and suspense) show that Truffaut wanted to preserve some narrative codes of classical Hollywood cinema.

indicating the title of the text and the name of the author they respectively wish to represent, through rote memory and repetition. While it is certain that Truffaut wants to create an emotional bond between the 'book person' and the literary work, the memorisation exercise casts doubts on the very possibility of challenging the established dictatorship due to the lack of allusions to the refugees' critical thinking skills. If *Fahrenheit 451* was set in Paris, Truffaut's 'book community' would follow the same trajectory as Flaubert's Bouvard and Pécuchet; they would recite Victor Hugo's verses or Karl Marx's class theory whilst walking alongside walls, until the end of the boulevard, coming back, continuing to the Arc de Triomphe, until renouncing, and returning, eventually, to their starting point. While Truffaut saw in *Fahrenheit 451* the opportunity to illustrate his human-centred interpretation of authorship, his film nonetheless failed in exploring the political causes of the existential malaise, the feelings of alienation and identity loss agitating 1960s French society. Instead, his adaptation appeared as an ode to the poetry teachings established by French primary education: a parrot-like mimicking.

4.3. Film and the realist novel: *Les deux anglaises et le continent*

As remembered by Jean Gruault, Truffaut's co-writer in *Jules et Jim* (1962), *L'enfant sauvage*, *Les deux anglaises et le continent*, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* and *La chambre verte*, literature played a fundamental role in his friend's life, be it in the filmmaking process, cinematic works, theoretical writings or personal history: 'François était à la fois un homme de l'image, mais avant tout c'était un homme de l'écrit. Il a souvent dit qu'il aurait, à une autre époque, sans doute été écrivain, romancier'.[43] The case of *Fahrenheit 451* gave us a glimpse of Truffaut's traditional interpretation of western literature as a source of spiritual fulfilment and emancipation. This section will further develop Truffaut's relationship to the nineteenth-century realist novel through his 1971 adaptation of Roché's *Deux anglaises et le continent* (1956).

[43] 'François was a visual person, but he was above all a literary man. He often said that, in a former life, he would have been a writer, a novelist' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Jean Gruault, 'Entretien entre Jean Gruault et Serge Toubiana, enregistré en juin 2000', *Les deux anglaises et le continent*, DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1971; MK2, 2004).

Roché's novel consists of the reconstitution of the author's diary and correspondence with two English sisters, Margaret and Violet Hart from Easter 1899 to summer 1927. It is composed of three different discourses (Roché and the two English girls' love letters and fragments of journals), each written in the first person. At the right corner of the letters, Roché added the exact location and date to emphasise the book's archival and biographical dimension. Through the absence of a narrator external to the correspondence, Roché's novel also offered a certain degree of interpretative freedom: each character transcribed his or her feelings, thoughts, emotions through *direct* speech. Truffaut's decision to add another third-person narrator to *Les deux anglaises* reveals, in turn, the director's wish to rein in the narration according to a more chronological and linear logic. Specifically, Truffaut kept Claude, Anne and Muriel's correspondence and juxtaposed three distinct voice-overs to scenes in which the characters write, read letters and fill their diaries. At times, to emphasise the dramatic potential of the letter, Truffaut's characters speak directly to the camera. However, a male and omniscient narrative voice overrides the characters' individual discourses.

The main narrator, whose voice is none other than Truffaut's, focuses on recounting Claude's version of events, not Anne or Muriel's. When Claude meets Anne for the first time, in his Parisian apartment, the narrator comments: 'Lorsque la jeune anglaise leva sa voilette, Claude eu l'impression d'une nudité pudique et plaisante'.[44] Similarly, when the English girl shows Claude a childhood portrait of her little sister, Muriel, the narrator continues: 'Le visage rond, la bouche sévère, les sourcils bien nets, et dans son regard quelque chose de farouche'.[45] In these two examples, the narrative voice adopts Claude's viewpoint through a narrative speech that usually alternates between descriptive and narrative sequences. This stylistic process blurs the distinction between an 'objective' and detached description of reality and an observation of the world filtered by Claude's consciousness. Like in the realist and naturalist novel, the narrator's descriptions do not appear as disconnected from the main characters' consciousness. Rather, 'the descriptive arises as an illusory product of the character's mental actions'.[46] As a result, the spectator is unable to identify 'who' is at the origin of the narrative speech: is it Claude? Roché? Truffaut? This synthetic voice which

[44] 'When she raised her veil, Claude thought of pleasant and chaste nudity'/ 'Round face, prim mouth, clear brow… and a shy, untamed look' [My translation, ZTZ].
[45] 'She had a round face, a severe mouth, sharp eyebrows. Her eyes were fierce and fearful all at once' [My translation, ZTZ].
[46] James H. Reid, 'Descriptive and Narrative Self-deception: Flaubert's Allegory of Parody', in *Narration and Description in the French Realist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78.

combines the subject's thoughts and a third-person narrator places Truffaut, the author, as an omniscient and therefore superior entity, able to establish a self-conscious complicity with the spectator: 'Claude était orphelin, mais avec la mort de sa mère il venait de perdre en vérité la plus exclusive de toutes ses femmes. À présent il était libre de conduire sa vie à sa guise. Quel usage allait-il faire de sa liberté?'.[47] This rhetorical question reinforces the sense of 'communication' between Truffaut and the spectator. This internal focalisation not only helps consolidate the characters' psychological consistency but, more importantly, establishes the narrator as an autocratic storyteller who is allowed to comment, give his opinion on the protagonists and thereby educate the spectator by orienting his viewing experience. Through this *échappée discursive* Truffaut implies that Claude is now left on his own and manipulates the spectator's expectations: will Claude conform to a more traditional life style or will he cause more grief and sorrow to Muriel? [48] The moralistic dimension of Truffaut's question anticipates the film's epilogue. Indeed, Truffaut concludes the film with an open ending: Claude leaves the Rodin museum with the uncertainty whether he will ever see Muriel again. The atmosphere of melancholy and disenchantment mirrors some narrative tropes of the Flaubertian novel: Truffaut takes away Claude's last illusion (that of finding Muriel pregnant with his child) and closes the film with a sense of failure.[49] It is difficult not to associate Claude's last thoughts 'Mais qu'est-ce que j'ai? J'ai l'air vieux aujourd'hui!'[50] with Frédéric Moreau's 'end of life introspection', which shows the effects the *embourgeoisement* had on his intellectual and sentimental aspirations **(fig. 4.2.)**.[51] Claude, like Frédéric, never really achieved anything, their potential as lovers and professionals is never fully realised.

The narcissistic aspect of Claude's personality was, according to Truffaut, representative of the turn-of-the-century Parisian dandies, like Roché and Marcel Proust: 'Claude, comme Roché, c'était un intellectuel curieux […] Roché me rappelle,

[47] 'Claude was alone. He had lost the most demanding of all his women. He was free to live his own life. How would he use his freedom?' [My translation, ZTZ].
[48] 'discursive breakaway' [My translation, ZTZ]. Christèle Couleau, 'La voix de son maître', *Cahiers de narratologie [En ligne]* (2001), Accessed May 24, 2015, http://narratologie.revues.org/6959
[49] Interestingly, Léaud played the role of Frédéric Moreau in Marcel Cravenne's television series *L'éducation sentimentale* (1973)
[50] 'What's wrong with me today? I look old!' [My translation, ZTZ]
[51] '– "You seem to me to have calmed down a lot about politics"
–"The effect of age", said the lawyer. And they resumed their lives. They both failed, the one who had dreamed only of love, and the other who had dreamed of power. What was the reason for this?
– "It was perhaps for not having followed a straight line", said Frédéric.'
Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Adrianne Tooke (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2003), 446–447.

par là, Proust jeune; comme lui, il a traversé la société, il a observé, écouté, et comme lui il a dû passer pour un homme frivole, pour un dilettante du fait qu'il ne créait pas'.[52] Just as Swann idealises Odette de Crécy due to her resemblance to Zipporah depicted in Sandro Boticelli's fresco, Claude is fascinated by the romantic idea of loving two sisters.[53] Indeed, Truffaut creates a character prone to novelistic drives; the sisterhood and cultural foreignness of Muriel and Anne stimulates his imagination. For instance, the idea of Muriel as a potential love only occurs after the imposition of Mrs Brown's religious conditions toward her daughter and Claude's relationship:

> Dans le tumulte que le discours de Madame Brown provoquait en Claude, une pensée dominait tout: il n'était pas impossible que Muriel devint amoureuse de lui. Amour, amour, les chiens sont lâchés, ils galopent dans le cœur de Claude. Le voici plus occupé du rêve que Muriel pourrait l'aimer que malheureux de ne plus la voir constamment. Un but est en train de naître en lui: Muriel.[54]

As a general rule, Truffaut's nineteenth-century characters are attracted by the idea of the ones they supposedly love – ideals created, on a regular basis, in the light of their gas lamps and with the reflexive accompaniment of their desk mirrors.[55] Whether it is Claude, Adèle H. or Julien Davenne, each character projects a self-deceived consciousness of the present and finds it difficult to empathise or coincide with the other's perception of events. In *Les deux anglaises*, Truffaut shows the characters' discordant emotions by contrasting Claude's reactions with Muriel's. For instance, Claude, who has returned to Paris, publishes anonymously Muriel's intense and openhearted confession concerning her compulsive masturbation (or nicely worded: 'l'usage nocif d'un de ses organes').[56] By doing so, Claude fails to associate Muriel's

[52] 'Like Roché, Claude was an intellectual, curious of everything […] Roché reminds me of a young Proust; like him, he experienced and knew about society, he observed, listened and, like him, he must have appeared as a frivolous man, an amateur, because he was not creating. While this dilettante phase did not last in the case of Proust, who wrote a work on it, Roché maintained this lifestyle when writing an extremely intimate body of work. Roché truly privileged life over anything else' [My translation, ZTZ]. François Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, ed. Anne Gillain (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 283.
[53] Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, vol. 1 of *In Search of the Lost Time,* trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library Edition, 1992), 311.
[54] 'In Claude's confusion, one thought stood out… Muriel might yet fall in love with him. Eros took possession of Claude's heart. He was too busy dreaming of her to mope over not seeing her. He now had one goal: Muriel.'
[55] In *Jules et Jim*, the two protagonists associate Catherine with a statue they commonly fell in love with.
[56] 'The evil use of her organs.'

letter with the manifestation of her sentimental devotion and reads it, instead, as a potential piece of literature. Truffaut's use of close-ups on Muriel's face, which emphasise the irrationality and overly emotional dimension of her character, anticipates the melodramatic techniques of *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* **(fig. 4.3.)**.

Surely, whether intended or not, Truffaut's exploration of Claude's consciousness alludes to major themes of both Flaubert and Proust: a narrative voice that reveals the male character's fantasised vision of reality and whose journey becomes an attempt to disconnect from the banality, mediocrity and setbacks of modern life. Despite the modernist dimension of Roché's theme, Truffaut nonetheless referred to *Les deux anglaises* as a period film, which had nothing to do with the contemporaneity of the Antoine Doinel cycle: 'J'avais envie de rompre avec le personnage de Doinel qui l'avait trop marqué. Or, pour briser Doinel, il ne fallait à aucun prix faire une film moderne… Aussi ai-je choisi la solution du film d'époque'.[57] Truffaut intended this old-fashioned atmosphere *against* the documentary qualities that characterised the 1970s 'new naturalism'.[58] Needless to say, the image of Muriel walking through the woods, giving way to the lamentation 'Claude, je t'adore! Everything I have is yours, except what you ask of me!' went sharply against the need for cinematic believability advocated by the cinema-vérité's improvisation techniques. Truffaut's 1967 critique of Roberto Rossellini's taste for *vraisemblance* demonstrates, in this regard, a tangible evolution in terms of aesthetic preferences. The importance that Truffaut formerly gave to documentary techniques in films like *Les mistons* and *Les 400 coups* weakened, considerably, at the turn of the 1960s.[59] The 1970 adaptations like *L'enfant sauvage* and *Les deux anglaises* systematically resorted to narrative voice-overs that acknowledged the novelistic essence of the films and re-established Truffaut as the omnipotent authorial/narrative voice. Truffaut's criticism of the English actors' tendency towards *too believable* performances during the shooting of *Fahrenheit 451* in the Pinewood studios already announced Truffaut's gradual distaste for naturalistic acting and subsequent taste for dramatic and storytelling devices:

[57] ' I wanted to break with Doinel's character, which fits him like a glove. So, to get rid of Doinel, I had to chose anything but a modern film… Hence the period film' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Truffaut cited in Guy Teisseire, 'Quand Truffaut donne en pâture le coeur de Léaud', *L'aurore* (May 8 and 9, 1971): 16.
[58] To learn about the documentary techniques of the cinéma-vérité, see Smith, *French Cinema in the 1970s. The Echoes of May*, 74–75.
[59] Truffaut, Comolli and Narboni, 'François Truffaut ou le juste milieu': 27–28.

> Tout dépend de ce qu'on aime, il y a un degré de vérité que je n'aime pas. Je me souviens que Rossellini, au contraire, adorait les acteurs anglais, il voulait toujours faire des films avec Jack Hawkins et, dans *Europe 51*, il a mis un acteur que j'ai trouvé sinistre dans les autres films.[60]

In 1970, Truffaut interestingly evoked this aesthetic evolution from realism and revolt to *preciosité* and formalism when discussing Jean Vigo's life work: 'cinéaste esthète et cinéaste réaliste, Vigo a évité tous les pièges de l'esthétisme et du réalisme'.[61] Truffaut defined 'realism' and 'formalism' by naming the masters of each style: Rossellini and Sergei Eisenstein. In this text, Truffaut suggests that *Zéro de conduite* (1933) and *L'Atalante* (1934) brilliantly combined both aesthetic tendencies. On the one hand, the sense of realism is found in the characters' boorish language and in Vigo's 'almost obscene taste for flesh'.[62] On the other hand, formalism bursts out from the visual poetry of Vigo's montage, through, for instance, the use of slow motion in the rebellion scene following the pillow fight in *Zéro de conduite* and the superimposition of the underwater image of Jean Dasté with the mesmerizing silhouette of the bride, Dita Parlo, in *L'Atalante*. While Truffaut's critique was certainly not self-referential, I submit that his career experienced a similar evolution: the realism that characterised *Les Mistons* and *Les 400 coups* were replaced, a decade later, by period films that privileged melodramatic shots (*Les deux anglaises*, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*), dramatic self-representations (i.e., *L'enfant sauvage*, *La chambre verte*) and, of course, nineteenth-century period drama. Surely, it is indisputable that *Jules et Jim* share similar narrative techniques as *Les deux anglaises*: both Catherine and Claude understand love as a passionate, uncertain and unstable experience. Catherine chooses Jules before returning to Jim, and Claude has an affair with Anne, despite his platonic love with Muriel.[63] Moreover, the 'emotional counterpoint between sound and image – dispassionate narration over powerful visual material' was also used to reinforce Truffaut's authority

[60] 'It all depends on what we prefer; there are degrees of truthfulness that I don't like. I remember that Rossellini, on the contrary, loved English actors, he always wanted to make films with Jack Hawkins and, in *Europe 51*, he chose an actor who looked gloomy in other films' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid.: 27

[61] 'Realist and formalist director all at once, Vigo avoided falling into the traps of both tendencies' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, 43.

[62] According to Truffaut, Vigo's realist bias is shown when the teacher touches the child's pale little hand with his 'greasy' hand in *Zéro de conduite* and the avalanche of dirty laundry in *L'Atalante*. Ibid.

[63] Emily Brontë's end of life inspired Muriel's death in *Les deux anglaises*. See Jean Gruault, 'Entretien entre Jean Gruault et Serge Toubiana, enregistré en juin 2000', *Les deux anglaises et le continent*, DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1971; MK2, 2004). The reference to the Brontë sisters is also mentioned in Teisseire, 'Quand Truffaut donne en pâture le coeur de Léaud': 16.

as purveyor of meaning. Nevertheless, despite the resemblances, their respective reception could not have been more different. While Robert Kanters compared *Jules et Jim* to a 'song of tenderness' [64] which found its perfect unity of tone, many critics criticised the 'dullness' and the feeling of 'boredom' conveyed by *Les deux anglaises*.[65] On the same note, *Le canard enchaîné* ironically commented on Truffaut's narrative voice-over, whose hurried tone resembled that of a 'bank clerk'.[66] In the winter of 1971, Claude Garson compared Truffaut's second adaption of a Roché novel to 'un fort joli album d'images que nous feuilletons sans toutefois nous intéresser aux personnages qui évoluent dans ces décors'.[67] On the eve of this journal issue, the radio programme *Le masque et la plume* broadcast Jean-Louis Bory and Nicolas de Rabaudy's discussion on Truffaut's latest film: overall, *Les deux anglaises* was deemed disconcerting due to its 'regressive' return to nineteenth-century moral values (in the context of a puritan turn-of-the-century Welsh environment). In addition to the monotonous aspect of Truffaut's voice-overs (which, according to Renaud, create the impression of a film without movement or duration),[68] Léaud was considered Truffaut's major casting mistake: 'Je ne suis pas sûr que Jean-Pierre Léaud corresponde au caractère d'un jeune amant douloureux dépassé par ses actes. Il s'identifie trop au typique petit rigolo renfermé, gauchement effronté, gavroche, imprévisible, des films précédents'.[69] Besides the 'Antoine Doinel' etiquette, which was consolidated in the course of the 1960s through Truffaut's saga composed of *Les 400 coups*, *Antoine et Colette* (1962), *baisers volés* (1968) and *domicile conjugale* (1970), Léaud became the regular face of the Nouvelle Vague cinema through collaborations with Godard and Rivette. In fact, one month before the release of *Les deux anglaises*, Rivette had already presented his twelve hour-long film *Out 1: Noli me tangere*. For the first time, Léaud played a leading part

[64] Robert Kanters, 'Jules et Jim', *L'Express* (January 25, 1952): 25.
[65] Tristan Renaud, 'Un temps pour la mélancolie *Les deux anglaises et le continent* de François Truffaut', *Lettres françaises* (December 1, 1971): 21.
[66] Michel Duran, '*Les deux anglaises et le continent* (Un Roché… et des écueils)', *Le canard enchaîné* 2666 (December 1, 1971): 7.
[67] 'A very nice image album. Yet, as we leaf through the pages, it is difficult to keep our attention on the characters who evolve in the different settings' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Claude Garson, 'Les deux anglaises et le continent', *L'aurore* (November 29, 1971): 16.
[68] Renaud, 'Un temps pour la mélancolie *Les deux anglaises et le continent* de François Truffaut': 21.
[69] 'I am not certain that Jean-Pierre Léaud corresponds to the idea of a young desperate lover overwhelmed by his own actions. It is so easy to identify him with the typical little funny guy, a bit withdrawn, awkwardly arrogant, *gavroche* and unpredictable, as embodied in his previous films. Sometimes he looks petrified and perhaps embarrassed by the seriousness of the role. The hero's adolescent naivety becomes, in this sense, almost laughable. Many lines appear comical despite the attempt to convey psychological truthfulness' [My translation, ZTZ]. Louis Chauvet, 'Les deux anglaises et le continent', *Le figaro* (November 29, 1971): 30.

between actors from the Marc'O troupe. The gap separating this Rivettian journey 'beyond the traditional borders of cinema'[70] and the Truffaldian 'dedication to creating an old-fashioned atmosphere' not only shows the versatile dimension of Léaud's acting career, but also indicates Truffaut's detachment from the more experimental films of his former friends and colleagues:[71]

> Mais le pivot du film, sa raison d'être, c'était encore une fois Jean-Pierre Léaud. Si d'un film interprété par lui, le public de *Baisers volés* avait attendu un témoignage sur la jeunesse moderne, il aurait été déçu, car Jean-Pierre m'intéresse justement par son anachronisme et son romantisme, il est un jeune homme du XIXe siècle. Quant à moi, je suis un nostalgique, mon inspiration est constamment tournée vers le passé.[72]

The association of romanticism with anachronism insinuates that Léaud's physical features and language contrasted with the existentialist-types of acting through performances that expressed (via gestures, enunciation, tone and intensity of gaze) the idealistic, passionate and deeply sensitive nature of his fictional characters. Truffaut suggested that the misunderstanding of *Les deux anglaises* differed from a film like *Les 400 coups*, whose success resulted from 'la fusion heureuse du sujet choisi et de notre nature profonde, la coïncidence entre nos préoccupations à ce moment de notre vie et celles du public à ce moment de l'actualité'.[73] The emphasis on the notion of *coincidence* between the artwork and the public's change of mentality and expectations implicitly depoliticises film production and strengthens Truffaut's life-long idea of cinema as the mirror of the author's personal beliefs and concerns. As demonstrated through *Les deux anglaises*, Truffaut approached nineteenth-century stories through a deeply Balzacian bias, a tendency which distanced him from the 1970s anti-auteurist discourse and alternative cinema experimented by Rivette and Godard. The case-study

[70] Martin Even, '*Out 1* Voyage au-delà du cinéma,' *Le monde* (October 14, 1971): 13.
[71] Garson, 'Les deux anglaises et le continent': 16.
[72] 'But the pivot of the film, its justification, is Jean-Pierre Léaud, once again. If Léaud is the one to interpret a film like *Baisers volés*, the public cannot expect to watch an account on modern youth. If so, the spectator would be disappointed. Jean-Pierre interests me exactly because of his anachronism and romanticism; he is a young nineteenth-century fellow. As for me, I am a nostalgic; my inspiration is constantly turned towards the past' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le plaisir des yeux*, 23.
[73] 'a fortunate fusion of the subject and [the author's] deeper feelings, an accidental coincidence of [his] preoccupations at a certain moment of [his] life and the public's' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid., 27–28.

of *L'enfant sauvage* will demonstrate that Truffaut's references to the 'way' films were made in the classical era give evidence of his self-identification as a melancholic and isolated director. Moreover, his paradoxical approach to notions of education and resistance belong to his paternalistic approach to philanthropy.

4.4. Nostalgia, education and self-referentiality: *L'enfant sauvage*

While European filmmakers like Werner Herzog, Robert Bresson, Rivette and René Allio responded to the nineteenth-century legacy through radical responses that disrupted with the conventional codes of classical Hollywood storytelling techniques, *L'enfant sauvage* testifies of Truffaut's wish to continue engaging with romantic and human-centred narratives that combine a subtle mix of documentary techniques with sophisticated literary style. In fact, *L'enfant sauvage* sharply diverges from the cinematic poetry of Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974), *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979) or the documentary techniques of Allio's *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère* (1976). In an interview with Claude Veillot, Truffaut stated that he adhered to Itard's pedagogical principle, which was to develop the boy's self-awareness into a moral conscience.[74] While critics have often drawn comparisons between *L'enfant sauvage* and Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* due to the coinciding theme of the nineteenth-century feral child, the latter did not allude to pedagogy and language acquisition as a process of emancipation and salvation but, on the contrary, represented Kaspar Hauser as a martyr of cultural assimilation.[75] Surely, Truffaut hinted at the fashionable Rousseauian idea of the 'state of nature' in *L'enfant sauvage*, but through a superficial and rather uncritical perspective. In fact, Truffaut told *L'Express* that he was a strong believer of the notion of direct and unhindered communication, hence showing signs of scepticism toward the influence of poststructuralist and Althusserian ideas on avant-garde cinema. Moreover, Truffaut cautiously avoided any reference to further research literature available on feral children and, in turn, re-watched some black and white classics with his film crew: 'J'ai

[74] Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 258.
[75] Kirsten Moana Thompson, *The Cinema of Werner Herzog: Aesthetic Ecstasy and Truth* (London: Wallflower Press, 2011), 62.

réussi à faire de l'anti-documentaire avec une chose extrêmement vraie'.[76] In the same way as Truffaut privileged the 'human' and universal dimension behind books in *Fahrenheit 451*, his work on Victor de l'Aveyron prioritised the representation of Itard's pedagogical skills over a more scientific account in order to avoid establishing a critical dialogue between the doctor's findings and the more recent psychoanalytic developments and structuralist theories developed in the wake of Lévi-Strauss. Jean-Pierre Oudart suggested that Truffaut's point of focus, which is to restore the mythical duality between nature and culture, produces a film that is 'moins un film idéologique que de l'idéologie faite texte'.[77] Although there is no third person narrator to guide the spectator through the film, Truffaut appears as the main protagonist, Dr Itard, whose writings, pronounced in voice-overs, structure the story by commenting on Victor's moments of resistance and progress. In addition to Truffaut's hegemonic narrative voice, Oudart implied that Truffaut's aesthetic choices, such as the use of depth of field for the forest scenes and the sequences involving Victor's afternoon walks or playtime in the garden, revived the myth of Mother Nature. The emphasis on the sensory dimension of wild vegetation conveys a comforting feeling to Victor, who avidly drinks his glass of water whilst staring at the countryside window.[78] According to the *Cahiers* critics, this natural imagery is a symbolic reminder of the child's irrecoverable freedom and thereby alludes to universal themes dear to Truffaut such as the 'lost youth' and the 'inaccessible mother'.[79] This dualistic vision of nature and culture is all the more evidenced through the representation of Victor's journey in the civilised world. Indeed, Truffaut usually films the feral boy amidst confinement facilities, medical and pedagogical infrastructures. For instance, after 'hunting' the little Victor, the peasants lock him up in a squalid cage. At the school of deaf-mutes, where Parisians, out of curiosity, visit the room of the wild child, Truffaut made sure to place Victor near large windows so as to highlight the sense of Victor's uprooting. Jean Itard's country house, in turn, symbolises this *juste milieu* between the tense urban atmosphere of Paris and the vast and obscure woods.[80]

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[76] 'I succeeded in making an anti-documentary film with something that is extremely true' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 320. See also de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut*, 263.

