

IN SEARCH OF *LE SECRET PERDU*: HOW FRENCH FILM DIRECTOR, FRANÇOIS
TRUFFAUT, WAS INFLUENCED BY SILENT CINEMA

by

MATTHEW BRUCE

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School of Languages, Cultures, Art History, and Music

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

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ABSTRACT

The focus of my research is the “*secret perdu*” or “lost secret” of François Truffaut’s cinema, to wit, the means by which Truffaut engaged with silent cinema and how it greatly influenced his *oeuvre*. This study is important since no other in existence focuses solely on this area of research and it provides an addition to the relatively small canon of academic literature on Truffaut in English. My research methods included: sourcing affirmative writing on Truffaut and silent cinema; isolating key words related to silent cinema, and further investigating their meaning to Truffaut and his work; and finally, watching a diverse range of visual material concerning Truffaut and silent cinema. My findings indicate that the success of Truffaut in his personal quest for “*le secret perdu*” was predicated on the help of a range of people who shared his passion for the silent era. Finally, it remains to be said that no single definition of *le secret perdu* exists, or, rather, if it ever did, it has gone to the grave with Truffaut. This leads me to suggest that we should be talking about *secret(s) perdu(s)* (plural), and that, ultimately, this subject remains open for further exploration.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late Mum, Jennifer, without whose years of encouragement this work would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

He [Truffaut] used to say that he wished he could have been able to make films during the years between 1924 and 1925. He said “That time was a truly extraordinary period – It would have been a real experience.” He would like to have been a member of Hitchcock’s generation, to be able to rediscover the lost secret.

(Gruault in Gillain, 2013, p.v)

These were the words of Jean Gruault, Truffaut’s frequent screenwriter, referenced in the work of Gillain (2013) which inspired me to undertake this study into the largely unexplored area of French filmmaker, Francois Truffaut’s relationship with silent cinema. I consider the dissertation on Truffaut I completed in the final year of undergraduate study to have been a springboard from which this thesis has developed. Titled “*In what ways do the director’s thematic and stylistic concerns change through the course of the “Antoine Doinel” films by François Truffaut – Les quatre cents coups; Antoine et Colette; Baisers volés; Domicile conjugal; and L’amour en fuite?*”, the dissertation, while a highly enjoyable writing experience, was, as I later discovered, a largely limited one, since the Doinel films represent only part of the highly varied Truffaut corpus. This study, I hope, is representative of a healthy cross-section of Truffaut’s work which encompasses much more than the already well-documented growing pains of the Antoine Doinel character.

Reading the aforementioned work of Gillain (2013) helped me to understand how Truffaut greatly envied the filmmakers who were fortunate enough to make films in the silent era, as well as the spectators who were fortunate enough to see them. Contestably, however, Truffaut claims that the visual artistry was lost, or indeed, wasted, on the moviegoers of that era who did not fully appreciate it. Using my prior knowledge of the Antoine Doinel films as a basis, I

perceived traits of the ‘Silent Greats’ within the Doinel character and Jean-Pierre Léaud, the actor. In my eyes, Doinel could be seen as an embodiment of the humility and humiliation associated with Buster Keaton and the impudence of Charlie Chaplin’s “Tramp” character. He is also Hitchcockian by virtue of the fact that he gets himself into difficult and compromising situations despite himself and is often, figuratively and literally, “on the run”. Finally, he is Renoirian because, despite the character’s peccadillos, he invokes sympathy, reminding us of Renoir’s mantra “Tout le monde a ses raisons” (*La règle du jeu*, 1939).

Finally, to understand Truffaut, one must understand his cinophilia, which stems, in part, from the inter-war and post-WWII discussions on whether film itself constituted an art form, and on the issue of film authorship. Pinel talks about the inter-war dispute over film as an autonomous mode of expression and, on the other hand, film as a mere mechanical manipulation of a preceding art form, photography:

Au lendemain de la guerre, la contradiction devenait éclatante entre l’évidence d’un fait – l’œuvre filmique rompt toujours davantage avec le modèle scénique et s’affirmait comme moyen d’expression autonome – et, chez les juristes, la permanence d’une doctrine qui continuait à définir le phénomène cinématographique comme étant « l’œuvre mécanique d’un machinisme muet ». Beaucoup de théoriciens du droit considéraient que le film n’était que la réunion de photographies dont la succession sur l’écran donnait l’illusion du mouvement et de la vie. C’était confondre le film, support technique – un ruban souple, perforé et transparent portant une série de photogrammes – et le film, œuvre intellectuelle et sensible. A la fin du muet, un autre juriste, Hubert Devillez dénonçait cette confusion (les italiques sont de l’auteur): Cette analyse va si loin qu’elle

dépouille le cinéma de toute sa spécificité : *en identifiant l'œuvre cinématographique et le film* [V. P. : le support], *on méconnaît ce qu'est une « œuvre »*, c'est-à-dire la production de l'esprit humain et *en assimilant le film à « une réunion de scènes photographiées »* [...]

(Pinel in Jeancolas et al., 1996, p.49)

It was seen as the mission of Truffaut and his contemporaries to restore cinema to its former health in the so-called transition period of the 'second epoch' of cinema:

Il s'agit pour les jeunes cinéastes de retrouver la santé du cinéma muet, santé formidable qui seule peut éviter à notre cinéma de devenir crispé, noueux, ennuyeux et sec. Il faut retrouver la fraîcheur de la première époque du cinéma et renier en bloc toute la seconde époque, qui apparaît aujourd'hui comme un stade de transition.

(Gillain, 1988, p.43)

Importance of this study

Andrew and Gillain (2013, p.xvii) point out that, compared to his contemporary, Jean-Luc Godard for instance, comparatively little academic literature on Truffaut exists, particularly in the English language. Further to this they express their concerns about the general modern perception of Truffaut, particularly the fear that Truffaut would be seen as a redundant figure:

It is alarming to realize that inspiration might dissipate, that a secret might be lost. And it is shocking that Truffaut could require the attention and reconsideration signaled [signalled] by this book, Truffaut whose name for his last twenty-five years was synonymous

with cinema's health. But so much has changed (in the way films are made, the way they look, how they are viewed) that Truffaut is seen as belonging to an earlier age altogether; indeed, there were many in his own day who felt this about him even then. But did they really know him at all?

(Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.xv)

Indeed, Guigue (*in* de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.301; 302) talks about how Truffaut represents the past in several different ways. For example, the past is invoked by his sense of dress on set, typically a suit and tie, and, for example, his preference for hand writing letters as opposed to making telephone calls. Truffaut never sought to keep in tune with the era in which his films were made, sometimes to the detriment of his reputation. Guigue also cites Truffaut's invocation of the past by means of his fidelity to the dead; and his situating of most of his films in the past by virtue of the fact that they are literary adaptations and, therefore, must show a loyalty to the era in which they were written or in which the original literature was situated.

It is quite conceivable, given the threat of Truffaut being considered antiquated, that many thought his films would not transcend time. However, Ingram and Duncan (2003, p.21) attest to the universality of Truffaut's work and their mass appeal, particularly on an emotional level, regardless of the audience's native language. Moreover, Desplechin (*in* Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.7) confirms that Truffaut's work is, in fact, "time-less" on both a figurative level and a literal level due to the proliferation of anachronisms within it. He points out that Truffaut's strong suit is that he never tries to seem *au courant*.

Furthermore, interest has evidently gained momentum thanks to the republication and translation of two of Gillain's works (2013 and 2017) for the English-speaking market.

During my research, while many of the significant English language studies of Truffaut were