[77] '*L'enfant sauvage* is less an ideological film than ideology turned into a text' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Oudart and Daney, 'L'enfant sauvage': 31.

[78] *L'enfant sauvage*, DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1969; MGM and Twentieth Century Fox, 2008)

[79] Oudart and Daney, 'L'enfant sauvage': 28.

[80] Critics, scholars and Truffaut himself have often brought this notion of *juste milieu* ('happy medium') when commenting on the latter's aesthetic techniques. This chapter has shown that this idea not only

Interestingly, *L'enfant sauvage* shares with the Antoine Doinel saga a very Truffaldian pattern: it is an evolution from the rebellious phase of childhood to the socialised and established state of adulthood. It forms part, according to Elizabeth Bonnaffons, of Truffaut's 'cinema of initiation'.[81] Truffaut's approach to education has nonetheless changed from one film to another. In *Les 400 coups* Truffaut criticised the traditional school system through an ending that remains open and ambiguous. The rebellious and romantic side of Doinel seems to have the upper hand in the struggle between nature and culture through the emotional and metaphorical bond Truffaut created between Doinel and the seaside. In *L'enfant sauvage*, Truffaut uses a closing iris shot that frames Victor's face, looking at the camera whilst climbing the stairs of Dr Itard's house, accompanied by Madame Guérin. Contrary to *Les 400 coups*, this open-ended scene implies that Victor abandons wild life and returns to civilisation. It is precisely Dr Itard, played by Truffaut himself, who awakens and develops Victor's self-consciousness and gradual humanisation. Additionally, the merging of documentary style with classical cinematic techniques not only alludes to Truffaut's personal pantheon of authors (i.e., D.W. Griffith, Dreyer, Jean Renoir, Alfred Hitchcock, Bresson) but has the effect of disconnecting the narrative from the present through a 'teinte d'époque'.[82] In this regard, Nestor Almendros recalled: 'he [Truffaut] likes the transitions and fades of the silent cinema. I had to study the problem: how to produce fades outside the laboratory (the dupe negative lowers the quality of the shots). I came up with the iris that was used in silent filmmaking'.[83] In a decade marked by the advent of experimental and hybridised forms of art house cinema, Truffaut's wish to perpetuate 'archaic' stylistic techniques such as the iris openings and closings in *L'enfant sauvage* is symptomatic of his nostalgic relation to traditional cinematic genres.[84] Moreover, Claude Poulette suggested that Truffaut articulated the central theme, the return to origins, by paying tribute to silent films.[85] Since the beginning, Truffaut chooses to

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characterised Jean Vigo's approach to the realist and formalist traditions, but also refers to Truffaut's personal approach to antagonistic concepts such as modernist and classical cinema, documentary and drama, fiction and autobiography, etc.

[81] Elizabeth Bonnaffons, *François Truffaut, La figure inachevée* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1981), 194–195.

[82] Oudart and Daney, 'L'enfant sauvage': 31.

[83] Nestor Almendros cited in de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut*, 263.

[84] Truffaut also refers to Vigo by choosing Jean Dasté (the education supervisor in *Zéro de conduite*) as Professor Philippe Pinel.

[85] Claude Poulette, 'Rôle et significations du journal pédagogique de Jean Itard dans *L'enfant sauvage* de François Truffaut', in *Cinéma-école. Aller-retour*, eds. Didier Nourrisson and Paul Jeunet (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2001), 57.

represent Victor's 'prise de parole' by opposing the peasants' unintelligible slang, Victor's silent gesticulation and the sounds of nature to Itard's clear, pedagogical and authoritarian discourse. Contrary to Godard and Rivette, who associated conventional verbal language with the major vehicle of bourgeois ideology, Truffaut unquestioningly used literary language as a 'natural' universal mode of communication as well as a self-referential proof of complicity and honesty with the spectator. In *Les deux anglaises*, Truffaut establishes a contract of trust through an omniscient narrative voice that acknowledges the public. In *L'enfant sauvage*, the narrative voice aims at emphasising the credibility of the story: the nineteenth-century memoirs of Dr Jean Itard filter Truffaut's authorial voice. As a matter of fact, de Baecque and Toubiana suggested that Truffaut's interest in the romantic themes of misunderstanding and difference was undoubtedly related to one of the director's personal wishes: that of tracing back the story of his *own* origins.[86] To understand Truffaut's romanticisation of his own life through nineteenth-century literary sources, references to his biography are required.

Truffaut's premature marginalisation from French society (the repetitive psychiatric, military confinements and judicial sentences) enhanced, in my opinion, his sense of belonging to the French film community in the context of the rapturous reception of *Les 400 coups* in Cannes. He who used to enter the movie theatres through the backdoor started building his own cinematic patrimony by engraving the juvenile and grave features of Antoine Doinel (representative of French youth at the dawn of the 1960s) to the history of French cinema. Working with children proved to be advantageous for Truffaut's career (besides bringing him considerable pleasure) in terms of commercial success for *L'argent de poche* and international recognition for *Les 400 coups* and *L'enfant sauvage*. Affected by the indifference of an absent mother, Truffaut spent a difficult childhood marked by his numerous detentions. He was arrested at the Observation Centre for Delinquent Minors at Villejuif in 1948 after being denounced by his stepfather for minor robberies (the theft of the typewriter becoming a central episode in *Les 400 coups*). Following his attempted military desertion on July

[86] In this regard, de Baecque and Toubiana mentioned that, in the late 1960s, Truffaut had the project to write his own autobiography: 'He also worked on the various intimate journals he kept in his youth, made rewrites, and gave them shape and focus. Moreover, he set down on paper various parts of his life: "My Childhood", "My Military Life", "My Articles", "My Films", "My Women", "My Friends". He contemplated using these meticulously kept documents – in which dates and facts were amassed in a precise, almost compulsive way – to write his autobiography, a project he abandoned to put together a collection of his main articles on cinema, *Les films de ma vie*'. See de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut,* 248.

1951, Truffaut was also imprisoned in Koblenz where he resided for six months. Finally, Truffaut was subject to severe depressions that led him to spend one month and a half at the mental asylum of Andernach.[87] Although these years of forced loneliness and social isolation made a decisive contribution to his self-taught knowledge[88] (Truffaut annotated the list of books he read in his diary and multiplied his correspondence letters with his friends, among whom André and Janine Bazin, Robert Lachenay, Louise de Vilmorin, Jean Cocteau and Jean Genet), this mistreated youth was essential in raising Truffaut's consciousness and developing his moral sensibility toward children's suffering.[89] As a matter of fact, Truffaut became a member of the sponsorship committee of the 'Secours Populaire Français' and was made president of the benefactors' committee for the 'SOS Villages d'Enfants' in 1964 and 1967, respectively. In April 1968, Truffaut's experience and views on the issue of abused children were broadcasted on the radio-station *France Culture*.[90] In the context of the international year of the child in 1979, Truffaut gave an engaging speech in which he raised awareness of third-world tragedies such as the massacre of children perpetrated by the Central African emperor Bokassa in spring of that same year, and the cinema fire in the Iranian city of Abadan in August 1978, killing nearly 400 innocents.[91] Truffaut's activism to protect children's rights was an ethical position that had a straightforward influence on his directing.

During one of his rare 1980s interviews with *Cahiers*, Truffaut reflected on the importance of adapting his fictional children to the true personality of the young actors. This working method allowed a more pedagogical relation with the children and, at the same time, preserved a certain degree of integrity in terms of acting. By contrast, Truffaut criticised Godard who tended to manipulate the interviewed children to prove his own political viewpoints in *France tour détour deux enfants* (1977–1978). Godard's editing techniques, according to Truffaut, overthrew the intrinsic relation between aesthetics and morality:

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[87] Insdorf, *François Truffaut*, 175–177.
[88] de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut,* 68.
[89] François Truffaut, *Letters*, eds. Gilles Jacob, Claude de Givray and Gilbert Adair (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 56–76.
[90] de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut,* 262.
[91] François Truffaut, '1979, Année de l'enfance assassinée', *L'argent de poche de François Truffaut* (1979), Accessed March 29, 2013, http://www2.ac-lyon.fr/enseigne/arts-culture/IMG/pdf/entretien_avec_F.Truffaut.pdf

> Il ne s'intéresse à eux qu'à condition qu'ils disent ce qu'il a envie d'entendre. Il y a cette petite fille dans *Tour détour* qui refuse pendant dix minutes de dire que l'école est une prison, simplement parce qu'elle ne le pense pas. À la fin, Godard surimpressionne sa voix off pour dire que cette petite fille parle déjà comme 'une petite vieille'. C'est un procédé dégoûtant, c'est ce qu'il appelle communiquer avec les autres![92]

Although Truffaut's actors bring to life aspects of the director's personality and/or biography, he also gives them a certain degree of interpretative freedom in order to create a balance between performance and directing.[93] Léaud is never completely forgotten behind Antoine Doinel and Claude Roc. Both fictional characters are in fact the imaginary synthesis between Truffaut, Léaud and, additionally, in the case of Claude Roc, Roché. Similarly, the psychotic nature of Adèle somewhat reflects, in a fictional way, Truffaut's difficulty to separate his intimate life from his art.[94]

In the early 1970s, Truffaut's personal involvement in the feral case of Victor de L'Averyron through his role as the scientist was nonetheless understood as a self-valorising and bourgeois strategy:

> Si le cinéaste se garde de montrer si l'effort du maître et de l'élève sera réellement payant, si même il insiste sur la passion de la vérité (qui est tout sauf un gain) qui anime Itard, et feint de n'inscrire aucun gain comme finalité à son travail, la savante frustration qu'il inflige à son spectateur […] ne peut faire que réactiver, mettre en valeur, le rassurer sur ses propres convictions humanisantes et moralisantes.[95]

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[92] 'These kids only interest him on the condition that they tell what he wants to hear. There is a little girl in *Tour détour* who, during ten minutes, refuses to say that school is a prison simply because she doesn't think so. At the end, Godard superimposes his own voice-over that says that this little girl already speaks like a "little old lady". This working technique is disgusting, that's what he calls communicating with people!'[My translation, ZTZ]. François Truffaut, Serge Daney, Jean Narboni and Serge Toubiana, 'Entretien avec François Truffaut (2e partie)', *Cahiers du cinéma* 316 (October 1980): 23.

[92] Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 33.

[93] Insdorf, *François Truffaut*, 70–71.

[94] The theme of abandonment, which permeates the stories of Victor and Adèle Hugo, was also related to Truffaut's personal search for his biological father. In 1968 Truffaut hired a detective (just as Doinel in *Baisers volés*) to discover the identity of his biological father, who abandoned his mother before he was born. This confidential search reported that Truffaut's father, Roland Levy, was a Jewish dental surgeon who was still living in Paris, boulevard Carnot. See de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut,* 249

[95] 'If the director is careful not to show whether the master's and the pupil's hard work really pays off, if he insists on Itard's passion for truth (which is everything but gain) and feigns not to pursue any final

Not only the *Cahiers* fellows criticised Truffaut's paradoxical association of authorial sovereignty with altruistic action but Godard also personally attacked *La nuit américaine* (1973). Although the historical topic of *L'enfant sauvage*, is, from a thematic point of view, poles apart from the contemporary and self-reflexive *La nuit américaine*, both works posit Truffaut (alias Ferrand and Jean Itard) as a caring and ingenious figure at the origin of a creation: Victor is Itard's scientific mission and *Je vous présente Pamela* is Ferrand's movie project. Understanding the terms of Godard's criticism will further clarify Truffaut's 1970s commercial strategies when reinterpreting the auteurist discourse.

At *La nuit américaine*'s release, Godard specifically associated Truffaut's cinema with a 'lie', by deploring his lack of criticism toward the cinema industry: 'Yesterday I saw *La nuit américaine*. Probably no one else will call you a liar, so I will. It's no more an insult than 'fascist', it's a criticism, and it's the absence of criticism that I complain of in the films of Chabrol, Ferreri, Verneuil, Delannoy, Renoir, etc.'[96] In his letter, Godard not only erases the frontier between 'tradition of quality' and 'cinema d'auteur' by placing Truffaut, Renoir and Chabrol in the same category as Delannoy and Verneuil, but also stresses the political divisions within the group of the Nouvelle Vague representatives. The common ground between these filmmakers, according to Godard, lay in their disinclination to challenge the bourgeois values of classical Hollywood cinema and, as such, to participate in the creation of films that reflect their own political conservatism and conformism. Since the 'cultural revolution' of May 1968, the essayistic films directed by the Dziga Vertov group sought to break with the idea of cinema as a means for individual self-expression and defended the conception of filmmaking as a form of struggle against the reigning bourgeois ideology.[97] With this in mind, *La nuit américaine* could paradoxically be interpreted as homage to the Golden Age of French cinema. In fact, Truffaut not only commemorated the tradition of studio shooting by using the Victorine studios as the main set of this transnational work (produced by Warner Brothers), but also contributed to the worldwide promotion of the French 'auteur' cinema.

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benefit from his work, the astute frustration he inflicts on the spectator […] can only reactivate, value and reassure his own humanising and moralising convictions' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Oudart and Daney, 'L'enfant sauvage': 28.

[96] Truffaut, *Letters*, 383.

[97] Sébastien Layerle, *Caméras en lutte en mai 68* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2008), 142–146.

On the one hand, Truffaut represented cinema as the outcome of the director's talent as negotiator, adviser and artist and, on the other hand, revived the illusion that filmmaking was an activity disconnected from the working class and the rest of society. As a result of Truffaut's desire to open up French filmmaking to Hollywood productions, his 1970s films focused on universal themes, like the sentimental subplots composing *La nuit américaine*, and laid claim, at the same time, to the cultural specificities of French cinema. Truffaut's position as a celebrity French auteur that placed most of his efforts in pleasing the international audience was clearly problematic.[98] Truffaut emphasised the antagonistic nature of the French and the American way of filmmaking by associating Ferrand (played by himself) to the figure of a paternal and idealistic director, and the American film producers to financial sharks. The representation of French and American cultures as incompatible heightened the film's chauvinistic tone. Indeed, Truffaut misrepresented the contemporaneous state of French cinema by associating the film director to what Hugo Frey named the 'New Wave genius'.[99] In *La nuit américaine*, the parallel Truffaut draws between the team work undertaken during the shooting and the relationship network of 'une grande famille' (with its melodramatic moments of conflict, deaths, forgiveness and reconciliations) undermines the hierarchical nature of the cinema industry; an issue which was at the heart of Godard's film militancy.[100]

As a consequence of Truffaut's political conservatism, his films found less notice among the reviews of *Cahiers du cinéma*.[101] Following *L'enfant sauvage*, the editorial team remained silent about *Les deux anglaises et le continent*, *Une belle fille comme moi* (1972), *La nuit américaine*, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* and *L'argent de poche*. Michel Capdenac insightfully referred to Truffaut's increasingly old-fashioned way of thinking cinema in his review of *L'enfant sauvage,* where he compares him to Pygmalion:

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[98] American critics welcomed Truffaut's films in a more positive light than the French press during the 1970s. See Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, 21.

[99] Hugo Frey, *Nationalism and the Cinema in France* (Oxford: Berghan Books, 2014), 22.

[100] The famous 'break-up' between Godard and Truffaut was the result of an earlier cleavage within *Cahiers du cinéma*, between directors who understood cinema as a political object and those who remained faithful to the individualistic bias of the politique des auteurs through aesthetic practices that actively contribute to the dissemination of bourgeois ideology. Already in 1967, Truffaut openly told *Cahiers* that he wanted to continue creating films for spectators' pleasure, because, 'as Fellini and Welles would agree, the purpose of entertainment is linked to the mise-en-scène'. See Truffaut, Comolli and Narboni, 'François Truffaut ou le juste milieu': 69.

[101] Jim Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinéma. 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 339.

> […] un pygmalion qui voudrait tirer une étincelle de vie et d'intelligence non pas d'une trop belle statue, mais d'un petit être fruste, muré dans ses propres ténèbres, dont se révèle peu à peu, au cours d'un difficile et parfois pathétique 'apprentissage', la personnalité cachée, complexe, faite d'élans secrets vers la liberté perdue.[102]

In contrast with Rivette, who engaged with the myth of Pygmalion through a reflection on the relationship of cinema with painting in *La Belle Noiseuse*, Truffaut approaches the notion of metamorphosis through the theme of education. Just like Itard taught Victor how to walk on two feet, Truffaut takes on the role of the omniscient instructor by guiding the young Jean-Pierre Cargol on-screen and off-screen **(fig. 4.4.)**.[103] Truffaut's role as an educator is a theme that binds *L'enfant sauvage* and *La chambre verte* together. As a matter of fact, Truffaut, in the role of Julien Davenne, familiarizes George, a young deaf-mute, with the image of death through the projection of historical photos of dead soldiers during the Great War. In both films, Truffaut considers photographic images and verbal language as communication tools between two individuals; similarly, cinema unifies the bond between author and spectator.

While Rivette, like Truffaut, understood cinema as a pleasurable and human-centred experience, the latter never questioned the idea of verbal language as a vehicle of bourgeois ideology. On the contrary, Truffaut demonstrates through the controversial topic of the feral child, that he believes in the communicative potential of cinema and, more specifically, in the association of the director with a pedagogical figure:[104]

> Et dans mon désir de faire ce film est entré une part d'agacement contre ce dont on parle depuis quelques temps: l'incommunicabilité. 'C'est le même vocabulaire mais on ne se comprend pas'. Je trouve qu'on a trop 'raffiné' autour de cette idée.

[102] '[…] a Pygmalion who strives to create a spark of life and intelligence out of a rough little being (rather than a beautiful statue), imprisoned in his own darkness, whose personality is progressively revealed through a difficult and sometimes moving 'learning': a hidden and complex personality, who secretly dreams of a lost freedom' [My translation, ZTZ]. Michel Capdenac, 'Le propre de l'homme', *Lettres françaises* (February 25, 1970): 15.
[103] Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 256.
[104] In this regard, Philippe Bernert agreed that Dr Itard conformed more to the image of a 'pedagogue' than a 'scientist'. See Philippe Bernert, 'L'histoire du vrai Mowgli de l'Aveyron', *L'aurore* (February 26, 1970): 14.

> Antonioni, notamment. Je dis souvent de lui que c'est le seul bon cinéaste que je n'aime pas.[105]

In the same way as Truffaut represented literature as a spiritual and emotional bond between reader and author, he portrayed knowledge through laborious and repetitive tasks like skill-building games requiring logical thinking and sound-mimicking exercises. In *Fahrenheit 451* and *L'enfant sauvage*, the assimilation and remembrance of western literary and cultural patrimony becomes the supreme goal of the 'ignorant' characters.

As this final section will show, from the mid-1970s onwards, Truffaut adapted nineteenth-century stories that went against the 'coming-of-age' pattern of *L'enfant sauvage* and *Les deux anglaises*. On the contrary, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* and *La chambre verte* trace back the stories of Adèle and Julien's self-destructive passions. Just as John Orr compared the narrative structure of *Jules et Jim* and *Les deux anglaises* to 'reverse love triangles', Adèle and Julien have stories that intersect.[106]

4.5. Adèle and Julien: failure and exile as romantic paradigms

Truffaut's personal and professional drama resides in dialectics of gains and losses: to bet on the bourgeois, author-centred and commercial value of cinema was to sacrifice, from the mid-1960s onwards, his title of pioneer of post-war modern filmmaking, as well as to lose influence on his own magazine and amongst his former colleagues. This chapter developed the claim that Truffaut's understanding of cinema's relation with nineteenth-century literary culture and authorship drove him towards an increasingly retired and anachronistic position in the last two decades before his death. Truffaut's personal fear of exclusion and self-preservation mechanisms led him to identify with the mad passions of nineteenth-century historical and fictional characters, who neglected their relationship with the present and lived blinded by their illusions. In both *L'histoire*

[105] 'There was also an important part of me who wanted to do this film as a response to the annoying and trendy topic of the incommunicability. The "it's the same vocabulary but we don't understand each other". I believe this idea has been too much "refined". Notably Antonioni. I often say that he is the only good filmmaker that I dislike' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 258.
[106] John Orr, 'The Impasse of Intimacy: Romance and Tragedy in Truffaut's Cinema', in *A Companion to François Truffaut*, eds. Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 156.

d'Adèle H. and *La chambre verte*, the idea of sacrifice, an important concept of the politique des auteurs, becomes the leading motif behind Truffaut's aesthetic choices:

> Réussir c'est rater. Je veux finalement défendre la thèse: Abel Gance auteur raté de films ratés. Je suis convaincu qu'il n'est pas de grands cinéastes qui ne sacrifient quelque chose: Renoir sacrifiera tout (scénario – dialogue – technique) au profit d'un meilleur jeu de l'acteur. Hitchcock sacrifie la vraisemblance policière au profit d'une situation extrême par avance choisie, Rossellini sacrifie les raccords de mouvements et de lumière pour une plus grande chaleur des interprètes, Murnau, Hawks, Lang sacrifient le réalisme du cadre et de l'ambiance.[107]

As in *La chambre verte*, the sacrificial dimension of *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* resides in Truffaut's renunciation to critically engage with historical material. Instead, he draws the spectators' full attention to Adèle's *idée fixe* and obsessions. Constant allusion to the ideas of repetition, insistence and perseverance permeate films as different as *Fahrenheit 451*, *L'enfant sauvage* and *La chambre verte*. In the case of Adèle Hugo, however, the insistence of her actions does not culminate in some sentimental or intellectual achievement but suggests Adèle's emotional stages towards mental deterioration. The visual emphasis on Adèle's face somewhat mirrors a scriptwriting process based on selection, extraction and dissecting. Truffaut excludes historical information external to Adèle's expatriate life and filters any geographical location through Adèle's consciousness. For example, Truffaut represents the geographical distance that separates Adèle Hugo from her family by juxtaposing a high-angle shot of the ocean to a close-up shot of Adèle, who recites out loud her letter to her father while staring at the camera**.** Truffaut's mission was not to reconstitute, in a great deal of anecdotes and contextual details, the life of Hugo's daughter but to rehabilitate a forgotten historical figure by cutting out the historical thickness of the manuscript and aggrandising, instead, Adèle's emotional life and behavioural responses to passion and

[107] 'Succeeding is failing. I would ultimately like to defend the thesis: Abel Gance failed author of failed films. I am convinced that there is no great filmmaker who does not sacrifice something. Renoir sacrifices everything (script – dialog- technique) to favour the actor's performance. Hitchcock sacrifices detective credibility to privilege an extreme situation he had already planned in advance. Rossellini sacrifices the continuity between movement and light to better experience the warmth of his actors. Murnau, Hawks, Lang sacrifice realism in their settings and atmosphere' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, 51–52.

sickness.[108] From an aesthetic perspective, Truffaut privileges interior evening shots that better reflect Adèle's emotional changes. Rarely going out during the day, Adèle Hugo is performed by Adjani, whose pale complexion shines through the obscurity of gas lighted rooms. Whether it is through close-ups or superimposed images, Truffaut's attention to Adjani's facial expressions creates an emphasis on the melodramatic dimension of the film and, in turn, places historical time as a geographical, distant and decorative backdrop against which Adèle's story unfurls. Indeed, in the opening scene, Truffaut stresses the fictional dimension of the film through a nineteenth-century world map that indicates the geographical position of Halifax. At the same time, a voice-over summarizes the historical context by evoking the American Civil War and the British troops' occupation of Nova Scotia, where European travellers, among whom Adèle H., disembark from the ocean liner. Similarly, towards the end of the film, the shot of a newspaper communicates the troop's relocation from Halifax to Barbados. In both cases this historical information supports the narrative change of settings. Truffaut justifies this minimalistic approach to history by naming *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* 'une histoire d'amour à un seul personnage'.[109] As such, Truffaut was not interested in creating a period film based on the historical value of Adèle Hugo's journal but was rather committed to pay tribute to an individuality by obsessively filming the woman's forgotten face. In Truffaut's praise of Abel Gance's *La tour de Nesle* (1955), Truffaut admired the director's ability to take risks. In fact, Truffaut evaluated the greatness of Gance through the director's audacity to turn a commissioned historical drama into a *western de cape et d'épée* by amplifying the film's melodramatic style, to the risk of making a laughing stock out of it:

> Il me souvient du grand plan de Pampanini se regardant dans la glace, monologuant intérieurement, donc muet. Vingt centimètres séparaient la glace du visage, le visage de l'objectif. A vingt centimètres de la glace, du visage et de l'objectif se tenait, hors champs, Abel Gance. C'est lui qui, penché vers l'actrice imposée et italienne prononçait le monologue qu'à l'écran débiterait une doubleuse: 'Regarde-toi Marguerite de Bourgogne, regarde-toi dans la

[108] de Baecque explained that Truffaut's aesthetic choices in *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* were also a consequence of economic constraints, see Antoine de Baecque, 'La construction d'une indépendence: François Truffaut et les Films du Carosse', in *Une histoire économique du cinéma français (1895–1995): Regards croisés franco-américains*, ed. Pierre-Jean Benghozi (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 223.
[109] 'a love story with one single protagonist' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 331.

> glace; qu'es-tu devenue? Tu n'es plus qu'une salope!...' (Je cite de mémoire).[110]

It seems to me that the spectators experienced a similar audacity, twenty years later, when watching Truffaut's close-ups on Adjani's moaning, suffocating and feverish face. Truffaut represents Adèle's feelings of sorrow, confusion, claustrophobia and neurosis through striking editing techniques that externalise the pathos of her plight. On this matter, editing devices like crossfading and the superimposition of images were, in the 1970s, a great subject of experimentation. While television and video technologies gave filmmakers the opportunity to explore new editing possibilities as shown, for example, in Godard's television series *France tour détour deux enfants*, Truffaut stuck to the traditional 35mm format and experimented with montage for storytelling and dramatic purposes.[111] For instance, Truffaut highlights Adèle's deep malaise and anguish by superimposing the black and white image of a drowning Adèle to that of her agitated night of sleep **(fig. 4.5.)**. Through this oneiric sequence Truffaut gives the spectator some biographical clues to explain the origin of Adèle's illness: family drama appears as the primal burden.

Developed around the story of an unrequited love, *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* depicts the life of a nineteenth-century French woman whose father's legacy forms an essential part of her suffering. Through the ghostly allusion to Léopoldine Hugo's drowning, Truffaut implies that Adèle's affliction originates from her search for paternal recognition. As a result, she desperately and unsuccessfully struggles to get lieutenant Pinson's attention and love. Born of a father unknown, Adèle Hugo becomes (in the same way as Antoine Doinel and Victor) a symbol of Truffaut's personal battle against family fracture and marginalisation. In this sense, Truffaut's cameo as an anonymous soldier in *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* has no rational purpose but possesses a 'symbolic value', as stated by the director himself.[112] The director's appearance demonstrates an empathic relation to his characters through a fictional encounter that places creator and

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[110] 'I remember Pampanini's close-up, looking silently at the mirror, with a voice-over monologue. Twenty centimeters separated the mirror to the face, the face to the lens. Abel Gance was off camera, twenty centimetres from the mirror, the face and the lens. Leaning towards the Italian actress, he pronounced the monologue that a dubber would later record: "look at you Marguerite de Bourgogne, look at you in the mirror; what have you become? You became a slut...!" (I quote from memory)' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Les films de ma vie*, 50.

[111] Michael Witt, 'Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph', in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard, 1985–2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 34.

[112] Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 332–333.

creation on an even keel. Moreover, Truffaut's staging of a hypnosis session not only implies that Adèle associates love to an individualistic and unilateral fantasy but also hints at his own vision of cinema as a means to emotionally affect the spectator through the mesmerising power of the image.[113]

Like Claude who nostalgically reflects on his naïve certainties, energy and illusions in *Les deux anglaises*, Adèle Hugo's journey is, similarly, anti-heroic and alludes to Truffaut's personal drama. Indeed, Adèle and Julien's storylines (they are driven into exile out of passion and devotion) mirror the director's isolation from French cinema's contemporary debates and developments. Self-destruction therefore becomes the underlying theme of his late 1970s adaptations, a topic that testified of Truffaut's struggle for artistic renewal. In *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*, neither Adèle nor Truffaut resist the temptation to become the protagonists of their own illusory world. Adèle Hugo, wearing man's clothes, theatrically bursts in at the reception to persuade the lieutenant, in the middle of a cemetery, to marry her. The passage from Adèle's night-time voyeuristic activities to daytime aimless wandering becomes, in this sense, Truffaut's personal (and repeated) reflection on the notion of fictional refuge. Truffaut reveals Adèle's absolute and unconditional love for Pinson by showing the ways in which she vicariously lived through her beloved actions. For instance, Adèle spies on the don-juanesque life of the lieutenant and sends him prostitutes as a personal gift. Adèle's behaviour moves from voyeuristic passivity to passionate self-exposure.[114] The gravity with which Truffaut represents the harmful consequences of Adèle's illusions and escapist desires foreshadowed one of his most intimate and misunderstood films, *La chambre verte*:

> Je ne sais pas pourquoi je fais un film comme ça. Aussi triste. Mais l'idée fixe a quelque chose de vertigineux et je crois que j'ai été entraîné dans ce vertige. Dès le début, je montre que c'est foutu: jamais le lieutenant n'aimera Adèle. Et tout le film est la description de son insistance. On a l'impression de revoir tout le temps la même scène.[115]

[113] Anne Gillain, 'Aesthetic Affinities: François Truffaut, Patrick Modiano, Douglas Sirk', in *A Companion to François Truffaut*, eds. Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 75.
[114] *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*, DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1975; MGM, 2008).
[115] 'I don't know why I am doing such a sad film. Fixed ideas are vertiginous, and I think I've been dragged into this vertigo. Right from the start I show that it's hopeless: the lieutenant will never love

Reminiscent of Flaubert's observation when defining *Madame Bovary* (1856) as this 'book about nothing', Truffaut's complaint implies his own identification with the leading character. As mentioned previously, Truffaut's detention at the German prison led him to create his own literary haven through readings sent by Bazin and his friend Lachenay. Amongst film magazines and history books, authors like Balzac, Daudet, Sartre, Duras, and Audiberti distracted Truffaut from the severe reality of prison. As far as his cinema was concerned, the association of literature to a place of refuge from everyday life led Truffaut to develop an avoidance behavior towards serious historical questions (such as world wars and the Nazi occupation of France).

As a general rule, Truffaut's films evoke history through documentary footages that are shown as detached, impersonal events that remain distant from the reality of the fictional story.[116] For instance, in *Jules et Jim*, Truffaut introduces the footage of World War I trench warfare as a narrative device that justifies the temporal gap that precedes Jules et Jim's reunion. He similarly insinuates the rise to power of Hitler through images of the Nazi auto-da-fe that were screened in the secluded and disconnected space of a cinema theatre. The beginning credits of *La chambre verte* also open with archival material of trench warfare that is superimposed with a close-up of the helmeted Julien Davenne, and accompanied by Maurice Jaubert's orchestral ensemble. In both films, these documentary images are systematically manipulated for fictional purposes: in *Jules et Jim,* the film theatre not only informs the French spectator about Nazism but the book burning warns the spectator of an impending tragedy (which involves Catherine and Jim). In *La chambre verte*, the documentary footage retains a dramatic quality through Jaubert's prelude of the *Concert Flamand* and sets the elegiac tone of Henry James' novella.[117] In another comparable case, historical tragedies aren't directly reported by archival material but are implied through artistic legacy. In the epilogue of *Les deux anglaises*, Truffaut suggests the death toll of the Great War through works of art: Auguste Rodin's commemorative sculpture of Balzac, the monument *Les bourgeois de Calais* and the representation of Ugolin's damnation in *L'enfer*. Truffaut's views on history are therefore refracted through fictional narratives. Moreover, Truffaut chooses works of art and literature, which, according to Michael Klein, embody notions of

Adèle. The entire film is the description of her insistence. We have the impression that we are watching the same scene again and again' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 325.
[116] Insdorf, *François Truffaut*, 87.
[117] Ibid., 224.

respectability and French cultural pride.[118] While it could be argued that Balzac and Rodin were considered 'revolutionary figures' in their own times, the State posthumously created literary and art museums in their honour hence establishing their creations and a considerable part of their heritage and holdings to the rank of national patrimony. In *L'enfant sauvage*, Truffaut hints at the historical context by emphasizing the nineteenth-century crowd's taste for spectacles and fairs; in return for some coins, the managers of the National Institute for Deaf Mutes organise regular visits to exhibit *le sauvage*.[119] In *Le dernier métro* (1980), Truffaut avoids bringing issues on the Nazi occupation to the forefront and, instead, focuses on representing the micro-community of Parisian actors by situating the large majority of his film within the walls of a local theatre during the Vichy era.[120] Truffaut's memory of the occupation as an entertainment-filled period (theatres, cinemas and cabarets were thriving due to the high public attendance rate) possibly had a shaping hand on the director's approach to history:

> Quand on me dit que la France a attendu la Libération, j'ai sincèrement l'impression que ce n'est pas vrai. J'ai vu autour de moi beaucoup d'indifférence. Des gens qui sortaient le soir, qui allaient au théâtre, au cinéma parce que la vie des spectacles était très importante pendant la guerre. J'habitais au croisement de la rue Henri-Monnier et de la rue Frochot, à Pigalle. Il y avait des musiciens dans la rue avec lesquels je jouais en rentrant de l'école.[121]

It is therefore the remembrance of human lives, over the memory of historical tragedies that Truffaut's cinema continually prioritised. When commenting about his scriptwriting techniques, Truffaut explains: 'Au moment où le besoin s'en fait sentir il y a toujours un souvenir qui arrive à débloquer une scène: "Je me souviens d'un type

[118] Michael Klein, '*The Story of Adele H.*: the Twilight of Romanticism', *Jump Cut* 10–11 (1976): 13–15, Accessed April 7, 2016, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/AdeleH.html

[119] To learn more about Truffaut's pre-production work, see de Baecque and Toubiana, *Truffaut*, 260–261.

[120] Bonnaffons, *François Truffaut, La figure inachevée*, 192–193.

[121] 'When people say to me that France waited for the Liberation, I sincerely feel that it's not true. The atmosphere was full of indifference. People were going out in the evenings to watch plays, to attend screenings, because entertainment was very important during the war. My home was situated in the intersection of the Henri-Monnier street and the Frochot street, in Pigalle. There were street musicians with whom I used to play when returning from school' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 21.

qui…" ou: "Un jour dans la rue j'ai vu…'''.[122] Surely, the notion of memory in *La chambre verte* is certainly not subject to time-travel experiences as in *La jetée* and *Je t'aime, je t'aime*. Julien's memory of the dead interestingly resembles the old lady's fetishisation of books in *Fahrenheit 451*. For example, when the director of the journal *Le globe* suggests Julien move to Paris in order to work for a more recent and topical weekly newspaper, the latter answers that, if *Le globe* is to be sold, he would rather be sold with it: 'vendez-moi avec les meubles, les dossiers, les machines à écrire même'.[123] Just as the old lady wishes to die amongst her books, which, according to her own words, were 'alive', and 'spoke' to her, Julien privileges the dead over the living, and describes the altar of the dead as a 'place of life'.

Almost twenty years from *La chambre verte*, Truffaut gave us the foretaste of his passion for literary authors, through the altar to Balzac, created by Doinel (who, in a moment of reverence, lights a candle in front of the author's portrait). The young boy's devotional torch was, successively, passed on to Guy Montag and Julien Davenne; the former through the personification of books in the dystopian and marginalised corner of a forest, the latter by the edification of a human-dimension and candle-lit altar in the memory of the dead, who are represented through portrait photographs and paintings. In the same way that Bory metaphorically described *L'histoire d'Adèle H*. as the story of 'a bee against a windowpane', the story of Julien is also a story of adoration without the possibility of reciprocity, of return – if it is not through death.[124] While Adèle's absolute passion for the Lieutenant Pinson led her to live the rest of her life in the mental home of Saint-Mandé, the only outcome of Julien's absolute fidelity to his dead resided in the sacrifice of his own life. His death enabled Cecilia to achieve Julien's last will, which is none other than the completion of this 'unfinished figure', by lighting a candle in his own memory. Just as Truffaut connects Bradbury's science fiction novel to the universal and 'natural' circle of life by developing the idea of cultural transmission, *La chambre verte* highlights the continuity between death and the universal and all-powerful natural cycle (or what Barthes named the 'cosmic commonplaces'): the seasons, storms, natural disasters, and so on.[125] In fact, Julien remains evasive regarding the circumstances that caused his wife's death, and similarly, the fate of his comrades at

[122] Truffaut, Daney, Narboni and Toubiana, 'Entretien avec François Truffaut (2e partie)': 27.
[123] 'sell me along with the furniture, the files, even the typewriters' [My translation, ZTZ]. *La chambre verte*, DVD, directed by François Truffaut (1978; MGM, 2007).
[124] Jean-Louis Bory, 'L'abeille contre une vitre', *Le nouvel observateur* (October 13, 1975): 103.
[125] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 95.

arms is only mentioned in a conversation between his boss Bernard and one of his work colleagues. Although Truffaut draws very little attention to the causes of death, the pictures of the dead are obsessively shown. For instance, Julien evokes the war to the mute boy Georges through a slide show that combines photos of ruins and dead soldiers with educational illustrations of dragonflies and fleas **(fig. 4.6.)**. The realm of nature and that of history are confused, hence founding the very principle of myth: 'Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History. In it, history evaporates. […] all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from'.[126] Although there is no first person narrator to guide the spectator through the story, Davenne's moribund life is entirely consecrated to perpetuate the dead's memory through storytelling: it is indeed Julien who determines the way in which those characters must be remembered. Such partiality is shown, for example, through the merciless obituary notice to the old friend who once betrayed him: Paul Massigny. Davenne can, in this sense, be characterised as a romantic character whose search for absolute love and faithfulness (even in death!) is complemented by a rather severe, intolerant and unforgivable personality that shares common attributes with the director. Françoise Zamour has even suggested that Davenne's letter to Massigny echoes the 'devastating letter Truffaut sent to Godard in 1973, which concludes with Truffaut praising "little men" who, unlike Godard, really do care about people'.[127] Indeed, the portraits of Raymond Queneau, Audiberti, Jaubert and Jeanne Moreau, whom Truffaut deeply admired as friends and artists, are displayed in the altar.[128] By combining fictional components from Henry James' short story with autobiographical details, Truffaut adds an allegorical dimension to his work: it is no longer Davenne's place of worship but Truffaut's.

In the Truffaldian altar of the dead, the spectator discovers the recognisable look of Jean Cocteau, hanging below the photo of an unknown child. On the far right of the wall, Truffaut added the familiar face of Mr Flint in *Les deux anglaises*, a role played by Mark Peterson. At the bottom, we find Oskar Werner. Whilst presenting his departed friends to Cecilia through anecdotes which honour the singularity of each dead, Truffaut/Davenne's eyes shine with wonderment: 'Regardez cet homme avec son si beau visage. Toute sa vie il a souffert de timidité, d'une timidité incroyable. J'aimerais

[126] Ibid., 152.
[127] Françoise Zamour, '*La Chambre Verte* and the Beating Heart of Truffaut's Oeuvre', in *A Companion to François Truffaut*, eds. Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 564.
[128] Zamour, '*La Chambre Verte* and the Beating Heart of Truffaut's Oeuvre', 564.

vous parler de lui, mais c'est difficile. Il faudrait vous communiquer le timbre de sa voix qui était incroyable'.[129] By saying so, Truffaut implies that the cinematic medium is inherently novelistic since it offers the photographic and thereby sensory experience that literary storytelling lacks. In fact, Truffaut emphasises the esoteric dimension of James' novella by transposing the scenery to the grey, stormy and deserted environment of the French eastern countryside during the interwar years.[130] The candle lighting of his dead friends and other anonymous portraits acts as a reminder of Truffaut's close-ups on book covers and printed pages in *Fahrenheit 451*. The economy of settings (which consists of three major shooting locations: Davenne's house, his work office and the cemetery) suggests the protagonist's retirement from the world of the living. Furthermore, the film's greenish and de-saturated atmosphere unambiguously places the main character in the realm of the dead. As a counterpoint to the sinister atmosphere, Julien recounts the dead's life stories with a remarkable enthusiasm and energy. In the same way as Davenne's obituaries can be eloquent, vindictive, light-hearted and touching, cinema, according to Truffaut, has the power to stimulate the spectator's imagination and embellish everyday life by founding stories on germs of truth. In *La Chambre Verte*, Truffaut represents death as an *individuality* and not as an abstraction. Similarly, while science fiction as a genre belongs to the 'cinema of ideas' (a concept which was often criticised by Truffaut), *Fahrenheit 451* paradoxically emphasises the importance for characters to connect with their inner emotions, to develop a psychology through literature. Clearly, cinema, according to Truffaut should privilege individualities over political stands: 'Non, je ne suis sûrement pas un novateur puisque je fais partie du dernier carré à croire aux notions de personnages, de situations, de progression, de péripéties, de fausses pistes, en un mot à la représentation'.[131] Therefore, cinematic and photographic repetition in *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* and *La chambre verte* (whether it concerns a character's behaviour or a stylistic choice) become the director's main tool for memory and recollection; in the latter film, the religious collection of the bride's post mortem belongings and portraits as well as the funerary rites in honour of Julien's wife and departed friends give the spectator the

[129] 'Look at this man with the handsome face. All his life, he was shy, incredibly shy. I'd like to tell you about him but it's difficult. You'd have to hear the sound of his extraordinary voice.'
[130] Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 372.
[131] 'I am certainly not an innovator because I am probably part of the last group of people who still believe in the notions of fictional characters, situations, progression, adventures, wrong tracks, in a word: in representation' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, Daney, Narboni and Toubiana, 'Entretien avec François Truffaut (2e partie)': 35.

impression of watching the same scene over and over. Truffaut took the risk, to self-expose his fears and obsessions by giving them the central place in *La chambre verte*, hence consolidating Bory's comparison of *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* to a 'film-monologue' (or to a 'one woman show'). The fear of forgetting and of being forgotten is, indeed, an underlying thread that characterises his entire filmography. Two years after the release of *La chambre verte*, Truffaut stated that he refused to break with the legacy of his 'fathers':

> Quand on attaquait les *Quatre cents coups* en disant: 'C'est du Pagnol', à cause du thème de la bâtardise, ou: 'C'est du Dickens' ou encore 'C'est du mélo', je ne ressentais aucune de ses propositions comme péjoratives. Je me suis contenté de citer le vieux dicton 'Qui n'entend qu'une cloche n'entend qu'un son', en ajoutant que, si on me laissait faire, je me proposais d'apporter mon propre 'son de cloche'.[132]

Certainly, the tragedy of *La chambre verte* resides in the foretaste of one of French cinema's most important losses. Significantly, Truffaut's last film adaptation interrogated the limits of his own aesthetic beliefs: 'Je n'adhère pas complètement au personnage, et il m'arrive de le critiquer. C'est un demi-fou, avec une idée fixe, mais ce qui importe c'est qu'il refuse l'oubli. Pour moi, c'est important ce refus'.[133] Truffaut (alias Davenne), whose death is staged at the heart of the temple, associates his vision of cinema with one that has ceased to exist, hence reinforcing his position as a classic director. Indeed, at the time of Truffaut's death, film historians like Philippe de Comes and Michel Marmin relegated his name to the rank of 'veteran' French director, whereas Godard still enjoys the title of 'patron saint' of modern cinema through films that experiment, every year, with cutting-edge technology (the 3D computer techniques have no more secrets for him).[134] The nationalistic connotation of the term veteran somewhat highlights the fact that Truffaut's cinema achieved a patriotic goal which, in the light of

[132] 'I never felt bad when people criticised the *400 Blows* by suggesting: "It's Pagnolesque" because of the illegitimate issue, "It's like Dickens", or "it's melodrama". I just referred them to an old saying: "you should always get both sides of the story" and added that, if allowed, I would be pleased to bring "my own side of the story"' [My translation, ZTZ]. Ibid.

[133] 'I don't completely agree with the character, I know that sometimes I criticise him. He is half-insane, with a fixed idea, but what matters is that he refuses to forget. And that's very important to me' [My translation, ZTZ]. Truffaut, *Le cinéma selon François Truffaut*, 372.

[134] See the table of contents of Philippe de Comes and Michel Marmin, *Le cinéma français 1960–1985* (Paris: Éditions Atlas, 1985).

this chapter, could be characterised by Truffaut's contribution to the Gallic myth of freedom, individuality, creativity and difference.[135] Like Adèle in *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*, Davenne's love for his late wife is absolute, and connects, as such, with one of the most important themes of Balzac's literature, that is, the analogical relationship between the love for a woman and the love for art. Whether it is the love for women, the love for a child and the (longing) love for a maternal and paternal figure, Truffaut erected the reality of human relationships to the rank of art through films that reflect his own imaginative interpretation and creativity. As proved by Truffaut's adaptations of nineteenth-century novels and memoirs, it is only through the representation of the romanticised other (Henri-Pierre Roché, Adèle Hugo, Victor de l'Aveyron, Julien Davenne) that Truffaut, like Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens and Henry James, found access to self-representation.

[135] See Barthes' definition of individualism in McQuillan, *Roland Barth*es, 95–96.

Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.6.

CHAPTER FIVE

De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène,
Qu'importe, si tu rends, – fée aux yeux de velours,
Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine! –
L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds?

– Charles Baudelaire[1]

5.1. Introduction

Since Jean-Luc Godard's first feature length, *À bout de souffle* (1960), the problem of representation has been at the centre of his mise-en-scène, through films that explored the instability of meaning and the deceptive mechanisms of classical realism. Godard's evolving aesthetic practices disregarded psychological and autobiographical insinuations, historical reconstitutions and classical narrative structures. During the first two decades of his filmmaking, Godard did not seek to adapt the nineteenth-century novel and, instead, incorporated textual quotes, visual references, parodic instances and archival footage belonging from different epochs into contemporary narratives. Whether it is in films as different as *Vivre sa vie* (1962) and *La chinoise* (1967), Godard turned nineteenth-century themes and motifs into allegorical tools that helped expressing artistic issues, which were in line with contemporary social concerns. For instance, Godard reflected on the gap separating the notions of muse and prostitute through excerpts from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Oval Portrait* (1842) in *Vivre sa vie* and re-assessed the French Revolution's legacy by dressing Jean-Pierre Léaud (alias Guillaume, a Maoist actor) as a Republican guard in *La Chinoise*. In contrast with Truffaut, who considered nineteenth-century novels and memoirs as the storytelling origin of fictional and self-referential narrative films, Godard used nineteenth-century artistic and literary figures for pictorial and allegorical purposes. According to French poet and novelist, Louis Aragon, Godard did not represent history but, instead, created

[1] 'Angel or siren, spirit, I don't care,
As long as velvet eyes and perfumed head
And glimmering motions, o my queen, can make
The world less dreadful, and the time less dead.' Charles Baudelaire, 'Hymne à la beauté', in *Les fleurs du mal* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961), 28. For the English version: Charles Baudelaire, 'Hymn to Beauty' (last stanza), in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45.

history, just as Eugène Delacroix, through the multi-referentiality, instantaneity, rhythm and harmony of his shapes and colours.[2] Godard's pictorialist bias, I argue, has often been interpreted as a deconstructionist tendency, which is justified by the director's lifetime concern with giving critical accounts of the different phases of modernity. As a result, scholars have continuously described his cinema as 'political', 'self-reflexive', 'poetic', 'essayist', 'pictorial' so as to find alternative notions to define Godard's subversive approach to the bourgeois conventions of cinematic representation.

In the light of Godard's 1980s narrative films, general consensus has analysed the director's return to sacred iconography, nineteenth-century myths and classical music as attempts to create the experience of the sublime through, for instance, images of nature that coexist, as self-sufficient and enigmatic entities, with the narrative.[3] Recently, Daniel Morgan argued that Godard's interest for natural landscapes should not be associated with a conservative stance and proposed to analyse these new aesthetic components as intrinsically connected with Godard's critique of late capitalist modernity. According to his logic, Godard engaged with the romantic tradition of aesthetics to better reflect on the meaning history has assigned to a certain type of images and on their relation to history and politics.[4] These two dominant accounts show the wide margin of interpretation Godard's late narrative films provoke.

Surely, Morgan's insightful monograph does justice to the idea of Godard as a film-philosopher who has continuously commented on the history of western culture through narrative experimentation, alienation strategies and explicit references to Marxism. While this chapter acknowledges and maintains a dialogue with the deconstructionist bias of Godard's 1960s films, I submit that it is possible to understand Godard's early 1980s films as conflicted between an endorsement of modernism and, at the same time, of romanticism. In fact, Godard engaged with nineteenth-century sources through films that, on the one hand, carry their own critique (aesthetics and politics remain inseparable) and, on the other hand, want to evade deconstruction, if only for a fleeting instant. To support this claim, my chapter details, in three parts, Godard's

[2] Louis Aragon, 'Qu'est-ce que l'art, Jean-Luc Godard?', *Les lettres françaises* 1096 (September 1965): 1–8.
[3] Marc Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: Éditions des Quatre Vents, 1989), 225; Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 96.
[4] Daniel Morgan, *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 76–77.

appropriation of the Carmen story in particular, and nineteenth-century motifs, in general.

The first part suggests that Godard's first and exclusive statement on Mérimée's novella, *Carmen* (1845), reconnects with some aesthetic premises of his early film criticism, which was known to be sceptical toward the notion of regional and national aesthetic particularisms and favoured, in turn, the universal aesthetic values of antique tragedy.[5] The mise-en-scène of *Prénom Carmen* (1983) shows that, for Godard, it is impossible to represent foreign, non-bourgeois and minor communities within a transparent, coherent and understandable representation of reality.[6] In this respect, Godard's filmmaking revived the ambivalent and ironic dimension of the novella through aesthetic strategies that expressed the irresoluteness and modernity of Mérimée's text. Just as the Merimean narrator alternates storylines and temporalities, Godard persistently digresses from Carmen's story by mixing moments of meditative, idealistic and universal value with the more ordinary, sarcastic and grotesque aspect of everyday life. By creating a dichotomous film in which the antagonistic realms of the 'ideal' and the 'spleen' meet one another, Godard's aesthetics connect with the instability of tone and bathos of Charles Baudelaire's poetry.

The second part opens with a discussion on Godard's critique of nineteenth-century realism in his 1960s films and submits that Godard looked back at the legacy of romanticism through the creation of new aesthetic forms that actively engaged with the present times and documented the history of the twentieth century.[7] To this end, I build a comparison between Baudelaire's concept of modern heroism and Godard's status as a revolutionary leader who, like Delacroix, became the 'man of the present' and only exists through his art. Once the grounds upon which his cinema engaged with romantic painting are established, I explore the impact the revolutionary disenchantment of the 1970s had on Godard's renewed approach to nineteenth-century motifs in *Passion*

[5] Marco Grosoli, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of the "politique des auteurs"', *Film Criticism* 39, 1 (Fall 2014): 33–48.

[6] Godard criticised the mainstream representation of the working class and oppressed minorities through films which deliberately keep their representatives' names anonymous (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [1967], *One + one* [1968], *British Sounds* [1969]). Of course, this practice was a recurrent pattern in the context of the Dziga Vertov collective, whose films challenged and openly denounced the transmission and perpetuation of bourgeois ideology, which was (and is still) being preserved through variant forms of realist approaches to the external world. On a similar principle, Godard strategically downplays the biographical identities of internationally acclaimed celebrities: in *Tout va bien* (1972), the pronouns *Lui* and *Elle* replace the names of Jane Fonda and Yves Montand, hence ironically implying their position as spokespersons of the bourgeoisie.

[7] Luc Moullet, 'Suivez le guide', in *Spécial Godard: Trente ans depuis*, eds. Thierry Jousse and Serge Toubiana (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1991), 104–105.

(1982) and *Prénom Carmen*. Godard's new treatment of natural iconography and classical music show a desire to incorporate melancholic impressions of unity through images of nature and musical samples and to reconnect, in an elusive and impermanent manner, with the neoclassical and universalistic aesthetic principles of the politique des auteurs.

The third part closes this chapter with an analysis of Godard's unprecedented concern with lighting in *Passion*. To complete my argument on Godard's revaluation of the relationship between cinema and romanticism, I examine the different treatments of colour and light in Godard's early narrative films and in *Passion*. Like nature and classical music, Godard's taste for light and shades insinuate a political resignation through the co-existence of alienation techniques with moments of melodious interplay between shades, movement and colours. By creating impressions of harmony in this chaotic contemporary setting, Godard highlights the impossibility of returning to an ontological conception of cinema. The sense of melancholy that inaugurates Godard's late return to narrative films, I argue, is symptomatic of Godard's conflictive position as an ex-revolutionary artist and mythical auteur. On the one hand, his cinema remains the paragon of modernism through works that consistently reinvent the art of filmmaking, on the other hand, Godard's 1980s self-inscription as an outcast and misunderstood artist suggests, to a certain extent, a desire to recognise the many times disowned affiliation to the politique des auteurs.[8]

5.2. The universal and the superfluous: Godard reads *Carmen*

Contrary to Truffaut, who conceived his position toward nineteenth-century legacy as that of a devoted torchbearer, who prevented the stories of Adèle Hugo and Victor de l'Aveyron from fading into oblivion, Godard took interest in Carmen when the subject was at the centre of everyone's attention. Godard was indeed well aware that Mérimée's novella had acquired, in the course of the century, the rank of myth. It is indeed no coincidence that he released his film in 1983, the year in which cinemas and theatres

[8] Cecilia Sayad, *Performing Authorship: Self-inscription and Corporeality in the Cinema* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 115.

screened and re-enacted contemporary readings of the novella and the opera.[9] To understand the aesthetic challenges brought by *Prénom Carmen*, summarising the context of the film's release is necessary.

In 1983, *Prénom Carmen* was competing at the Venice Film Festival against a fair number of adaptations of novels and plays, notably Gilles Carle's *Marie Chapdelaine*, Euzhan Palcy's *Rue Cases-Nègres* and Robert Altman's *Streamers*. Previous to the film's release, Peter Brook and Carlos Saura had given radical interpretations of the Carmen story through theatrical and choreo-cinematic practices that aimed to strip the artificiality of Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) and retrieve, in the first case, the 'primal', demythologised Carmen through Artauldian practices, and in the second case, the cultural authenticity of Carmen through Antonio Gades' flamenco rehearsals of the opera.[10] In contrast with Saura and, months later, Francesco Rosi's *Bizet's Carmen* (1984), Godard relocated the Carmen story from Spain to France. At the premiere, Anne de Gasperi commented on the boldness of Godard's aesthetic decision in the following terms: 'Quelle bouffée de vitalité après toutes ces histoires enchanteresses, mais tellement immobiles dans leur contexte! Carmen explose de son cadre habituel, nue comme la vérité sort du puits'.[11] Was de Gasperi indirectly criticising *Marie Chapdelaine*, an adaptation which she described as 'un superbe roman d'amour qui, une fois de plus, ne fonctionne pas'?[12] Or was *Prénom Carmen* compared against Palcy's adaptation of Joseph Zobel's novel, *La Rue Cases-Nègres* (1950)? The latter film was ranked second after *Prénom Carmen*, which won the Golden Lion. The critical and popular acclaim of Palcy's film can be explained in several ways; these factors help us understand the (inter)textual workings of the Godard film.

On the one hand, *Rue Cases-Nègres* (1983) was praised for the fact that its biographical dimension opened discussions on Martinique's colonised past. On the other hand, the film distinguished itself due to the director's personal commitment to

[9] After Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), *Carmen (*whether it is the version of Mérimée or Bizet) became the most adapted story in the history of cinema, with more than eighty film adaptations since 1906. See Phil Powrie, Bruce Babington, Ann Davies and Chris Perriam (eds.), *Carmen on Film: a Cultural History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 8–9.

[10] H. Marshall Leicester, 'Discourse and the Film Text: Four Readings of Carmen', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6 (November 1994): 254–266, Accessed April 13, 2016, doi: 10.1017/S0954586700004328

[11] 'What a breath of fresh air, after all these charming stories which stubbornly cling to their context! Carmen explodes from her customary setting and appears naked like the truth that comes out in the wash'[My translation, ZTZ]. Anne de Gasperi, 'Venise. Deux héroïnes jetées aux lions', *Le nouvel observateur* (September 9, 1983): 33.

[12] 'a superb love novel which, once more, fails to work' [My translation, ZTZ]. See de Gasperi, 'Venise. Deux héroïnes jetées aux lions': 33.

the story: Palcy is a woman who shares a common Martinican background with the writer. In between 1983 and 1984, filmmakers like Palcy and Saura questioned colonial tropes by staging a more personal and 'local' vision of their respective countries. In this regard, the rewriting of *Carmen* in the first half of the 1980s created a new set of challenges which emerged from the pressing desire to revise the Franco-centric, paternalistic, and mythologised representations of Spanish folklore, its women, and the Romany culture.

In the case of Saura's *Carmen* (1983), the director and the choreographer Gades challenged the underlying imperialist view of Spain instituted by Bizet's *Carmen*, through a choreo-film made in Spain by native Spaniards. From a narrative perspective, Saura establishes a critical distance between the audience and the flamenco dancers, who are shown rehearsing in front of mirrors, wearing rehearsal clothes, and listening to the choreographer's instructions. Rosella Simonari noted that Saura's characters express their psychological states through flamenco steps instead of communicating their emotions through dialogues, hence undermining the more touristic, entertaining and ornamental representations of Flamenco.[13] Arguably, Saura's focus on body language over the reconstitution of pre-constructed fantasies about Spain shares a common ground with Godard's interpretation of *Carmen.* Both directors approached acting through a strict refusal of psychological characterisation. In fact, the scenes involving Carmen and Joseph are, above all, rhythmic and physical, if not carnal. On three different occasions, the two lovers are seen undressing, in a determined and energetic manner. In uncle Jean's apartment, near the seaside, Joseph removes his soldier boots and throws them against the walls, whilst Carmen joyfully wanders around the empty living room. When the former asks Carmen 'Chez qui on est?' the latter pushes him abruptly against the wall and says 'Tirez-vous!'[14] Joseph replies with a 'Non!' and whilst she orders him 'Attirez-moi!', he grabs Carmen's waist and, this time, pushes her against the same wall.[15] Godard exteriorises the power game between Carmen and Don José (which has always characterised the novella as well as the opera) through marked and unrestrained movements and gestures. It is therefore the rhythm of Carmen and

[13] Rosella Simonari, 'Bringing Carmen back to Spain: Antonio Gades' Flamenco Dance in Carlos Saura's Choreofilm', *Dance Research* 26, 2 (October 2008): 196, Accessed November 3, 2015, doi: 10.3366/E0264287508000182

[14] 'Whose place is this?'/ 'Go away!' [My translation, ZTZ] *Prénom Carmen*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1983; Studiocanal, 2012).

[15] 'No!'/ 'Pull me!' [My translation, ZTZ].

Joseph's actions, and not so much their words, which evoke moments of tenderness, sexual desire, frustration and contempt.

The comparison with Saura's film, nonetheless, ends here. Saura and Godard ultimately interpret the Carmen myth in decidedly different ways. To my mind this divergence relates intrinsically to the directors' cultural identities. Whereas Saura's film aims to recover a certain idea of Spain, which attempts to escape the nineteenth-century Orientalist discourse on Andalucía, Godard uproots the novella (and, thereby, the opera) from its traditional setting, and sets the story in France.[16] The reason behind Godard's transposition of the myth in between Trouville and Paris is complex, and cannot be merely reduced to pragmatic grounds (e.g., the management of a tight budget). I suggest that we must understand this as an aesthetic but also political choice – the cultural context here pertains not simply to nation or region, but also to Godard's specific reaction to his formation as a critic and artist. In other words, Godard's return to narrative filmmaking in the 1980s meant to reconnect with, and at the same time to criticise, the aesthetic premises inherited from his formative years at the *École Schérer*.[17]

To understand this point, it is required to briefly rehearse the background with which Godard was engaging. Rohmer's film criticism revolved around the provocative analogy between classical tragedy and classical Hollywood cinema.[18] Rohmer argued that classical Hollywood encapsulated the narrative paradigm of classical tragedy by carrying, within a singular plot, the universal dialectics between freedom and constraint. His younger followers (Truffaut, Rivette, Godard and Chabrol) supported such theoretical premises.[19] Despite the political resonance of their surname, the *Jeunes Turcs* hardly advocated the foreign aesthetic alternatives proposed by 'World Cinema' directors.[20] Indeed, in the aftermath of World War II, debates opposing Hollywood

[16] The Francoist regime encouraged the glorification of 'Spanishness' and its National Catolicismo through films representing, for instance, Andalusian folkloric tales (the children films starring Joselito, or *Lola, La Piconera in* the early 1950s). See Simonari, 'Bringing Carmen back to Spain: Antonio Gades' Flamenco Dance in Carlos Saura's Choreofilm': 193.
[17] Pierre Kast first used the expression *École Schérer* in 1952. See Pierre Kast, 'Fiançailles avec le notaire. Notes sur Conrad et le cinéma', *Cahiers du cinéma* 12 (May 1952): 22.
[18] Grosoli, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of the "politique des auteurs"': 38.
[19] Ibid.: 41.
[20] Whereas the term 'Young Turks' designates, in the realm of 1950s French cinema, the group of film critics writing in both *Arts* and *Cahiers du cinéma* (Rohmer, Truffaut, Rivette, Godard and, to a certain extent, Chabrol), the origin of such expression relates to a group of senior officials, young officers, journalists, who fought against the authoritarian regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II and advocated a democratic, constitutional government, which they helped establish in 1876. European Nationalism, positivist sociology and Balkan freemasonry influenced the movement of the Young Turks. See Hasan

cinema to 'minor' national cinemas coincided with the advent of the European New Waves (Italian Neorealism, for example, emphasised the national and sometimes regional dimensions of culture and production modes).[21] The development of film festivals and forums in the late 1940s led many French film critics to write about Egyptian, Brazilian, Japanese, Mexican, Indian, Czech, Austrian and other foreign films, alongside the hegemonic Hollywood cinema. Nevertheless, Rohmer and his clique were sceptical of the singularity and peculiarities of these new cinematic forms, to the extent of referring to American Westerns (*Red River* [1948] by Howard Hawks and *The Lusty Men* [1952] by Nicholas Ray) as reviving the antique traditions of the Occident.[22]

To this day, studies on Godard commonly understand his filmic corpus as a reaction to the universalistic bias of the criticism of the Young Turks in the 1950s. For scholars scrutinising his 1960s and 1970s films, Godard's famous comment against the politique des auteurs works like a refrain: 'la notion d'auteur est une notion complètement réactionnaire'.[23] Ramona Fotiade defined Godard's early filmmaking methods in *À bout de souffle* (1960) as a deconstructive approach to cinema, which consists in 'working with existing conventions in order to expose and subvert the limitations of both genre and filming technique'.[24] In regards to Godard's revolutionary cinema, an outstanding number of studies have applied the deconstructionist and postmodern theories of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze to analyse the director's political aesthetics in the aftermath of May 1968.[25] The mission of the Dziga Vertov group was, according to Roberto Chiesi, to revolutionise the system of production and distribution through the intensive creation of 'new' images that radically

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Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks, Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1909–1918* (London: University of California Press, 1997), 38–44.

[21] Marijke de Valk, *Film Festivals, from European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 59.

[22] 'Cette factice, inhumaine, monstrueuse Amérique reprendrait-elle de nos mains le flambeau de la plus pure tradition de l'Occident – grecque ou chrétienne, chevaleresque ou tragique, peu importe, si intimement se sont-elles mêlées au cours des siècles?'/ 'This fake, inhuman, monstrous America is taking from us the torch of the purest western tradition. Whether it is Greek or Christian, epic or tragic, it has no real importance. All these traditions have thoroughly been mixed up over the centuries' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Maurice Schérer, 'Livres de Cinéma', *Cahiers du cinéma* 37 (July 1954): 58.

[23] 'The notion of author is a completely reactionary notion' [My translation, ZTZ]. Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard par Godard. Des années Mao aux années 80* (Paris : Flammarion, 1991), 64.

[24] Ramona Fotiade, *À bout de souffle: French Film Guide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 38–39.

[25] When analysing *Le gai savoir* (1969), Morrey considers Godard's film aesthetics as a practical *demonstration* of the deconstruction of the concept of truth, a position that unites postructuralist thinkers such as Barthes, Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault. See Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 90.

contrasted and challenged bourgeois iconography.[26] Although it is impossible not to envision Godard's cinema as a real challenge to bourgeois culture, his aesthetic stance in the 1980s hesitates between Marxist-inflected disruptive strategies and the sensualist belief in cinema as an art of space, within which the idea reveals itself through sheer appearances.[27] It was indeed Godard who, when reviewing Alfred Hitchcock's *Stranger on a Train* (1951) echoed the Kantian equation of beauty and nature so dear to Éric Rohmer: 'Certes, le cinéma défie la réalité mais il ne se dérobe point à elle, s'il entre dans le présent c'est pour lui donner le style dont il manque'.[28] While some scholars might regard this two-faceted aspect of Godard's cinema as contradictory and problematic (which, in appearance, it is), the analysis of *Prénom Carmen*'s narrative and stylistic components will allow a more nuanced conclusion.

In the 1980s, unprecedented attention to Godard's engagement with high art has surfaced and revealed the director's desire to build a new discourse on artistic and literary traditions. *Passion*, *Prénom Carmen* and *Je vous salue, Marie* (1985), sometimes termed the 'trilogy of the sublime', have an altogether simple organisation: Godard's narrative films, which deal with the representation of western mythologies, are repetitively permeated with natural landscapes and classical soundtracks.[29] More than audio components, music and nature manifest themselves through striking visuals, which interrupt the narrative flow. It seems to me that Godard's new taste for natural iconography and classical composers reveals a desire to rethink cinema in terms of an inherently western medium. In line with the geographical displacement of the Carmen story (from Spain to France), the reference to nature and musical classics adds to the idea that Godard wants to capture 'something' of the legend, which goes beyond the entertaining and exotic bias of Bizet's opera. Rather, it is the tragic and enigmatic quality of Mérimée's novella that *Prénom Carmen* seems to restore.

It is necessary to compare the film to the source text to understand this claim. Like Racine's tragedies (*Andromaque* [1668], *Britannicus* [1669]*, Bajazet* [1672]), Mérimée's *Carmen* is composed of a very simple action, which, according to Jacques

[26] Roberto Chiesi, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Rome: Gremese, 2003), 49–50.
[27] Paul Willemen, *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 232.
[28] 'Surely, cinema challenges reality but cannot hide from it. If cinema engages with the present it is to stylise it' [My translation, ZTZ]. Hans Lucas, 'Suprématie du Sujet (*Strangers on a Train*)', *Cahiers du cinéma* 10 (March 1952): 60.
[29] Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard*, 207–231.

Chabot, develops into a convoluted narrative.[30] It is precisely the simplicity of the novella's action (the dialectical movement between the act of love and the act of death), which incited composers, playwrights, cinema and TV directors to profusely adapt the story of *Carmen* in the past two centuries. In *Prénom Carmen*, Godard exclusively preserves the story's fundamental connection between love and death, hence providing a variation on the theme of *Carmen*, rather than a pale copy of the novella or a filmed opera. The absence of the exotic components of the novella and the opera correspond to Pierre Brunel's idea according to which the mythical dimension of the Carmen story resides in the very *uncertain* and *indefinable* nature of the Bohemian's identity. To become a myth, the story of Carmen had to contain an unresolved mystery; furthermore, the enigma had to maintain a universal dimension.[31] The opera *Carmen* did not acquire the status of myth on the grounds of the *Españoladas* it evokes. In contrast with Bizet's work, Mérimée took a subtler look at the Bohemian's identity by regularly referring to Carmen's manipulative skills and pronounced taste for lies and disguise. Indeed, Mérimée communicates the story of Don José and Carmen through a complex narrative that entangles the narrator's discourse with Don José's, thereby levelling these characters' importance and decentring the figure of Carmen.

For example, when meeting Carmen for the first time, Mérimée's narrator takes her for a Moorish or a Jewish, before she introduces herself as a Gypsy.[32] His description of the *gitanilla*, additionally, is full of contradictions: 'her eyes in particular had an expression, at once voluptuous and fierce', her lips were 'rather full but finely chiselled', her hair 'rather coarse, and black' yet 'long and shining'.[33] The narrator concludes the portrait by suggesting that each of her flaws came with a contrasting and disconcerting quality.[34] Bizet, in turn, reinforced the centrality of the character of Carmen as well as the Gypsy clichés and extraneous components of the novella.[35] This partly explains the opera's great popular appeal. Bizet's emphasis on the stereotypical

[30] Jacques Chabot, 'Doña Carmen', in *Carmen, figures mythiques*, ed. Elisabeth Ravoux Rallo (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1997), 28.
[31] Pierre Brunel, 'Carmen est–elle un mythe?', in *Carmen, figures mythiques*, ed. Elisabeth Ravoux Rallo (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1997), 24–25.
[32] Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen and Other Stories*, trans. Nicholas Jotcham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 13.
[33] Mérimée, *Carmen and Other Stories*, 14.
[34] Additionally, Don José bitterly recounts how Carmen manipulated him by pretending to be Basque, like him: 'She was lying, señor, as she always did. I wonder whether that girl ever spoke one word of truth in her life; but whenever she spoke, I believed her – I couldn't help it'. Ibid., 24.
[35] Suzan McClary, 'Sexual Politics in Classical Music', in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 56–58.

assumptions about the Romany culture contradicts the original story. The opera's discourse on Carmen's cultural identity went, in fact, against the subtleties of the novella and, in turn, represented Carmen as a bewitching Bohemian spectacle through music characterising the Gypsy woman as fascinating, threatening and sexual. In Bizet's opera, Carmen embodies sexual passion through rhythms that 'tease and taunt', and hint at the 'physical impulses of exotic, pseudogypsy dance'.[36] Certainly, *Prénom Carmen* was more influenced by Mérimée's depiction of Carmen as an *oxymore vivant* than Bizet's more glamourous and Manichean idea of Carmen, whose role is antithetical to the virginal (and invented) figure of Micaëla. Free and dependent all at once, Carmen incarnates the tragic paradigm.

The casting of the actress Isabelle Adjani underscores the universalistic bias of Godard's reading of *Carmen*. In the early 1980s, Adjani was already considered as the modern embodiment of tragedy through her performances as Ondine, Emily Brontë, Adèle Hugo and the vampiric role of Lucy Harker in Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979). The choice of Adjani therefore builds on her star persona and, at the same time, subverts the image of the actress, which was tainted with ideas of romanticism, conservatism, and Greek tragedy.[37] Despite having famously withdrawn from the project, Adjani was, for the producers, a bankable choice due to her growing fame and dramatic potential.[38] Her career not only combined the classical repertoire of the *Comédie française* (*L'école des femmes*, *L'Avare* by Molière, *Ondine* by Jean Giraudoux) with collaborations with acclaimed directors (Truffaut, Roman Polanski, André Téchiné, Herzog, Claude Miller, Saura), but importantly enough, had a popular dimension through her remarked performances in French comedy dramas (*La gifle* [1974], *Violette et François* [1977], *Tout feu tout flamme* [1982]). Lastly, her Algerian roots appropriately represented Carmen's racial 'otherness', without challenging the Caucasian standards of beauty.[39] For all these reasons, Adjani was the perfect fit for Mérimée (and, by extension, Bizet)'s tragedy.

[36] Bizet opposed Carmen to the character of Micaëla, whose innocent and motherly nature is represented through 'simple, lyrical, sweet' melodic lines. See McClary, 'Sexual Politics in Classical Music', 57.
[37] Antoine de Baecque, *Godard biographie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2010), 618.
[38] Michel David, *Isabelle Adjani: la tentation sublime* (Paris: Éditions Imago, 2008), 70–71.
[39] To learn about the Hollywoodian construction of Afro-American identity and its relation to the case of Dorothy Dandridge in *Carmen Jones* (1954), see Yvonne D. Simms, *Women of Blaxploitation. How the Action Film Heroine Changed the American Popular Culture* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006), 38–43.

The replacement of Adjani by debutant Dutch actress Maruschka Detmers proves, all the more, that the canonical dimension of Carmen's physical features was a primary condition. Indeed, de Baecque described Detmers in such fashion:

> La plastique de Detmers est superbe: elle est grande, ferme, dynamique, les seins arrogants, et ressemble étonnamment à une beauté latine sélectionnée par Godard dans l'un de ses *Films-Tracts* de Mai 68, le n°15, qui est sans doute l'image source, l'îcone fétiche dont s'inspire fantasmatiquement le cinéaste pour choisir sa Carmen.[40]

The use of Detmer's nude beauty and 'almost' Latin features was, however, conceived to better disrupt the spectators' expectations. The very fact that Godard presents himself as Carmen's uncle Jean highlights the paradoxical aspect of the heroine: her physical features certainly resemble the standardised image of Carmen, but she is, at the same time, 'la fille d'Élizabeth'.[41] Godard's reference to Carmen's family connections allows him to emphasise the contradictions of Mérimée's Carmen, who embodies the singularity and ordinariness of a Gypsy-girl and, at the same time, seals her fate with Don José in the most tragic manner. For instance, the character of Carmen alludes to the famous lines of Bizet's Habanera, 'Si je t'aime, prend garde à toi', by paraphrasing the refrain with a more trivial expression: 'Tu sais, Joe, je te le dis clairement. Si je t'aime, tu es fichu'.[42] In contrast with other Carmen figures like Dorothy Dandridge in Otto Preminger's adaptation, *Carmen Jones* (1954) or Julia Migenes in Rosi's *Carmen* (1984), the dialogues of the Godardian Carmen are hesitant, repetitive and unfinished. The performance of Dandrige and Migenes was, in fact, modelled (to a lesser or greater extent) on Bizet's traditional opera performance, with its over-empowering lyrical dimension. Godard, in turn, chose to name his heroine 'Carmen' for deceitful purposes, just as with Pierrot and Marianne in *Pierrot le fou* (1965).

By the very name of Carmen, the public imagines, on the one hand, the *femme fatale*, the feminine Don Juan, the devil's daughter – western icons which Detmers should supposedly embody. The addition of 'Prénom' emphasises, on the other hand,

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[40]'Detmers' physical appearance is superb: she is tall, firm, dynamic, with arrogant breasts, and resembles, surprisingly, a Latin beauty Godard selected from his *Films-Tracts* of May 68, n°15, which is certainly the source image, the fetish icon that fantastically inspired him when choosing his own Carmen'[My translation, ZTZ]. de Baecque, *Godard biographie*, 619.

[41] 'Elizabeth's daughter' [My translation, ZTZ].

[42] 'If I love you, you'd better beware'/ 'Joe, let me put this straight. If I love you, you are screwed' [My translation, ZTZ].

the word Carmen, with its alphabetic and phonetic components. Through the title, *Prénom Carmen*, Godard suggests that Carmen is, first of all, a name, and echoes, as such, the cover of the *Nouvel observateur*, whose headline, on August 19th 1983, claimed: 'Toutes les femmes s'appellent Carmen'.[43] Although the connotations of the name Carmen have varied from 1830 to 1983, it should be emphasised that both Mérimée and Godard were conscious of the various meanings and expectations such name would awaken.[44] As a matter of fact, Bouvier has asserted that Mérimée expressed an acute awareness of the European's stereotypical assumptions about Spaniards and acknowledged, more importantly, his ignorance of the Bohemian culture through narrative strategies which consist in combining written with oral speech, historical with mythological references, French with Spanish and Romany dialect, and so on.[45] Bouvier characterised the first chapter of *Carmen* as 'an elaborate exercise of self-mockery' in which the narrator reveals 'that from one end of the chapter to the other, he does not know what he is talking about, destroying his claims to narrative authority and capability, as well as his carefully constructed distinctions'.[46]

As an introduction to the story of Carmen, Mérimée wrote a paragraph in which the narrator observes that geographers have misguidedly located the battle of Munda near Monda, an Andalusian city that shares the same etymological root. The narrator adds that he is about to prove, in a future publication, that the battle of Munda happened, in reality, in the surroundings of Montilla. In a similar way, the concluding chapter breaks with the 'little story' of Carmen, through the narrator's scholarly reflections on the history and lifestyle of the Bohemian culture. In this way, Mérimée opens and closes his anecdote through the voice of a studious Orientalist who does not hide his fascination and, at the same time, unfamiliarity with the Spanish and Gypsy

[43] 'All women are called Carmen' [My translation, ZTZ]. Dominique Maingueneau, *Carmen les racines d'un mythe* (Paris: Éditions du Sorbier, 1984), 9.
[44] Interestingly, at the time Mérimée published *Carmen*, the name of Carmen was extremely recurrent within the Gypsy community in Spain: 'Les sorcières pullulent en Espagne à l'époque comme jadis les magiciens en Thessalie. Pour se convaincre et de cette multiplicité et du fait que la Carmencita, sans être Carmen, est un nom en quelque sorte générique pour ces sorcières, il suffit de relire la quatrième des *Lettres d'Espagne*, datée de Novembre 1830'/ 'Witches proliferated in Spain, just as magicians formerly abounded in Thessaly. For proof of such plurality and, of the fact that the name of Carmencita (without being 'the' Carmen) was commonly used to name witches, one needs to read the fourth letter from *Letters from Spain*, dating back from November 1830' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Brunel, 'Carmen est-elle un mythe?', 23.
[45] Luke Bouvier, 'Where Spain Lies: Narrative Dispossessions and the Seduction of Speech in Mérimée's *Carmen*', *Romanic Review* 90, 3 (May 1999): 354–357, Accessed November 2, 2015, https://www.questia.com/read/1G1-75609030/where-spain-lies-narrative-dispossession-and-the
[46] Bouvier, 'Where Spain lies: Narrative Dispossessions and the Seduction of Speech in Mérimée's *Carmen*': 357.

culture. Indeed, the narrator many times refers to Greco-Roman mythology when depicting Spanish life. At his arrival to Cordoba, the narrator observes (accompanied with other Andalusian men) the spectacle of women enjoying leisurely time in the river of Guadalquivir during sunset and compares this daily life scene to the mythological tableau of Diana, the goddess of wilderness, bathing with her nymphs:

> Yet those white and indistinct forms visible against the dark azure of the river set poetic minds at work, and with a little effort it is not difficult to imagine one is watching Diana and her nymphs bathing, without the risk of incurring the fate of Actaeon.[47]

As this example indicates, Mérimée acknowledged the impact western mythical figures have had on the representation of exotic experiences.[48] The narrator's position is, thereby, paradoxical: on the one hand, he recounts his impressions of the landscapes and population of Cordoba, Granada and Gibraltar by regularly drawing comparisons with western literary and artistic legacy and, on the other hand, he attempts to embrace the Spanish culture by evoking his own boldness and transgressive behaviour. Thus, the expression of Mérimée's irony is to be found in the very textual nature of his storytelling. The image of Carmen is constructed through the curious gaze of the French visitor (the narrator), and shortly after, through Don José's repentance speech.

Godard, by complicating the main narrative of Carmen in *Prénom Carmen*, confirmed his ties with the Merimean vision of Carmen's tragedy. For instance, the story of Carmen and Joseph persistently digresses. The six opening minutes show everything but Carmen. Scenes from three parallel but intermingled stories get in the way of the Carmen story: the life of social recluse and ex-director uncle Jean, the string quartet rehearsal, and the peripheral and unrequited love story between the Micaëla-based character, named Claire, and Joseph (the former, by the way, plays the violin in the rehearsal scenes). Furthermore, just as Mérimée combines subjective accounts on Carmen and Don José with more scientific (or 'academic') information, Godard's mise-en-scène oscillates between moments of pronounced artificiality and dramatic acting

[47] Mérimée, *Carmen and Other Stories*, 12.
[48] Likewise, Mérimée started a previous novella, *Les âmes du purgatoire* (1834) by drawing a parallel between the mythological figure of Jupiter and the legend of Don Juan. See Brunel, 'Carmen est-elle un mythe?', 14.

and documentary-like scenes such as the music rehearsals. Examining the bank robbery is instructive.

Carmen, elegantly dressed in black, appears at the top of the marble stairs, and shoots, intermittently, in Joseph's direction, at the bottom of the stairway **(fig. 5.1.)**. Already in their first encounter, Godard places Carmen several steps ahead of Joseph, hence creating a situation of dominance. Indeed, Godard shows, through the verticality of this gunfire exchange, that Carmen and Joseph's relation conforms to the law of the strongest: there is no situation of equality or partnership, despite the fact that Joseph risked prison for Carmen. The warm lighting, which visibly emanates from the middle-left edge of the image as well as from the upper background situated in the off-screen space of the top floor, creates a remarkable impression of depth. The change of yellow tones between the foreground and the background produce a halo effect that encircles both Joseph and Carmen. The detached presence of the stereotypical Parisian bourgeois, who is casually sitting on an armchair while reading his journal on the left corner of the shot drives the spectator's attention to the unfolding action between the main protagonists and enhances the theatrical and constructed nature of the scene. Here, the trap, set by destiny, closes on Joseph.

While impressions of destiny and fatality haunt the dynamics of this scene, Godard mirrors the heterogeneity of Mérimée's narrative strategies by multiplying viewing angles and refusing to create a fixed and dominant reading. In contrast with the theatrical, if not operatic, dimension of the previous action, which is cadenced by Beethoven's string quartet, Godard interrupts the progressing narrative through an anti-climatic interlude. In fact, nothing really crucial happens at the gas station. Whereas the bank scene triggered the legendary encounter between Carmen and Joseph, the following scene relocates these two heroes back into the realm of the trivial and the ridiculous. Now that Joseph has attached Carmen (using his belt) and driven her away from Paris, he decides to park the car near a convenience store. A corpulent thirty year-old man (played by Jacques Villeret) watches them walk towards the shop whilst sipping his coffee. From a reverse angle, we see this same man discreetly sneaking an indistinct product into his pocket and entering the public toilets. Carmen and Joseph, who struggle to find a solution to Carmen's need to urinate, move towards the same restroom as this anonymous man. From inside the public W.C., the frame shows the odd man eating a baby-food jar with his fingers in front of the mirror on the right corner, while the left part of the image shows Joseph and Carmen, slamming the door multiple

times, and entering, eventually. Although a large part of this sequence is devoid of music, Godard decides to punctuate the moment in which Carmen drops her panties and improvises a sitting position in one of the urinals with Beethoven's music. The counter shot shows this grotesque individual finishing his potty whilst staring at the couple **(fig. 5.2.)**. The role of Villeret could be associated with that of the newspaper reader in the bank scene, whose visual presence and intrusive gaze not only reflects on the voyeuristic dimension of spectatorship but also creates a critical distance between the image and the audience.

In this sequence, Godard undermines the triumphant attitude of Carmen (as shown in the hold-up scene) by revealing the most primitive aspect of the heroine. The unquestionable beauty of Detmers is accompanied by images revealing the un-idealised and realistic dimension of womanhood. Godard transposed the novel's universal conflict between freedom and possession in a rather trivial setting through crude lighting and provocative dialogue: 'Détachez moi, j'ai envie de pisser!'[49] The unrefined manners of Carmen connect, directly, with Mérimée's novella whose closing chapter re-locates Carmen among the Bohemian people and informs the reader that Gypsy women are particularly known for their 'very swarthy, always darker' complexion, and their tendency to beg and tell fortunes all around Europe.[50] For these reasons, the character of Carmen, in Godard's film, possesses the very same contradictions as the Merimean Carmen. She is both inaccessible and ordinary, both the legendary Carmen and 'Ms. Everywoman'.

As a general rule, Godard constructs characters whose identities are marked by a sense of instability and deception. The case of Pierrot, in *Pierrot le fou* is, to a certain extent, comparable to Carmen. Indeed, Belmondo plays a character whose name is permeated with strong literary and theatrical references like the right-wing modernist writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline, as well as the endearing but cowardly lackey of the *Commedia dell'arte*, Pierrot (or Pedrolino). Be they self-referential allusions (the duo Karina-Belmondo calls to mind Godard's musical comedy *Une femme est une femme* [1961]),[51] or culturally connoted names, Godard strategically submerges his characters

[49] 'Untie me, I want to pee!' [My translation, ZTZ].
[50] This fourth part is sometimes missing in the English translations. Mérimée added it later, in 1846. See Prosper Mérimée, *Les âmes du purgatoire/Carmen* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1973), 163.
[51] In the first car scene, Marianne remarks 'Ça fait drôle tout de même de se retrouver'. Ferdinand answers back : 'Oui. Ça fait quatre ans', hence hinting at the year of release of *Une femme est une femme* (1961). The nickname Pierrot also refers to the French gangster Pierre Loutrel, who became the public

in disconcerting series of signifiers (sounds, images, graphic letters, colours) so as to tear them away from social stereotypes inherited from the Balzacian realist novel.[52] Furthermore, Godard approaches Mérimée's novella with the same running joke previously applied to *Pierrot le fou*: Carmen calls her lover 'Joe' on two occasions, and the latter corrects her, each time: 'je m'appelle Joseph'.[53] Be it in *Pierrot le fou* or in *Prénom Carmen*, the characters' dialogues often lack causal connections and become, instead, a patchwork-like speech which, in the case of Ferdinand, is composed of literary quotes (Élie Faure, Garcia Lorca, Rimbaud, Céline…), literary references ('*Les fleurs du mal*, c'est bien'), old sayings ('Allez, allons-y les voyages forment la jeunesse!'), word play ('Allons-y Alonzo!'), self-quotations ('j'y vais pas, j'y vais pas, j'y vais pas' in relation to Camille in *Le mépris*), advertisement slogans ('Sous mon nouveau pantalon, scandale, ligne jeune!'), and the list goes on.

These defamiliarisation techniques are present, in a more or less emphatic way, throughout *Prénom Carmen*. Through his own presence as uncle Jean, Godard gives a self-reflexive dimension to the film, and through Beethoven's 'Harp' Quartet (Op.74), he incorporates his longest and most continuous musical quote.[54] Most of the time, uncle Jean expresses himself through verbal clichés, word play, political, literary and artistic references, as when he briefly refers to Proust's madeleine, when eating a piece of sweet bun at the yellow bakery: 'En tout cas, je me réjouis beaucoup de refaire un film dans un casino, ça me fera… ça me fera une madeleine'.[55] Certainly, Godard's late narrative style still possesses the counter-cinema strategies which Peter Wollen listed in 1972 as 'narrative intransitivity, estrangement, foregrounding, multiple diegesis, aperture, unpleasure, reality'.[56] However, to consider *Prénom Carmen* as a mockery or parody of the myth of Carmen would dismiss the most intriguing dimension of Godard's late narratives: the back and forth movement between moments of reverie and moments of sarcasm. These instants take visual, but also sonic, forms. Indeed, the self-

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enemy number one in the immediate aftermath of the Occupation. See de Baecque, *Godard biographie*, 285.

[52] It is indeed impossible for the French spectator not to recognise Marianne as the French Republican symbol or to forget the popular song *Au clair de la lune*.

[53] In *Pierrot le fou*, Ferdinand Griffon keeps repeating to Marianne Renoir: 'Je ne m'appelle pas Pierrot, je m'appelle Ferdinand'. *Pierrot le fou*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1965; Studiocanal, 2007).

[54] Godard also explored music rehearsals with the Rolling Stones in *One + One* and the Rita Mitsouko in *Soigne ta droite* (1987).

[55] 'In any case, I am very glad to shoot a new film at the casino. This will bring me… this will bring me a madeleine' [My translation, ZTZ].

[56] Peter Wollen, 'Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent d'Est*', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 418.

reflexive use of Beethoven's 'Harp' Quartet (op.74) points to a sustained engagement with classical music and nature, a form of intertextuality with the nineteenth-century that we must scrutinise further.

5.3. Romantic residues: nature and classical music as self-sufficient mechanisms

The role of music and nature in late Godard has been, in the past three decades, a great subject of scholarly attention, as shown through Maryel Locke and René Prédal's edited books and, more specifically, through Morgan's extensive study on the significance of nature in films like *Soigne ta droite* (1987), *Nouvelle vague* (1990), *Allemagne 90 neuf zero* (1991), *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998).[57] The interest of exploring Godard's approach to nature and music resides, precisely, in the fact that his previous films, be they from his 'cinema of youth and transgression' (as designated by Chiesi in relation to his 1960s films), or from his Marxist film collective, were very critical of the Aristotelian (and, by extension, Rohmerian) communion between body and soul, between the sensible and the intelligible. Godard challenged Rohmer's belief in cinema as the 'the revelation, in the universe, of the Creator's hand'.[58] In this regard, a significant amount of scholarship has explored the connection between Bertolt Brecht, structural Marxism and films as diverse as *Alphaville* (1965), *Pravda* (1969), or *Hélas pour moi* (1993).[59] Derrida's reflection on the origins of language and critique of logocentric speech in *De la grammatologie* (1967) shares common grounds with Godard's political cinema, which tackled, among other themes, the Babelian idea of incommunicability, through desynchronised image and sound, the accumulation of authorless quotes and, as developed by K. Malchom Richards, the taste for word play

[57] See Maryel Locke and Charles Warren, *Jean Luc Godard's Hail Mary: Women and the Sacred in Film* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); René Predal (ed.), *Où en est le God-Art?* (Courbevoie: Cinémaction – Corlet, 2003); Daniel Morgan, *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013)

[58] Keith Tester, *Eric Rohmer: Film as Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13.

[59] See, for instance, Allen Thiher, 'Postmodern Dilemmas: Godard's *Alphaville* or *Two or Three Things that I Know about Her*', *Boundary 2* 4, 3 (Spring 1976): 947–964; Trevor Stark, 'Cinema in the Hands of the People: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film', *October Magazine* 139 (Winter 2012): 138–150; James S. Williams, '"C'est le petit livre rouge/Qui fait que tout enfin bouge": The Case for Revolutionary Agency and Terrorism in Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise*', *Journal of European Studies* 40, 3 (September 2010): 206–218, Accessed November 2, 2015, doi: 10.1177/0047244110371901; Lucie Dugas, '*Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*. La mémoire fait l'histoire', in *Où en est le God-Art?*, ed. René Prédal (Courbevoie: Cinémaction – Corlet, 2003), 32–38.

and the amalgamation of different languages.[60] Whether it is through the poststructuralist framework of Derrida or Barthes, scholars have scrutinised Godard's cinema as paradigmatic of deconstructionist aesthetics through his life-long critique of the classical system of representation. Among the dominant discourses on Godard lies the claim that his cinema overthrew the auteurist stand of his early writings through aesthetics of collage (which hinder the origin of the source text) and a tendency to disrupt spatial unity and homogenous temporality. It is necessary to illustrate this established anti-auteur trope to understand Godard's aesthetic changes from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The political significance of *La chinoise*, for instance, should be found in the way in which Godard represents the collective voice of China's cultural revolution through the Parisian actor and Maoist activist, Guillaume. Through the use of interview techniques, Guillaume answers the questions of an off-screen Godard, hence blurring the frontier between the fictional Guillaume and the real-life actor, Léaud. Facing the camera, Léaud reports, in French, a Chinese student's discourse and act of protest, hence creating a conceptual mise-en-abyme that escapes all realistic representation; it is the actor Léaud who plays another actor, Guillaume, whose reported speech refers to a Chinese student's act of protest. In this Brechtian situation, Godard uses language to erase the origin of the discourse and challenges, as such, the classical premise according to which the actor is responsible for impersonating a psychological individuality. Through the self-reflexive nature of Léaud's acting, Guillaume's anecdote brings the spectator's attention to the constructed nature of language and representation.

Godard's 1960s films consistently challenged the conservative politics of traditional acting which, as suggested by the acting principles established by the *Comédie française,* presupposes a corporal, almost cannibalistic fusion between the actor and the text: the art of the interpretation requires to penetrate the author's idea, 'de rompre […] l'os où l'auteur renferme parfois sa pensée pour en extraire et en sucer toute la moelle'.[61] In *Pierrot le fou*, Godard interrogates the relationship between morality and nineteenth-century acting by alluding to the Vietnam war through Belmondo's caricatured impersonation of an American naval officer, and Karina's

[60] K. Malcolm Richards, *Derrida Reframed* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 129.
[61] The complete quote goes like this: 'To penetrate this idea without any waste, to untangle its most subtle fineness, to grasp its most delicate shades, to break, at last, according to the picturesque and vigorous expression of Rabelais, the bone in which the author contains his thought in order to extract and suck the marrow' [My translation, ZTZ]. Henri Dupont-Vernon, *L'art de bien dire: principes et applications* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1903), 62.

parodic performance of a Vietnamese woman. Karina's face is covered in yellow paint; a Vietnamese conical hat accompanies her colourful makeup. Marianne faces and looks at the camera whilst imitating an incomprehensible Vietnamese dialogue that is punctuated by background bombing noises **(fig. 5.3.)**. The unintelligibility of the 'Vietnamese Marianne' parodies the western assumptions on the enigmatic and therefore threatening character of Asian communities. Furthermore, Marianne's performance is centred on the purely physical aspect of the Vietnamese woman and, as such, alludes to the 'yellowface' performance tradition, whose roots belong to nineteenth-century vaudeville.[62]

Godard's disregard for the regional specificities of Mérimée's novella in *Prénom Carmen* largely relates to the director's critique of the stereotypical representations of Carmen as a Franco-centric male construct and embodiment of exoticism, attraction and danger.[63] However, despite Godard's poststructuralist wish to get rid of ideological chimeras through films which refuse to represent the past through classical narrative conventions, it is hard not to acknowledge the director's persisting desire, in *Passion*, *Prénom Carmen*, and *Je vous salue, Marie*, to grant the spectator with short-lived samples of temporal and spatial unity, which, as we shall see, revive the spiritualist bias of the politique des auteurs. In the late 1970s, Godard looked at the similar topics (love, the city, nature) that permeated his early narrative films with a *different* eye. Godard sought 'a new way of seeing, a way of looking afresh' at the world.[64] Indeed, his observations of 1980s French society are less doctrinaire than his questioning of the Gaullist cultural politics in the years that announced the crisis of 1968. Whereas the aesthetics of *Pierrot le fou* foreshadowed films that advocated the political taking of action on current social stakes, *Prénom Carmen* expressed the fallout of the possibility

[62] In parallel with the Caucasian embodiment of African-Americans on stage (the 'blackface' performance), the expression 'yellowface' appeared in the 1950s and referred to 'the continuation in film of having white actors playing major Asian and Asian American roles and the grouping together of all makeup technologies used to make one look "Asian"'. See Karla Rae Fuller, *Hollywood goes Oriental, Caucasian Performance in American film* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 9–20; Krystyn R. Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance 1850–1920s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 164.

[63] See, for instance, Phil Powrie, 'Godard's *Prénom Carmen* (1984), Masochism and the Male Gaze', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 31, 1 (1995): 70, Accessed October 9, 2015, doi: 10.1093/fmls/XXXI.1.64 ; Laura Mulvey, 'The Hole and the Zero: the Janus Face of the Feminine in Godard', in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image*, eds. Colin McCabe and Raymond Bellour (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 75–88; Phil Powrie, 'Jean-Luc's Women', in *Carmen on Film: A Cultural History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 132–142 ; Jeremy Tambling, 'Ideology in the Cinema: Rewriting Carmen', in *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Glasgow: Manchester University Press, 1987), 33–34.

[64] Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard*, 135.

of revolutionary success. In this sense, Godard dealt with romantic motifs and patterns in very distinct ways in the two aforementioned decades. It is necessary to pinpoint the differences and nuances of the romanticism of *Pierrot le fou* and *Prénom Carmen* to better understand Godard's aesthetic changes and treatment of the romantic legacy.

Céline Scemama suggested that Godard's 1960s films took an active interest in capturing the beauty of modern life, hence revealing 'a sort of political heroism'.[65] The term 'heroism', in my opinion, alludes here to the expression of this very impossibility of getting away from the despair and sufferings of the modern world, as once defined by Baudelaire. In contrast with the heroes of ancient times embodied by mythological figures like Hercules, Achilles or Agamemnon, Baudelaire suggested that the heroism of modern life was to be found in the private subjects of the everyday world:

> The pageant of fashionable life and the thousands of floating existences – criminals and kept women – which drift about in the underworld of a great city; the *Gazette des Tribunaux* and the *Moniteur* all prove to us that we have only to open our eyes to recognize our heroism.[66]

The drawings of Constantin Guys and paintings of Delacroix embodied such a heroic stance, not because they portrayed public events or political victories, but precisely because they shared the passion of crowds and the love of 'tout ce qui se passe à la surface de notre sphéroïde'.[67] In other words, Baudelaire admired Guys and Delacroix's attempts to overcome everyday banal reality through a commonly resistant and rebellious nature.[68] Upon the release of *Pierrot le fou*, Louis Aragon compared Godard to Delacroix. Aragon claimed that, just as Delacroix created beauty through scenes of murder and adversity, Godard brought to light new aesthetics, which remarkably expressed the beauty of modern days:

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[65] Céline Scemama, *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard. La force faible d'un art* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 27.
[66] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life', in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Francis Frascina and Charles Harisson (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1982), 18.
[67] 'everything that happens on the surface of our globe'. See Charles Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 689. For the English version, see Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 7.
[68] See Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', 711.

> Tout le film n'est qu'un immense sanglot, de ne pouvoir, de ne pas supporter voir, et de répandre, de devoir répandre le sang. Un sang garance, écarlate, vermillon, carmin, que sais-je? Le sang des *Massacres de Scio*, le sang de *La Mort de Sardanapale*, le sang de Juillet 1830, le sang de leurs enfants que vont répandre les trois *Médée furieuse*, celle de 1838 et celles de 1859 et 1862, tout le sang dont se barbouillent les lions et les tigres dans leurs combats avec les chevaux…[69]

Like Delacroix, Godard's engagement with modernity was less driven by political convictions than by a firm desire to return to cinema its artistic responsibility and freedom. In his study of *La liberté guidant le peuple* (1830) Pierre Gaudibert described Delacroix as this spiritual aristocrat, not exactly known for his revolutionary nature but whose paintings became, nonetheless, a symbol of revolutionary will.[70]

In the period of the Algerian War, critics praised Godard's cinema for successfully engaging with present times through the creation of a new language able to transcend the political cleavage dominated by the imperialism of Hollywood classical realism and Soviet socialist realism. Already in 1961, the leftist critic and filmmaker Luc Moullet expressed his admiration for Godard and, by the same token, contempt for Rohmer's editorial leadership in *Cahiers du cinéma*:

> [Jean-Luc Godard] is not discreet; he paints his characters' psychological quirks in black and white. This is no longer the uniquely interior depth much vaunted over the previous five years by the young absolutists of *Cahiers du cinéma*, but a depth which is both interior and exterior, and by token anti-commercial.[71]

Although one hundred and thirty years (at least) separated the Parisian *Salons* in which Delacroix participated from the context of *À bout de souffle*, the public and the press

[69] 'The entire film is about an immense sob. It is a sob expressing, on the one hand, the incapacity to see blood being spilled and, on the other hand, the duty to shed blood. A madder-coloured, scarlet, vermilion, carmine blood, whatever. The blood of *The Massacre at Chios*, the blood of *The Death of Sardanapalus*, the blood of July 1830, the blood of their children, which were shed by the three *Furious Medea*, the one of 1838, and those of 1859 and 1862, and all the blood by which the lions and tigers got dirty in their fights against horses' [My translation, ZTZ]. Aragon, 'Qu'est-ce que l'art, Jean-Luc Godard?': 10.

[70] Pierre Gaudibert, 'Delacroix et le romantisme révolutionnaire', *Europe: Revue mensuelle* 41 (April 1963): 5.

[71] Luc Moullet, 'Jean-Luc Godard'', in *Cahiers du Cinéma. 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 40.

commonly noticed the revolutionary quality of their creations, despite their deeply equivocal political position. In the early 1960s, *À bout de souffle* represented a model for the European New Cinema to follow, and for Moullet, an effective weapon against the influence of the Mac Mahon school (a group of extremely elitist critics whose idolatry for some American directors was known for its fascist tone).[72] Later in 1967, when Truffaut was asked to comment on the current state of cinema, he stressed the eminent role of Godard in shaping the French cinematic landscape throughout the decade: 'the films which imitate Godard are indefensible because they miss the essential thing. They'll imitate his free and easy manner but forget – and for good reason – his despair. They'll imitate the word-play but not the malice.'[73]

Whether it is despair and malice, or disenchantment and irony, each one of these adjectives refer to Godard's ability to represent the modern struggle between inspirational moments turned towards the 'ideal' and moments of discouragement, stricken by the 'spleen'. Baudelaire referred to these two notions to designate the beauty of modern life: 'All forms of beauty, like all possible phenomena contain an element of the eternal and an element of the transitory – of the absolute and of the particular'.[74] Baudelaire's verses oscillate between the expression of the poet's desire to master the arena of the city sights and spectacles and, at the same time, the breaking off from these delights. It seems to me that in Godard's early feature films, these back and forth movements between reverie and disgust were articulated through narrative strategies, which generally took a spatial trajectory: the urban environment as a starting point, and the provinces, as well as the foreign lands as a much-fantasised finality. As shown in *À bout de souffle*, Michel Poiccard plans to leave Paris for Italy but does not succeed due to Patricia's fatal betrayal. Contrary to Michel, couples like Paul and Camille in *Le mépris* (1963) and Ferdinand and Marianne in *Pierrot le fou* eventually move from

[72] Among the Mac Mahonians: Michel Mourlet, Jacques Lourcelles, Michel Fabre, Jacques Serguine, Marc Bernard and Alfred Eibel. They generally praised films by Joseph Losey, Otto Preminger, Raoul Walsh and Fritz Lang. They despised, in turn, the existentialist and 'fashionable' Michelangelo Antonioni, Orson Welles, Ingmar Bergman, Elia Kazan, Federico Fellini, and others. De Baecque described the prevailing atmosphere in post-war French film criticism as an institution divided by diverse 'chapels' sharing the same fervour towards cinema. The Rohmerian will to maintain film criticism *sub specie aeternitatis* was replaced in 1963 by the Rivettian desire to see *Cahiers du cinéma* as an 'instrument of warfare'. See Antoine de Baecque, *La cinéphilie : Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture 1944–1968* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2003), 148 ; 210–211.

[73] François Truffaut, 'Evolution of the New Wave: Truffaut in interview with Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni (extracts)', in *Cahiers du Cinéma. 1960–1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 109.

[74] Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life', 17.

town to the countryside for narrative purposes.[75] On the one hand, the urban settings (whether it is in *Le mépris* or *Pierrot le fou*) exposed contemporaneous problems which relate to the realms of love and family relationships, business market, literary and artistic world patrimony, leisure activities, and so on. The seaside, country fields and roads, represent, on the other hand, the land of possibilities, risks and revival. However, despite the job opportunity brought by producer Jeremy Prokosch in *Le mépris*, the trip to Capri doesn't improve or resolve the sentimental conflict between Camille and Paul. Quite the reverse happens. Camille's provocation, which consists in abandoning Paul by leaving the island in Prokosch's car, leads her to death. Likewise, in *Pierrot le fou*, the experience of love and freedom in the South of France gives way to boredom, betrayal and, eventually, death and suicide. This conflict between impressions of love, joy, freedom and moments of deep melancholy and discouragement has always been at the core of Godard's life work. Godard shows tenderness in the bed scene at the opening of *Le mépris* as well as through Marianne and Ferdinand's singing sequence in *Pierrot le fou*. Helplessness and sarcasm are constantly expressed through Godard's taste for tragic endings, overly theatrical, parodic performances and, as mentioned by Aragon, the allegorical use of colours (like in *Pierrot le fou*, Godard uses important amounts of vivid red paint in *Weekend* [1967]).

In the early 1980s, nature, for Godard, no longer formed part of the characters' aspirations and fantasies. Not only does the countryside become, for most of Godard's late films, the main setting in which the narrative unfolds (*Sauve qui peut [la vie]*[1979], *Passion*, *Je vous salue, Marie*, *Soigne ta droite*…), but images of nature also possess a self-contained narrative.[76] Morgan analyses the shot of waves in *Allemagne 90 neuf zero* as suggesting an 'idea of escape or detachment, a space outside the trauma of history'.[77] In Godard's early 1980s films, the images of nature generally appear unexpectedly and intermittently, have a brief duration, and are generally accompanied by classical music.

This interdependency between nature and classical music is absent in Godard's early narrative films. In contrast with the musical arrangements of *À bout de souffle*,

[75] Morgan, *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema*, 69–70.
[76] Following the dissolution of the Dziga Vertov group in the early 1970s, Godard co-founded the studio-laboratory *Sonimage* with Anne-Marie Miéville in winter 1973 and moved it to Rolle (Switzerland) in 1977. Ever since, Miéville and Godard have collaborated in an important number of video works and feature films. See de Baecque, *Godard biographie*, 517–573.
[77] Morgan, *Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema*, 134.

which allude to the B-Hollywood detective film, or the fragmented, unexpected, and roughly cut music soundtrack in *Une femme est une femme*, classical music, like nature, appears as an index of continuity. In *Prénom Carmen* music and natural landscapes function as complementary phenomena through a mode of editing which synchronises, from time to time, the blowing waves with the musical unfolding of Beethoven's piece. Contrary to the narrative shots (involving characters, dialogues and actions), shots of nature, when linked with classical music, give way to a different temporality which goes beyond real-life duration, and comes closer to an aesthetic, if not metaphysical, time.[78] Indeed, already in the opening of the film, the title card is associated, straightaway, with the image of a windy sea. In between these two shots, Carmen's sentence 'c'est en moi, en toi, que ça produit des vagues terribles' is introduced in voice-over, alongside other fragmented dialogues which are being 'swallowed' by the sound of the waves and the seagulls.[79] In my opinion, Godard reconnects with the universal through the linking together of contradictory elements from the realm of the ideal, of the eternal (Beethoven's String Quartet), and the realm of the concrete, of the real (the empirical phenomenon of rolling waves). The Rohmerian belief in the ontological correspondence between cinematic landscapes (dominated by nature) and classical music is, therefore, alluded to, without being entirely rejected. Explaining Rohmer's thoughts on classical music will clarify the meaning of Godard's use of natural iconography.

Rohmer defined music listening as an inherently idealistic experience. He suggested that despite the abstract nature of music, composers like Mozart and Beethoven were capable of expressing the richest and most complex human feelings, to the point of competing with, and eventually transcending, real-life emotional experiences.[80] For Rohmer, the experience of classical music has the effect of revealing an inner truth. Cinema is similarly capable of manifesting a metaphysical bond between nature and an inner spiritual life through the photographic reproduction of reality (that is, the material world). In *Prénom Carmen*, Godard struggles between reviving the enigmatic and mythical dimension of Carmen by incorporating Beethoven's music and natural landscapes to the narrative and, at the same time, demystifying the traditionally phallocentric representation of the heroine by using the camera as a means to explore, in a detached and naturalistic manner, the most intimate parts of her body. In the sequence

[78] See Rohmer's discussion on classical music and its relation to cinema in Éric Rohmer, *De Mozart en Beethoven*, trans. Loreto Casado (Madrid: Ardora, 2005), 95–97.
[79] 'It's in me, it's in you, it makes terrible waves' [My translation, ZTZ].
[80] Rohmer, *De Mozart en Beethoven*, 94.

in which Carmen, half-naked, talks with Joseph in the kitchen, Godard films Detmer's face in a close-up shot and increases the volume of the String Quartet audio track so as to make the end of her dialogue hardly intelligible: 'Comment ça s'appelle?... Il y a quelque chose avec les innocents, là… Et les coupables là… Et puis… Et puis je sais pas…'[81] When Joseph answers 'Moi non plus', Carmen turns her eyes towards him (situated off-screen, at the bottom left of the frame) before looking downwards and, finally, glances at the camera for less than a second.[82] Following this, a two-second close-up shot shows Joseph's right profile in front of Carmen's crotch. Her lower abdomen takes the centre of the frame and is touched by Joseph, whose hand is being held by Carmen. Shots of waves interrupt the scene, thus possibly alluding to Carmen's interiority. In addition to the classical music and the waves, Joseph adopts a submissive position (this scene exclusively focuses on Carmen's bodily features and leaves Joseph off-screen or shows him partially), which induces the spectator's association of Carmen with a solemn and impenetrable figure. Her face and sexual organs are momentarily associated with the seaside and allude to romantic imagery: Carmen is as mysterious as a disturbed sea. In a similar manner, the insert shot of a full moon, whose circular form reminds us of the mother's womb (hence the mystery of the origin of mankind), repeatedly follows the image of Marie in *Je vous salue, Marie*.[83] Sometimes a setting sun replaces the moon, and its declining and warm brightness conveys ideas of life and death (the French expression 'voir le jour' is synonymous with 'to be born').

Based on evidence from other works, it could be argued that Godard's continuous association of nature with classical music in the 1980s put into question his former belief in cinema as an 'agitational' and political tool.[84] In the beginnings of *Passion*, for instance, Raoul Coutard's camera follows, from a low angle shot, the rectilinear movement of an airplane in a clear and sunny sky. The irregular movements of the camera flicker between languidness and attentiveness whilst being accompanied by Maurice Ravel's Concerto in D for the Left Hand. Interestingly, Baudelaire illustrated his vision of the romantic genius through the image of an old man who sees

[81] 'How do we call it?... There is something about the innocents, here… and the culprits, there… And then… And then, I don't remember…' [My translation, ZTZ].
[82] 'Me neither' [My translation, ZTZ].
[83] Morrey efficiently summarises the different approaches scholars have pursued when explaining the role of womanhood and nature in Godard's early 1980s films. See Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard*, 146–152.
[84] Stark, 'Cinema in the Hands of the People: Chris Marker, the Medvedkin Group, and the Potential of Militant Film':128.

the world for the first time, through a juvenile gaze. In *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), he refers to watercolour painter and draftsman Guys in these terms:

> Supposez un artiste qui serait toujours, spirituellement, à l'état du convalescent, et vous aurez la clef du caractère de M.G.
> Or la convalescence est comme un retour vers l'enfance. […] L'enfant voit tout en nouveauté; il est toujours ivre. Rien ne ressemble plus à ce qu'on appelle l'inspiration, que la joie avec laquelle l'enfant absorbe la forme et la couleur.[85]

Barbara Spackman defined the concept of convalescence as this transitional phase between the irreconcilable conditions of sickness and health. Like the convalescent, the romantic artist, according to Baudelaire, is caught in between moments of reverie, evasion, detachment, and moments of seriousness, anxiety, and depression.[86] Godard expresses, through the camera's undecided and meditative sky shots, the doubts, uncertainties, this very in-between state, that characterises the romantic genius. In *Passion* and *Je vous salue, Marie*, music pieces by J.S. Bach, Mozart, Ravel, Dvorak serve to emphasise the elusive and incongruous nature of Carmen and Joseph's dialogues and bring the spectator's attention elsewhere, beyond the projected images. Thus, classical music and shots of nature in *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* embody an ascent to the experience of the sublime, which is repetitively interrupted by a return to mundane images. According to Immanuel Kant, sensible forms cannot *be* sublime but can only *provoke* the feeling of sublimity: sublimity can be regarded as 'the exhibition of an indeterminate concept of reason'.[87] In contrast with the discordant conversations, the shots of nature and the music, which Jacques Aumont named 'an infinitely retold melody', reveal Godard's new commitment to respect the integrity of certain types of images and sounds.[88] Indeed, the musical samples dissolve without sharp interruptions and, through their uninterrupted harmony, rise as an autonomous and transcendent

[85] M.G. refers to Constantin Guys: 'Imagine an artist who was always, spiritually, in the condition of that convalescent, and you will have the key to the nature of Monsieur G. Now convalescence is like a return towards childhood. […] The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always *drunk*. Nothing more recalls inspiration than the delight with which a child absorbs form and colour'. See Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', 690.
[86] Barbara Spackman, 'The Scene of Convalescence', in *Decadent Genealogies. The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to d'Annunzio* (Ithaca: Cornwell University Press, 1989), 42.
[87] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 99.
[88] Jacques Aumont cited in Adrian Martin, 'Three Lyrical Interludes', eds. James S. Williams, Michael Temple and Michael Witt, in *For Ever Godard* (London: Blackdog, 2004), 290.

organised whole. Godard's comments on the role of Beethoven in his Carmen reworking reinforce the idea of a higher entity, a genius, at the origin of these visual and sonic components: 'Ce n'est pas une musique dans le film, c'est un film fait avec de la musique. Mon vrai producteur, c'était Carmen, et mon scénariste c'était Beethoven, qui a bien voulu m'écrire une attaque de banque avec de la musique'.[89] The allusion to Beethoven as the main director of *Prénom Carmen* shows that the String Quartet rehearsal scenes occupy a much more important place than that of a parallel story within the narrative. Beethoven's composition takes on a totalising dimension, which embraces the narrative and the extra-filmic. For instance, when Carmen tells the gang leader that uncle Jean has agreed to lend his apartment for filmmaking purposes, her boss replies with the following expression: 'Ça devait être réglé comme du papier à musique'. Its English translation loses, alas, the musical image provided by the French metaphor: 'the plan should be settled like clockwork'.

The reference to music paper mirrors the film's narrative workings: it is indeed the unfolding narrative that adapts to musical rhythm, and not the contrary. The leader's concern over the risk of improvising the bank robbery not only hints at the unpredictability of the storyline but also elevates the diegetic music performed by the violinists as the 'Father time' of the narrative. This providential metronome therefore binds the plurality of stories. The principle of uncertainty and arbitrariness, which gives place to human encounters, is constantly measured against the determined ambition of the music rehearsal. Falling, one after the other, on the slippery floor of the bank, Carmen's encounter with Joseph wavers between improvisation and fate. In contrast with Joseph's clumsy movements and agitated state, the bank robbery victims strike theatrical and extravagant stationary poses that emphasise the absurd interaction of traditional and immutable genres with the 'transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent', in other words, with the Baudelairian idea of modernity.[90]

Godard approached the legend of Carmen through an 'Absolute' piece of music, which moves away from the Bizetian narrative. Indeed, McClary has suggested that Bizet's dialogues serve to accompany the musical characterisation of the protagonists. Bizet strengthens the vision of Carmen as a male fantasy through a musical discourse which McClary described as 'slippery, unpredictable, maddening'. In the opera, music

[89] 'It is not music within the film, it is a film created with music. My true producer was Carmen, and my scriptwriter was Beethoven, who kindly agreed to compose a bank robbery' [My translation, ZTZ]. Jean-Luc Godard quoted in de Baecque, *Godard biographie*, 617–618.

[90] 'transient, the fleeting, the contingent' see Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', 695.

becomes a key-strategy for Bizet to manipulate desire and provoke a libidinal response from the male spectator at the vision of Carmen.[91] The String Quartet, by its non-operatic and 'purely' musical nature (the lack of narrative, lyrics and dramatic representation) is set in opposition to the opera. Whereas Bizet represents Carmen as a threatening, fascinating, exotic and immoral figure, Godard introduces Carmen through music which spectators commonly associate with 'perfection, universality, extra-human truth', detached from any social context.[92] Beethoven's String Quartet, unlike Bizet's opera, does not refer to any narrative and claims no fixed meaning. As a matter of fact, music, in *Prénom Carmen*, pertains to the counterpoint mode, whose principle lies in the simultaneity of varied melodic lines. Godard borrowed from the counterpoint (or fugue) its equalitarian system, which refuses to privilege any primary tune.[93]

Despite these points of contrast, the choice of Beethoven's late composition should not exclusively be regarded as a deliberate affront to Bizet's opera. In his interview with Gideon Bachman, Godard expresses his admiration for the 'fundamental' dimension of Beethoven's music.[94] The fundamental quality of composers like Bach, Mozart and Beethoven resides in that they stand for 'all the theory and the practice of music which has so far existed'.[95] In this day and age, Beethoven still provides work 'to all the musicians of past and present throughout history' as shown through the music rehearsal in *Prénom Carmen*. Godard brings together divinised art with day-to-day work life by adding rehearsing musicians to the storyline, as shown through the bourgeois atmosphere of the violinists' Parisian living-room, or through extradiegetic classical music, as in the working-class setting of *Passion*. In the final scene, when Carmen's gang gather in the Intercontinental hotel to fake the shooting of a documentary, Godard introduces the musicians to the Carmen story, by making them play Beethoven's String Quartet in the fancy salon, just before the hotel hold-up. The place of Beethoven ironically changes from fundamental to the narrative to background music, at the service of the wealthy bourgeois who placidly enjoy their meal. The role

[91] McClary, 'Sexual Politics in Classical Music', 58.
[92] This also applies to classical music used in *Passion* and *Je vous salue, Marie*. See Susan McClary, 'The Blasphemy of Talking Politics during Bach Year', in *Music and Society: the Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, eds. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambdrige University Press, 1987), 57.
[93] Isabelle Piette, *Littérature et musique: contribution à une orientation théorique: 1970–1985* (Namur: Presses universitaires de Namur, 1987), 98–99.
[94] Jean-Luc Godard and Gideon Bachman, 'The Carrots Are Cooked: A Conversation with Jean-Luc Godard', in *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, ed. David Sterritt (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 130.
[95] Ibid.

of uncle Jean, who appears dissatisfied by the filmmaking conditions and, at the same time, completely unaware of his niece's terrorist scheme, is all the more sarcastic. Filmed in a medium wide shot, uncle Jean, followed by his female assistant, enters the salon and salutes one of the male violinists in the same way as a conductor shakes hands with the first violin. This gesture symbolises hierarchical recognition between the conductor and the concertmaster, who represents the second leading authority in the musical ensemble. This comparison becomes more obvious when the violinist says to Jeannot: 'Ah, c'est vous. Vous savez que nous ne sommes pas un orchestre de thé dansant!'[96] The fact that Godard answers 'Et oui, les temps sont durs pour des œuvres comme nous' alludes, on the one hand, to the inadequacy of Beethoven in this hotel setting, and confirms, on the other hand, the role of Godard and the String Quartet as co-founders of *Prénom Carmen*.[97] In the following shot, Godard emphasises the musicians and uncle Jean's 'out of place' feeling by enacting, in front of a dining table and surrounded by his assistant and customers, a gesture which could be associated with the Christian ritual of the sign of cross **(fig. 5.4.)**.

Be they gestures of authority or ceremony, Godard refers to the musical and the religious spheres as two distinct but connected worlds, whose autonomous role in society is legitimised through a whole set of traditions and rules and which consequently clash with the chaotic murders who are about to take place. Indeed, the image of a cleaning man polishing a series of crystal candelabra from the top of a ladder contrasts with the way in which Carmen's gang suddenly opens fire and circulates around the tables holding hotel clients hostage. Interestingly, Godard's analogy between the film director and the music director in *Prénom Carmen* foreshadowed the image of a future Godard, standing next to his bookcase, imitating an orchestra conductor in front of a music stand in 'Une Vague Nouvelle', the episode 3b of *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*.

The role of Godard as a social outsider and passé filmmaker, who struggles to communicate with younger generations, has been the centre of focus of recent scholarship exploring the autobiographical dimension of Godard's self-fictionalisation in *Passion*, *Prénom Carmen*, *Soigne ta droite*, *King Lear* (1987), *JLG/JLG: autoportrait de décembre* (1994), and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[98] Cecilia Sayad drew on Mikhael Bakhtin's literary theory to suggest that Godard's late appearances as 'oncle

[96] 'Oh, it's you. You know, we are not a tea dance orchestra!' [My translation, ZTZ].
[97] 'Alas, these are difficult times for works like us' [My translation, ZTZ].
[98] Sayad, *Performing Authorship: Self-inscription and Corporeality in the Cinema*, 115.

Jean', 'monsieur Godard', 'L'Idiot', 'Le Prince', or 'Professeur Pluggy' reconnected with the traditional role of the fool, as defined by various art forms like popular theatre, circus shows and the novel.[99] Sayad not only describes Godard's performances as an ambivalent state in between the fictional world of the narrative and the extra-filmic, but also emphasises that Bakhtin acknowledged the authority position of the fool: they have the right, within the narrative, to be outsiders, to criticise, to interrupt the plot, as well as to confuse the spectators.[100] Although Godard did not properly act in the case of *Passion*, he created his own surrogate through the role of Jerzy Radziwilowicz, a misunderstood Polish filmmaker. In fact, Jerzy in *Passion* is not only reminiscent of the director's physical characteristics through his square glasses and smoking habits but also mirrors Godard's demanding nature when working on the reconstitution of classic paintings through *tableaux vivants*. This final section examines Godard's shifting views on authorship through his treatment of light, colour and movement in *Passion*.

5.4. Aesthetics of Romanticism: light, colour and movement in *Passion*

It is uncertain whether *Passion* was a veiled homage to Aragon, who died in the same year as the film was released. As commented above, already in 1965, Aragon discussed the way in which Godard transposed romantic patterns in *Pierrot le fou*. In his essay, the poet saw in Godard's particular use of red the very symbol of past and present massacres, and mentioned, in this regard, a series of historical struggles between the people and the armed forces, among which the murder of Republican Spanish writer and playwright, Federico Garcia Lorca, during the Spanish Civil War.[101] Like Édouard Manet's painting *L'Exécution de Maximilien* (1868), which establishes an intertextual relation with Francisco de Goya's *El tres de mayo 1808 en Madrid* (1813-1814), Godard builds his cinema upon intermedial relations between past and contemporary western literature and art. However, Aragon's analysis of *Pierrot le fou*, which supports the idea that Godard spoke for worldwide proletarian struggles and mass murders in an allegorical and messianic way (through a pronounced attention to colour, form and

[99] Ibid., 109.
[100] Ibid., 110.
[101] Aragon, 'Qu'est-ce que l'art, Jean-Luc Godard?': 10.

movement), has not, to my knowledge, been closely followed up.[102] Rather, a vast number of studies have agreed that Godard's aesthetics of collage advocate a secular critique of modernity and were influenced by twentieth-century modernist art (Dziga Vertov, Bertolt Brecht, Cubism, Dada, Pop Art). For instance, Angela Dalle Vacche suggested that Ferdinand's readings on Diego Velazquez, in the opening of *Pierrot le fou,* serve to emphasise the conflict between high and low art and, as such, criticised the traditional boundaries separating works of art from life.[103] Although Dalle Vacche highlights that Godard was interested in images that expressed 'feelings', through an emphasis on visual echoes and nuances, she overlooks the root of these romantic connotations and fails to acknowledge the film's possible connection with previous postulates from the politique des auteurs era.[104] Indeed, in *Pierrot le fou*, Godard defines cinema as such: 'film is like a battleground. It's Love. Hate. Action. Violence. Death. In one word, Emotion.'[105] The emphasis on action, over language, shows, on the one hand, that Godard questions the possibility of cinema to represent life through classical mimesis and, on the other hand, the necessity to build a discourse on contemporary history by creating palympsestic images.[106]

Certainly, Godard's tendency to undermine the importance of the narrative and to experiment, instead, with the meaning of form, can be associated with a modernist strategy. I nonetheless understand modernist self-reflexive and deconstruction practices as the historical transmutation of the romantic expression of profound suffering, loneliness and irony that we find in authors as different as Friedrich Shlegel, Heinrich von Kleist and François René de Chateaubriand.[107] In *Prénom Carmen*, Godard was

[102] Jacques Rancière, 'Jean-Luc Godard, la religion de l'art. Entretien avec Jacques Rancière', in *Où en est le God-Art?*, ed. René Prédal (Courbevoie: Cinémaction – Corlet, 2003), 111–121.
[103] Angela Dalle Vacche, 'Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou*: Cinema as Collage against Painting', in *Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 109.
[104] Ibid., 113.
[105] Samuel Fuller is at the origin of this sentence. It is Ferdinand, in *Pierrot le fou*, who asks him directly 'what is cinema?'. The association of the American director to an author of tragic and epic stories is directly related to the politique des auteurs' conception of Hollywood cinema. For instance, when describing Howard Hawks' 'genius', the Young Turks used classical notions of Greek tragedy like 'peripeteia', 'bravery', 'honesty', 'necessity', 'morality', 'fatality' and so on. See Jacques Rivette, 'Génie de Howard Hawks', *Cahiers du cinéma* 23 (May 1953): 16–23.
[106] Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October* 12 (Spring, 1980): 69, Accessed April 15, 2016, doi: 10.2307/778575
[107] Scholars such as Diane Elam and Edward Larrissy developed the idea that the postmodern condition is intimately tied to romanticism: 'Postmodernism is not a perspectival view on history; it is the rethinking of history as an ironic coexistence of temporalities.' Diane Elam, *Romancing the Posmodern* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6. Larrissy edited a collection of essays on the relationship between romanticism, modernism and postmodernism; see Edward Larrissy (ed.), *Romanticism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

concerned with restoring the ironic dimension of Mérimée's *Carmen* by expressing the dialectical movement between freedom and constraint, pathos and mockery, at the centre of the story. Through the alternation of climatic and anti-climatic scenes (harmony recovered versus chaotic movements), Godard expresses the tragedy of Mérimée's novella, that is, the impossibility of representing, in a stable and dogmatic way, the essence of Carmen's being.

In *Passion*, the Polish director Jerzy formulates the romantic taste for paradox as such: 'Vous savez, je découvre qu'il faut vivre les histoires avant de les inventer'.[108] In *Passion*, like in any other 1960s and 1980s narrative film, this romantic assumption (which is stated by Godard himself in *Scénario du film Passion* [1982]) incarnates Godard's leading and overarching concept: it is the form, which should generate the thought, and not the other way round.[109] With this in mind, addressing the evolution of Godard's treatment of light and colour will give a new perspective on the intermedial relation between painting and mise-en-scène.

Throughout the 1960s, Godard abundantly used the symbolic and political dimension of the colour red to evoke wars, slaughter and violence in the most vibrant way. Edward Branigan argued that, in the first decade of his filmmaking, Godard had a clear preference for pigment's primaries (red, blue, yellow) over a more nuanced palette. In his study of *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966), Branigan characterises the director's use of red as 'brilliant', 'solid', and 'indivisible'.[110] The monochromatic and solid aspect of Godard's colours reveal his refusal to light objects and settings according to a natural and varying light. Accordingly, films like *Pierrot le fou* and *Le mépris* commonly use 'high key, featureless lighting which supresses shadow and creates flatter colors with less spatial or volume effect (*chiaroscuro*)'.[111] The result of this lighting technique gives the impression that the luminosity and colour tones, whether it is in indoor or outdoor scenes, remain constant and unchangeable. In contrast with *Le mépris* (which is another self-reflexive film about the film industry), I

[108] 'You know… I'm realising you have to live stories before inventing them' [My translation, ZTZ].
[109] For Baudelaire, painting, like poetry, can only be interesting when the artist privileges form and colour. The form and the idea are, thus, one. For Godard, the only path towards the understanding of the world requires from the filmmaker the creation of images that prevail from the verb, and escape, thereby, written and spoken language. See Albert Cassagne, *La théorie de l'art pour l'art en France chez les derniers romantiques et les premiers réalistes* (Paris: Éditions Champ Vallon, 1997), 384.
[110] Edward Branigan, 'The Articulation of Colour in a Filmic System: *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*', in *Color, The Film Reader*, eds. Angela Dalle Vacche and Brian Price (New York: Routledge, 2006), 173.
[111] Branigan, 'The Articulation of Colour in a Filmic System', 172.

read *Passion* as a film about lighting and its effects on the subject of representation. More precisely, *Passion* could be a discourse on the pictorial technique of *chiaroscuro*. While the self-reflexive strategies of both films are comparable, it is no longer the saturated colours of the Mediterranean coast that interest Godard when choosing the setting of *Passion*. Surely, bright red colours are a constant in Godard's filmic corpus, as will be shown in a few *tableaux vivants* and the everyday props of the characters (numerous sweaters, cardigans, dresses, skirts, lamps, traffic cones, car stickers, curtains, bed sheets, tables, umbrellas and so on…). However, the *chiaroscuro* technique not only haunts Godard's lighting strategies but also adds new levels of meaning to his critique of bourgeois power dynamics.

In *Passion*, Godard introduces Delacroix's *L'entrée des croisés à Constantinople* (1840) through Élie Faure's sentence: 'That which plunges into light is the repercussion of that which is submerged by night. That which is submerged by night prolongs in the invisible that which plunges into light.' From a forward tracking and low angle shot, Jerzy pronounces this sentence whilst the smoke of his cigarette spreads in the studio. In the background, knights on horseback circulate around the miniature reconstitution of Constantinople, whilst the Allegro Agitato of Antonin Dvorak's piano concerto in G minor is being played. Simultaneously, technicians rush and push the extras into the platform to strike the pose of the city inhabitants who, in Delacroix's paintings, beg the crusaders' mercy. The chiastic composition of Faure's sentence matches the dynamics of lights and shades of the *tableau vivant*. While Godard films the horse riders frontally, through an even lighting and static camera **(fig. 5.5.)**, the silhouettes representing the oppressed crowd are shown in the darker backstage, being chased, stripped and trapped by the assistant director who, along with the help of the crusaders, places them back in the appointed setting. This hide-and-seek game between the shooting team, the crusaders and the persecuted extras provokes movement within the studio environment and through Godard's cameras, and renders the lighting variable and unsettled. In opposition to the colour filters that characterised the beginnings of *Le mépris* and *Pierrot le fou*, *Passion* adds depth to Godard's color palette through an emphasis on the multiplicity of perspectives framing the cinematic space and spoken reflections on the group of characters and individuals being lit.

By privileging multiple viewing angles, camera movements and games of light and shade, Godard evokes the complexity of composition produced by the pictorial system of *chiaroscuro*. Indeed, Baudelaire praised Delacroix's ability to multiply, ad

infinitum, the shades of colour and, as such, to recreate, through the mastery of lighting, the balance and melody of nature. The importance the romantics gave to colour and lighting is all the more emphasised in Baudelaire's colourist theory:

> The right way to know if a picture is melodious is to look at it from far enough away to make it impossible to understand its subject or to distinguish its lines. If it is melodious, it already has a meaning and had already taken its place in your store of memories. Style and feeling in colour come from a choice, and choice comes from temperament.[112]

The notion of melody should be understood as the painter's capacity to transcend the materiality of artistic forms by creating a work of art that connects with the beauty of the natural realm. Like classical music and nature, light is a contrapuntal element that co-exists with desynchronised images and sound. Examining the way in which Godard frames Isabelle, the factory girl, will help clarifying this point.

Isabelle is the leader of a labour-union group, she is often seen pursued by the police, marginalised from the shooting studio or retired in the woods. Godard hinders her attempts to communicate with Jerzy and the plant owner by disrupting the intelligibility of the audio-tracks and holding back the clarity of the dialogues due to the girl's continuous stuttering. In the union meeting, taking place at Isabelle's house, Godard frames her semi-right profile and lights it from a source coming from the upper right side of the shot. Godard plays with this lighting source by turning it on and off and letting it reflect on Isabelle's face, which strikes a pensive pose. The light continues to vacillate while Isabelle's co-workers, situated off-screen, lay down a list of books and essays related to class struggle. At this same moment, Mozart's 'Introitus' begins to play. In addition to the unionists' voices and Mozart's *Requiem* (1791), Isabelle punctually declares: 'Dieu te pardonne!', 'Commence pas à m'énerver!', 'Vous faites rien pour changer vous-mêmes!'[113] Is Isabelle addressing her orders and criticism to her grandfather (also placed off-screen), to the factory women, to the spectator? Surely, this scene has an unambiguously Brechtian dimension, as shown through the shifting audio

[112] Charles Baudelaire, 'On Colour', in *Art in Theory 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 260.
[113] 'God forgives you'/ 'You are starting to annoy me'/ 'You do nothing to change yourself' [My translation, ZTZ]. *Passion*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1982; Kinowelt, 2010).

tracks that do not coincide with the image, Isabelle's direct look to the camera and the irritable sound of her harmonica.[114] However, Godard's pronounced focus on Isabelle's face, through the discontinuous lighting, and intermittent but smooth insertion of the 'Introitus' adds a lamenting tone to the scene and connotes martyrdom. In this example, Godard shows a certain degree of consciousness of the metaphysical dimension of lighting, which, since Plato, has been many times associated with the notions of the Good and the Ideal.[115]

In a sense, to 'look closely at the human beings, like Rembrandt, at their eyes and lips' is a statement expressing the bitter failure of the director's revolutionary aesthetics, which did not succeed in representing the working class with the appropriate light. Although Godard continuously directs the spotlights toward Isabelle, he multiplies obstacles that prevent her from establishing emotional and relational bonds with the rest of the characters. Although Isabelle and Jerzy appear together in the opening shots, these two protagonists embark on different storylines, which intersect occasionally: Jerzy is the director of a heavily indebted cinematic project and Isabelle organises reunions to establish wage claims as a reaction against her unfair dismissal. With the exception of an erotic encounter between Isabelle and Jerzy, the factory girl and the Polish filmmaker rarely interact. Following the opening shot in which Jerzy drives his car whilst Isabelle follows him with her bicycle, Godard recreates a similar situation in

[114] The German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht contributed to the development of a political form of theatre, the Epic Theatre, in the mid-1920s. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, American and European film critics and directors rediscovered Brecht's essays and plays, and by the same token, relaunched debates on the relationship between cinema and realism. In fact, among the major principles of the Epic Theatre is a critique of the realistic conventions of traditional theatre, which prevents spectators from engaging with contemporary social issues by subjecting the audience to the illusion of reality. Brecht's aesthetic practices therefore went against the spectator's familiarisation with the drama and empathy towards characters, and promoted, in turn, theatre (and art in general) as a call to praxis, whereby the audience gains political awareness and is led to reflect on, and eventually change, society. Up until today, directors as diverse as Orson Welles, Alain Resnais, Michelangelo Antonioni, Nagisa Oshima and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (to only name a few) have incorporated elements from Brecht's Marxist aesthetic theory to their filmic practices. Godard, for his part, became Brecht's most famous advocate, through aesthetic and narrative choices, as well as modes of production that consistently opposed mainstream narrative cinema and developed, in Peter Wollen's words, a radical 'counter-cinema'. Inspired by the Brechtian critique of theatre's dramatic and realist modes of representation, Godard's 'counter-cinema' challenged the capitalist production and distribution system via distancing techniques, such as depsycholigised-type of characters, multiple diegeses, self-reflexivity, discontinuous and abrupt montage, anti-illusionist and didactic editing styles. To learn more about the impact of Brecht in 1960s film criticism and filmmaking see Robert Stam, 'The Presence of Brecht', in *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 145–150; Bernard Dort, 'Pour une critique brechtienne du cinéma', *Cahiers du cinéma* 114 (December 1960): 33–43; Wollen, 'Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent d'Est*', 418–426.

[115] Paulette Choné, *L'atelier des nuits: Histoire et signification du nocturne dans l'art d'occident* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1992), 28–29.

which Isabelle, walking alongside the car window, attempts to communicate with Jerzy. This sequence is filmed through the shot-reverse shot technique. The longest shot focuses on Isabelle who asks Jerzy to join her to a unionist reunion. Isabelle's face remains in shadow while her dialogue is constantly interrupted by Jerzy's reflections on art, the sound of the traffic, Ravel's Concerto in D for the Left Hand and the harmonica playing. By filming Isabelle's face against the skylight, Godard subtly reveals the moral dimension of light and, more generally, of aesthetic decisions. In *Passion*, lighting, like tracking shots, is a question of ethics.[116] Indeed, the lighting reveals and excludes all at once. Analogically, Godard's approach to painting reflects on the ideological mechanisms of representation, which have continuously disconnected the privileged object from the reality of off-frame surroundings. To clarify this point, returning to André Bazin's writings is instructive.

In *Passion*, Godard challenges the centripetal dimension of pictorial space by connecting the *tableaux vivants* to the reality outside the frame and the studio. He releases pictorial representation from its inward and atemporal composition and transposes it within cinematic spatio-temporality. Bazin describes the principle of pictorial art as such:

> De même que le tableau ne se confond point avec le paysage qu'il représente, qu'il n'est pas non plus une fenêtre dans un mur, la scène et le décor où l'action se déroule sont un microcosme esthétique inséré de force dans l'univers mais essentiellement hétérogène à la Nature qui les entoure.[117]

In turn, the photographic nature of the cinematic frame delineates a portion of reality which contains, according to Bazin, a geographical and horizontal temporality.[118] The expression 'cache', which refers to the frame of the camera lens, implies that the cinematic image is composed of a visible, on-screen reality, and of a hidden, imaginary

[116] Godard's famous sentence, 'le travelling est une affaire de morale', is a variation of Luc Moullet's formula: 'La morale est une affaire de travelling'. To learn more about the connection between aesthetics and ethics, as conceived by the politique des auteurs, refer to Jacques Rivette, 'De l'abjection', *Cahiers du cinéma* 120 (June 1961): 54–55.

[117] 'Just as the picture is not to be confounded with the scene it represents and is not a window in a wall. The stage and the décor where the action unfolds constitute an aesthetic microcosm inserted perforce into the universe but essentially distinct from the Nature which surrounds it'. André Bazin, 'Théâtre et cinéma', in *Qu'est-que le cinéma?* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 158–160. See also Bazin, 'Théâtre et cinéma', 139–140; Bazin, 'Peinture et cinéma', 188.

[118] Bazin, 'Théâtre et cinéma', 158.

and off-screen reality which prolongs the screen. In *Passion*, the mise-en-abyme strategy, which consists in filming the filmmaking of a film about famous *tableaux vivants*, challenges classical scenography by making the off-screen activities of the technicians visible.[119] The studio becomes a conflictive space in which paintings from the royal collection (*El quitasol*, *La familia de Carlos IV*) and the nude tradition (*La maja desnuda*) meet the historical event (*El tres de mayo*). By emphasising the eclectic genres of which Goya's oeuvre partook, Godard removes the pictorial subjects from their a-historical frame and reflects on the political complexity of the painter's works.[120] For example, he films technicians inclining a large and noisy spotlight in a downward position and shedding light on a Spanish rioter who witnesses the execution of his compatriots by a Napoleonic firing squad from *El tres de mayo*. The camera follows the spotlight's movement and progresses towards the Spaniard, kneeling down next to another big lamp lying on the ground. In this sequence shot, the camera not only reveals two different light sources, but also captures the documentary aspect of the spotlight and the fictional dimension of the ground-based lamp, which is represented in Goya's painting. Whilst the camera zooms out, the boots and the grey greatcoats of the Napoleonic troupe become visible and take over the entirety of the frame, their rifles pointing to the left side, in unison. In the background, the woman from *El quitasol* wanders behind the Spanish soldiers, whilst a director of photography follows her with another camera.[121] The extras from the foreground remain static until Godard cuts to another shot, which shows another painting by Goya, *La maja desnuda*, from a different position. This scene is none other than the continuity shot of the woman from *El quitasol* who appears walking in front of the bed in which lies the model of *La maja desnuda*. Godard pans the camera down towards the woman's Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, whose path slightly touches the corpses of the firing squad. Through these two consecutive shots, Godard creates a sequence in which Goya's paintings, from different

[119] Classical narrative conventions create the impression of continuity between the cinematic image and the off-screen surroundings. According to Pascal Bonitzer, this editing strategy only applies to classical scenography, whose dramatic (and therefore ideological) function he defines as such: 'celle d'avérer, d'un champ à l'autre, la "réalité" (la concrétude) de la scène *par ce qui s'en absente*'/ 'that of proving, from one shot to another, the "reality" (the concreteness) of the scene *through that which is absent*'[My translation, ZTZ]. See Pascal Bonitzer, 'Hors-champ (un espace en défaut)', *Cahiers du cinéma* 234–235 (December 1971 – February 1972): 20.

[120] To learn about the ideological conflicts brought by the Enlightenment in Spain and its direct impact on Goya's paintings, refer to Thomas Crow, 'The Tensions of Enlightenment: Goya', in *Nineteenth-Century Art: a Critical History*, ed. Stephen F. Eisenman (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 95–99.

[121] Later in the film, Godard hints at *El quitasol* through a red-dressed factory-girl, wearing a red umbrella. She wanders in the snow until she and her comrades get in the way of Michel's car.

political contexts, engage with one another. Furthermore, the mise-en-abyme technique highlights the ideological dimension of the image through camera movements and editing techniques that reveal the viciousness of the casting and selection process, the feelings of anxiety, moments of coercion and intimidation, as well as the lack of communication between groups and individuals. In contrast with the Hollywood studio system, the shooting studio in *Passion* becomes a space of inclusion, where the multiplicity of points of view emphasise the impossibility of representing the history of western painting within classical conventions.[122] Like in *Prénom Carmen*, Godard calls into question cinema's ability to address the complexity of foreign entities, which in *Passion* are associated with the working class and the historical paintings.

Similarly to Isabelle, the Spanish martyrs have expressionless faces, which are lit through light and shade techniques. Godard implies the allegorical connection between Isabelle's labour-union reunion and the staging of *El tres de mayo* by binding the two narratives together with a musical theme: Mozart's *Requiem*. In both examples, the lighting and the classical music enhance the dramatic dimension of the scene through close-up shots that let the spectator contemplate the complexity and dividedness of the represented subject. As a matter of fact, Godard's representation of *El tres de mayo* does not simply illuminate the faces of the Spanish victims but also reveals the hidden and inhuman faces of the firing squad so as to prevent the spectator from fixing any interpretation to the chosen camera angles. In the painting, the soldiers turn their back on the spectators. Scholars have alluded to Goya's Napoleonic troupes as 'machine-like and anonymous', as opposed to the 'individual faces of the illuminated Spaniards'.[123] Godard, through a tracking shot, captures frontally, the soldier's faces and restores, as such, the Spanish victims' diegetic gaze **(fig. 5.6.)**. In terms of lighting, Godard illuminates the executioners' faces through the same ground-based lamp that Goya placed at the soldiers' feet. For the first time, in *Passion*, the spectator witnesses that which Goya kept secret. However, despite revealing the faces of the firing squad, the looks remain stern, impervious to any psychological reading.

Another example of Godard's refusal of psychology can be found, once more, in the way he approaches Isabelle. The latter challenges the pre-conceived and

[122] Classical narrative cinema aims to preserve the illusion of a continuous, homogeneous, profound and intelligible universe through the very exclusion of the mechanisms through which the enactment of reality becomes possible. See Bonitzer, 'Hors-champ, (un espace en défaut)': 21.
[123] Petty Huntsman, *Thinking about Art: a Thematic Guide to Art History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 28.

stereotypical representation of factory women in classical narrative cinema. She is a thinker who, in contrast with the more submissive look of Jerzy's extras, understands that her living and working environments are a political construct. On the one hand, Isabelle offers genuine and critical insights on the relation of labour with art, as shown at the factory, when she remarks to the script girl that cinema never shows people at work. On the other hand, the plant owner, as well as the production and artistic managers, fail to understand Isabelle and persecute her, either by having recourse to the police forces or through other forms of violence. Interestingly, Godard establishes analogical power dynamics between Isabelle and the plant owner, Michel Boulard (played by Michel Piccoli), and the shooting team and the extras.

At the shooting studio, Godard films Jerzy walking through the crowd of extras whilst categorically refusing to answer their questions. The script-girl, Sophie, and the producer, Laszlo Kovacs, consecutively approach the director to discuss shooting issues, hence standing in his way. Jerzy pushes them away, one after the other, before bumping into his assistant, who is followed by the extra representing the Biblical angel of *Lutte de Jacob avec l'Ange*. This face-to-face encounter between Jerzy and the angel turns into a battle which resembles, step by step, Delacroix's wrestling scene. The intertextual dimension of this particular scene, which blurs fiction with artistic and self-referential references, aims to destabilise the intelligibility of the storyline and provokes unexpected power dynamics between physical bodies. Similarly, in the tumult caused by the entrance of the crusaders, Jerzy's assistant (played by Patrick Bonnel), who is originally seen shouting at the extras, suddenly comes to the rescue of a Constantinopolitan woman, caught between two knights. The dialectics between fiction and non-fiction show Godard's attempt to provide a totalising vision of human relationships and express, through the very physicality of gestures and movements, the belief in pre-existing transcendental aesthetics. To echo Godard's reflections on *Prénom Carmen*: Goya becomes the producer and Mozart the scriptwriter of *Passion*.

In this regard, Loshitzky suggested that the subject of *Passion* 'surpasses the boundaries of moral idealistic criticism of the film industry, and becomes a philosophical treatise on the creative process'.[124] Although it could be easily argued that *Passion*, by its very self-reflexive nature, criticises the capitalist system of cultural production and distribution, Godard's centre of attention has varied since *Le mépris*. For

[124] Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci*, 92.

instance, that which differentiates the self-reflexivity of *Le mépris* from *Passion* is that, in the former case, Godard was primarily concerned with the disintegration of the relationship between Paul and Camille, which was provoked by Paul's submissiveness to the Hollywood film system. In the latter case, Godard shows more concern for Jerzy's inability to fulfil his artistic aspiration by giving to the *tableaux vivants* a major place within the narrative. Simply put, *Le mépris* could be regarded as an open letter against the Hollywood studio system while *Passion* gives heavier emphasis to the relationship of history with art and cinema. Unlike the filming of Greek mythological statues in *Le mépris*, which appeared as isolated from the narrative through a static and single camera, *Passion* invites the spectator to visit the paintings from within the cinematic space and to understand the power games inherent to any attempts at representation.[125]

Certainly, Godard pessimistically reflects on the role of the filmmaker in the face of history by revealing the breach that separates the bourgeois director, painter, producer from the working class, the studio technicians, the female extras, and so on. However, the moments of harmony between classical music, lighting and *tableaux vivants* function as spaces of evasion from modernist imagery. Indeed, these new aesthetic devices have provided scholars with the opportunity to build a discourse on Godard's stylistic lateness. Alain Bergala was indeed among the first scholars to explore Godard's relation to Christian and Biblical iconography.[126] According to Guy Bedouelle, a film like *Je vous salue, Marie* leaves the mystery of the Immaculate Conception intact and takes away the possibility of any intelligible explanation.[127] For instance, when the gynaecologist examines Marie, he confirms her pregnancy through the pleonasm 'C'est vrai que c'est vrai'.[128] In this film, the ambiguity of Godard's discourse on the relationship between science and religion was such that Catholic journals like *La croix*, *Témoignage chrétien* and *Du spirituel dans le cinéma* agreed on

[125] The priority given to camera movements contrasts with the car accident scenes in *Pierrot le fou* and *Weekend*, where the camera strictly follows the main characters' movements (Ferdinand and Marianne, and Roland and Corinne).

[126] Alain Bergala, *Nul mieux que Godard* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1999), 142–162.

[127] Natalie Malabre, '*Je vous salue Marie* de Jean-Luc Godard: modalités et enjeux d'un retour du religieux au cinéma', *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires*, Numéro Special (2012). Accessed April 18, 2014, doi: 10.4000/cerri.1086

[128] 'It's true that it's true' [My translation, ZTZ]. *Je vous salue, Marie*, DVD, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1985; Gaumont, 2010).

the following point: Godard was concerned with exploring the traditional connection between art and the sacred.[129]

While this chapter has cautiously attempted to provide an important margin of interpretation to the films under discussion, I have suggested that Godard's renewed interest for nineteenth-century motifs and patterns reveal the director's reflections on the romantic communion between the artistic and the metaphysical. Theodor W. Adorno commented on Beethoven's late style, as such: 'The caesuras, the sudden discontinuities that more than anything else characterize the late Beethoven, are those moments of breaking away; the work is silent at the instant when it is left behind, and turns its emptiness outward'.[130] In *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen*, Godard has created an unusual idiom that breaks away from the political and dissonant dimension of his aesthetics through the synchronicity between classical music, nature images, stylised lighting and ascending camera movements. Surely, it can be argued that *Pierrot le fou* and *Prénom Carmen* are variations of a same *amour fou*, which exposes the bourgeois man (Ferdinand and Joseph) to the temptations of an outlawed and unfaithful woman (Marianne and Carmen).[131] Similarly, *Le mépris* and *Passion* explore the breach that separates nature from science, art from technique, love from labour, and so on. Nevertheless, Godard has continuously approached these themes and motifs to provide contemporary and 'timely' readings of classical tragedy. *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen*, in turn, contain anachronistic components that act against Godard's deconstructionist aesthetic system. In light of Godard's growing taste for self-fictionalisation (especially since the 1980s), I suggest that his evanescent and persistent allusions to a metaphysical, natural order, which contradicts the secular and Marxist inclinations, should not be understood as an index of a recovered religious faith. Instead, this study invites scholars to inquire further into the connection between Godard's changing approach to nineteenth-century motifs and the auteurist precepts of the pro-Hollywood period of *Cahiers du cinéma*. I consider this conflictive movement between past and present, auteurism and anti-auteurism, nineteenth-century echoes and modernist practices, as the most appropriate framework to engage with an artist who, like Delacroix, continuously invoked the spectre of the past to create an art of the present.

[129] Malabre, '*Je vous salue, Marie* de Jean-Luc Godard.'
[130] Adorno quoted in Edward W. Said, *On Late Style. Music and Literature Against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 11.
[131] Mulvey, 'The Whole and the Zero: Godard's Visions of Femininity', 78.

Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.6.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how nineteenth-century art and literature have functioned as a repository of ideas that have continuously influenced the Nouvelle Vague, considered in the context of different phases of twentieth-century French history. Specifically, this thesis has focused on the French film industry, from the period of social tensions in the mid-1960s through to the political disillusionment and cinematic crisis that pervaded the 1980s and shaped the current state of French cinema. This research rests on the premise that Nouvelle Vague directors at the origin of the politique des auteurs (i.e., Éric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard) have continuously created implicit dialogues with nineteenth-century sourcing and imagery through extremely different filmmaking careers. This thesis therefore developed the argument that, despite the diversity of their trajectories, the four of them commonly partook of representing nineteenth-century romantic and realist novels, memoirs and paintings in times when writers, artists and directors increasingly questioned and challenged the notions of moral instruction, the classical quest for beauty, the romantic genius and the bourgeois realist novel. In light of their former advocacy of André Bazin's ontological realism which, as demonstrated in chapter two and three, owed its subtle combination of idealism and materialism to Aristotle's metaphysics, by extension Honoré de Balzac, this thesis investigated the many ways their adaptation and transposition practices reclaim, reinterpret and challenge cinema's relationship with nineteenth-century romantic and realist legacy. The textual analyses of *Die Marquise von O…* (1976), *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (1971), *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991), *L'enfant sauvage* (1970), *Les deux anglaises et le continent* (1971), *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975), *La chambre verte* (1978), *Passion* (1982) and *Prénom Carmen* (1983) have demonstrated that the 'gang of four' continued tackling issues that were at the heart of the politique des auteurs and of Bazinian teachings such as the unity of nature, transcendental appearances, aspirations for totality through the mixing of art forms and genres, reflections on mise-en-scène as the expression of a personality and cinema's relationship with reality. Summarising the divergent aesthetic responses these directors gave to these interrelated nineteenth-century themes and patterns will provide us with a clear overview of these chapters' conclusions.

The introduction chapter explained that Bazin's ontological realism, which influenced the Young Turks' theoretical formation and criticism, was permeated with a certain degree of spiritualism that was directly connected to the Personalist bias of the post-war journal *Esprit*. According to Bazin, the solution to the declining individualism and dehumanizing values of capitalist society was the advocacy of a spiritual renewal that would redeem the world from its mechanisation and the moral solitude separating individuals.[1] The idea that the body is the physical manifestation of the soul not only echoed the classical Aristotelian concept on form and matter but also announced a major aesthetic principle of the politique des auteurs.

In this regard, my thesis demonstrated that, whereas Rivette, Truffaut and Godard showed a desire to emancipate themselves (to varying extents) from the ontological theory of realism (through extremely personal, original and more politicised filmic careers), cinema, for Rohmer, allowed him to put his own film theory into practice, which remained unchanged throughout the decades leading up to *Die Marquise von O…* Whether it is a contemporary fiction like *L'amour l'après-midi* (1972) or an adaptation of Heinrich von Kleist, Rohmer revealed the unity of nature through an aesthetic of self-erasure. By this, I mean that he consistently favoured still camera angles over camera movements, dolly movements over over-the-shoulder cameras, zooms or crane movements, American and deep focus shots over close-ups, long takes and transparent montage over what he considered aggressive and piecemeal editing. As examined in chapter two, Rohmer's film theory argued that filmmakers have a privileged touch with reality due to cinema's photographic mechanism. In other words, Rohmer claimed that the camera's unmediated relation to nature contrasted with language, which, in turn, is condemned to represent the physical world through fragmentary, narrow and deceptive concepts. Accordingly, cinema is able to reveal the subject's inner consciousness through physical appearances via a mechanical device whilst the nineteenth-century novel depicts the external reality through linguistic modalities via an inner consciousness. As such, cinema shares with the realist novel the desire to represent man as subordinated to the metaphysical order that rules all living

[1] Emmanuel Mounier, *Révolution Personnaliste et Communautaire* (1932–1935), ed. Pierre Palpant (Chicoutimi: Les Classiques des Sciences Sociales, 2003), Accessed April 29, 2016, http://www.uqac.uquebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/index.html

organisms and societies. Therefore, for Rohmer, cinema not only reflects the order and harmony of natural laws but also shows the intrinsic harmony that unites man to his surrounding landscapes. In terms of mise-en-scène, it is difficult to forget the soft, clear and comforting colours, as well as the purity of lines and geometrical forms that pervade Giulietta's salon in *Die Marquise von O…* Likewise, Rohmer's unusual camera angles (low-angle shot, 'emphatic' tracking shot on Bruno Ganz) and the dark and voluptuous atmosphere of his reconstruction of Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781) mirror the characters' unbridled, instinctive and secretive desires.

The textual analyses of *Out 1: Noli me tangere* and *La Belle Noiseuse* have shown that Rivette shared with Rohmer the belief in the filmmaking process as a quest for a *pre-existing* truth within the filmed reality. However, while Rohmer's ambition was to show that, despite the inherent modern condition of cinema, film reconnects with the classical search for beauty through its mimetic relation to nature, Rivette revived Balzac's romanticism through films that follow a recurring pattern: characters are trapped in a secular capitalist society and try to reconnect with a lost and coveted unity between man and nature through collective activities (theatre, art-related discussions, painting, playful and anti-utilitarian actions) aiming to restore the social and unalienated solidarity attributed to the pre-modern world. The fundamental distinction between Rohmer and Rivette's aesthetic views on cinema thereby resides in that the director of *Die Marquise von O…* did not challenge the classical mimetic function of realism (whether it is in terms of literary language or visual representation) and perceived human history as regulated by cyclical natural events. Whereas Rohmer's unquestioned belief in a depoliticised physical reality depending on a metaphysical realm was directly connected to his classical and Catholic education, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard had a different and, for some, more critical approach to the notion of realism.

For Rivette, a director is in touch with reality when the mise-en-scène captures the movement, transformation and changing processes of the world itself through techniques that reflect man's instinctive self-surpassing drives; hence the importance of reviving the heroic and demiurgic values advocated by the myths of Icarus, Prometheus and Pygmalion. However, returning to the mythical roots of Balzac's novelle or Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* (1845) necessarily meant, for both Rivette and Godard, the overthrowing of the nineteenth-century realist mode of representing the world. The two directors proposed alternatives to the reigning bourgeois order through radical aesthetics

(i.e., self-reflexive rehearsal scenes, multiple diegeses, discontinuous and unpredictable editing techniques) that focused on recovering, beyond the bourgeois mode of expression and representation, the mythological essence of these nineteenth-century novels. As such, Rivette revealed man's desire to reconnect with the sacred and universal dimension of myths through the unscripted, spontaneous and relentless recording of physical appearances (i.e., men and women within a small, autarkic community) boundlessly interacting and evolving in time and space. In a way, Rivette's anti-auteurist position, which involves the refusal to guide performances according to a pre-determined idea, renewed with Renoir's vision of cinema as a human experience, whose narrative takes shape *in the course* of the shooting process via democratic collaborations between the production, the technical and the acting team.[2] Like Rohmer, Rivette's camera insisted upon cinema's spatial-temporal dimension through a pronounced taste for long shots and minimalistic editing techniques.

In turn, Godard's former revolutionary activism as a militant Maoist filmmaker who reclaimed Dziga Vertov's legacy throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s contradicts Rohmer and Rivette's anti-linguistic views on cinema. In this regard, Godard's revival of nineteenth-century myths cannot, contrary to Rivette, take place in a marginal or private environment disconnected from the mundane reality of class divisions. Although Godard certainly shared with the latter the desire to reflect on the place of nineteenth-century myths in contemporary France, the director of *Prénom Carmen* did so through an aesthetic of fragmentation, which reveals the impossibility of revoking the harmonious and 'natural' relation between language and the world. Analysing *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* has proved that, while great emphasis is placed in the irreconcilable gap between image and sound (through aphoristic statements, open-ended sentences, disorienting and desynchronisation editing practices), Godard created a new, unresolved, if not opaque, discourse on nature, classical music and nineteenth-century art. As a matter of fact, Godard's association techniques restored a certain level of interdependence, harmony and homogeneity between these three components and thereby enhanced the existing clash between the routinised work activities, power dynamics of capitalism and romantic allusions on the impossibility of

[2] Interestingly, Rohmer's aforementioned self-withdrawal techniques aimed at the contemplation of a metaphysical order (from which classical beauty emerges), whereas Rivette promoted self-erasure values to create a film based on a collective experience.

love and of a desocialised production of art. These harmonious visual and aural references to natural landscapes and high art punctuate the 'broken' storylines and evoke a chain of associations without affirming any clear position on the part of the director. Instead, these elements act as a silent reminder of man's lost state of communion with nature; a metaphorical backdrop against which the modern human drama is played out. His flickering allusions to cinema's ontological relation to reality form part, however, of a self-critique. Godard's acting performances and fictional self-references are further evidence of his complicated relation with his own status as an author. While his deconstructionist approach to the bourgeois system of representation conformed to a Marxist rejection of the notion of the author as a lone and sovereign creator, the slavish attention scholars have devoted to his life work consolidates his status as France's most influential avant-garde director. The importance attributed to Godard's life work is due to his belonging to a generation of directors whose trajectory follows a before/after pattern; like Rivette, he formerly believed in cinema as the manifestation of an inner moral and spiritual life through its direct contact with sheer physical appearances. The growing politicisation of *Cahiers du cinéma* since the early 1960s and, more generally, of the French literary, artistic and cinematic scene, affected Rivette and Godard's understanding of cinema's relationship with realism and prompted the experimental, anti-auteur and marginal character of their films. *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* therefore become the works through which Godard reassessed the legacies of his openly bourgeois-oriented film criticism and of the anti-realist and estranging dimension of his Marxist filmmaking practices. Although Godard has often created films that escape any clear, definitive or prevailing interpretation, chapter five has argued that the contrasting imagery (i.e., the secular and alienated quotidian versus the romantic impulse toward an atemporal and transcendental realm) mirrors the contradictions at the core of Godard's aesthetic system. Indeed, his filmic corpus is constituted of a desire to critically witness the decline of western capitalist society and, at the same time, to preserve the taste for immoderate and messianic ambitions (impossible not to think of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* [1980-1988]) and to develop a highly individual aesthetic practice. In this respect, his pictorialist bias, which focuses on cinema's spatiality through an editing-based mise-en-scène (and, unlike Rohmer and Rivette, overlooks its temporal dimension), supports Louis Aragon's comparison of Godard with the colourist tradition of painters. Following this analogy, it can also be

concluded that Rohmer, Rivette and Truffaut's aesthetic developments are, by contrast, rooted in the nineteenth-century realist novel.

This comparative analysis would not be complete without summarising Truffaut's position toward nineteenth-century romanticism, realism and authorship. While Rohmer, Rivette and Godard's film aesthetics share a relatively solid theoretical background against which scholars scrutinise their thematic and stylistic patterns, the idiosyncratic value of Truffaut's filmmaking partly resulted from the advocacy, in the course of his filmmaking career, of a deintellectualised approach to cinema. As French director Arnaud Desplechin stated: 'In all his own films there is a sort of apology for simplicity as a goal'.[3] Chapter four developed the argument that Truffaut understood cinema's relationship with reality as mediated by the director's identification with the world he represents. In other words, Truffaut's autobiographical memories and passions played an important part in shaping thematic and artistic choices when adapting nineteenth-century sources. The significant shift between Rohmer and Truffaut therefore lies in the latter's disregard of the technical and stylistic proscriptions advocated by Bazin's ontological realism and subsequent definition of mise-en-scène as an artistic practice that represents the worldview of the one and only genius: the director. In fact, Truffaut's 1970s film adaptations are characterised by an increasing distrust of documentary techniques and preference for emphatic stylistic allusions to the classical age of cinema (i.e., the melodramatic close-ups, the iris shots, extra-diegetic music soundtrack) as well as to his personal aesthetic strategies (omniscient and novelistic voice-overs, fictional 'doubles', central acting roles, cameos, superimposition of images, looks at the camera, zoom techniques, etc.). While Rohmer oriented his filmmaking practices towards the revelation of a metaphysical force through the metaphorical undertones of the recorded physical reality, Truffaut understood cinema as a means, for the director, to express his inner thoughts, beliefs and personality. In short, Rohmer was not really preoccupied with determining 'whose' soul the film reveals (the director, the characters, the viewer). In contrast, Truffaut constructed an author-centred discourse that places the director as the main creative agent responsible of a film's aesthetic outcome. The change between the two stances is subtle but essential in

[3] Arnaud Desplechin, 'Interview with Arnaud Desplechin, Part II. Truffaut and his methods', in *A Companion to François Truffaut*, eds. Dudley Andrew and Anne Gillain (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 118.

understanding Truffaut's relationship with the three other directors from the late 1960s onwards. In contrast with Rohmer, who continually preserved a neoclassical style in order to strengthen the bond between man and the divine order of the world, Truffaut's filmmaking was decisive in the development of a misappropriated and simplified understanding of the politique des auteurs (notably through his collaboration with overseas production companies and subsequent enhancement of nationalistic storylines). By consolidating the image of the film author as an individual whose craftsmanship combines imaginative skills, autobiographical experiences, film-watching/filmmaking pleasure and professional competences, Truffaut moved (far) away from Rivette and Godard's views on authorship and its relationship with nineteenth-century thought.

As opposed to Truffaut's adaptations, Rivette's engagement with Balzac in *Out 1* and *La Belle Noiseuse* implied the sheer abandonment of self-referential cinephilic allusions and required, instead, the exclusive devotion to spontaneous and collective occurrences developing in front of the camera. For Rivette, faithfulness to Balzac meant faithfulness to the modernist and demiurgic nature of his literary goal: observing human movement in a historical period of industrial, political, moral and artistic changes. The contemporaneity of Rivette and Godard's adaptations echo, in this sense, Charles Baudelaire's definition of romanticism: 'S'appeler romantique et regarder systématiquement le passé c'est se contredire'.[4] In relation to *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen*, French and present-day settings become the battleground against which conflicting forces (in the domain of love, art and politics) move between order and chaos, contingency and destiny, freedom and constraint. These dynamics mirror Greek tragedy, through an emphasis on dialectical actions and contrapuntal forms over language and narrative intelligibility. While Rivette and Godard cautiously undermined and challenged the linguistic and visual system of representation of nineteenth-century realism, Truffaut's film adaptations promoted nineteenth-century literary culture through films that reveal his personal love of books and reverence for classic authors of the French literary patrimony. His sophisticated narrative voice-overs and recurring visual references to literary texts helped him to reinforce the connection (already established in the politique des auteurs era) between the film director and the novelist.

[4] 'To call oneself a romantic and to look systematically at the past is a contradiction' [My translation, ZTZ]. See Charles Baudelaire, 'Qu'est-ce que le romantisme?', in *Salon de 1846*, ed. David Kelley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 125.

Truffaut's submissiveness to the literary text is, however, of a different nature than Rohmer's. Although some scholars might argue that Truffaut's adaptation practices show a desire to dissipate his creativity in favour of a classical re-enactment of the literary narrative, the director's level of personal expressivity should be found, precisely, in his devotional references to the source-*author* he is adapting. By devotion, I mean that Truffaut's personal adherence and uncritical identification with the *meaning* of the text was his way to restore the *spirit* of the author. Indeed, Truffaut's adaptations evade the question of multiple readings and heighten the idea of communicability between author and reader. As demonstrated through the emblematic case of *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), Truffaut's wish to honour the memory of literary authors was thereby synonymous with a bourgeois interpretation of the role of literature within society. In turn, Rohmer's adaptation practice mirrored the *theoretical* preoccupations at the basis of Kleist's novella and highlighted the text's historical materiality through an impersonal and sober neoclassical film style.

As this conclusion suggests, the understanding of these directors' film aesthetics is intrinsically connected to their personal views on the relationship of cinema with nineteenth-century art and literature. This thesis has shown that, while scholars can be tempted to dissociate the affiliation of these four filmic corpora on the grounds of political and stylistic divergences, a thorough assessment of their late Nouvelle Vague filmmaking (i.e., films produced since the late 1960s) still needs to be developed, from the perspective of a lifelong and common project. The relationship of cinema with the nineteenth-century novel and its neighbouring arts was, in this respect, a fundamental thread between Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard's filmographies. The interdisciplinary and comparative methodology I have adopted is, furthermore, representative of these former critics and directors' common understanding of filmmaking as a synthetic and innately modern art, which could not exist without traditional art forms or without the myths that permeate western contemporary thought. Although scholars have explored these directors' relation to modern art and literature, comparative studies with the aim of assessing their different approaches to nineteenth-century culture, have not, to my knowledge, been carried out.

The ambitious and immeasurable character of this enterprise is reflective of the totalising precepts of the politique des auteurs: the vision of cinema as a medium able to reveal a glimpse of the ideal and the universal within chaotic, fragmentary and material

appearances through synthesis, harmony and biographical reflections. Far from pretending to be an exhaustive account of the multiple references to nineteenth-century art and literature, this thesis opens a research field that requires thorough investigation and consolidation. The Nouvelle Vague has most commonly been written about with discourses of innovation, novelty, originality and the (post)modern. This predominant scholarship, however, essentially reproduces the directors' own self-images and publicity – that they were, broadly speaking, revolutionising French film and overturning tradition. Returning to some neoclassical aesthetic premises of the politique des auteurs in chapter two has proven that Balzac's realist novel has haunted these directors' early and late reflections on the cinematic medium. Indeed, the four broad chapters invite readers not to disregard the fact that Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut and Godard were deeply indebted to past forms, styles, themes, particularly those of the nineteenth century. To be sure, their works were not uncritical, nostalgic appropriations; as this thesis has demonstrated, these four directors transformed and transposed nineteenth-century letters and art to often political, always personal and sometimes imaginative ends. In this regard, my approach has thereby corrected the contradictory but common association of Godard as an absolute genius and deconstructionist master by examining the genealogies by which the Nouvelle Vague was derived.

My argument thus reflects a new confidence in, and a new generation of, film studies. Earlier studies, those that were concerned with genius and absolute innovation, were animated by a larger impetus: the need to claim cultural authority for film, that is, to demonstrate implicitly that film could be just as artistic as a novel, a sculpture or a symphony. In the meantime, in days where film studies is taught at universities alongside biology, literature and law, this battle has been largely won. This victory allows for more specific considerations such as this thesis – no longer needing to demonstrate film's aesthetic significance in culture and society, scholars can be more precise and show borrowings, appropriations, adoptions and transpositions without jeopardising their status. The position of the Nouvelle Vague as the fundamental transition between classical and modern ways of filmmaking incites, all the more, considerations on questions of legacy, imitation, adaptation and parody between cinema and traditional art forms.

Finally, this doctoral project became a tremendous opportunity to explore an insight that has accompanied me throughout my formative years as a film scholar.

When attending seminars on cinema history in Paris, the names of Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer and Rivette were referred to with a certain degree of seriousness, an ounce of mockery, if not plain annoyance. More than allusions to their individual careers, it seemed to me that the notion of *group* created a chain of associations that went beyond the concept of the Nouvelle Vague and reconnected with the artistic quarrels that have animated nineteenth-century Europe. Despite their political antagonisms and stylistic individualities, there is no doubt that this *bande des quatre* marked the second half of the twentieth century with a high level of aesthetic demands that somehow resonate in the minds of students from La Fémis and other French film schools. I hope that this thesis has contributed to explain, if only to a small extent, that the considerable impact the Nouvelle Vague has on cinephiles, directors, interdisciplinary students and scholars has less to do with the originality of their modernist approach to cinema than with the esoteric value and ethical exigency at the origin of their mise-en-scènes. I considered that my answer needed to be elaborated through the prism of nineteenth-century art and literature for the simple reason that these 'classics-to-be' directors produced works that gave *exclusive* attention to an elitist and higher-order (because classical) artistic challenge: man's mythical dream of totality.

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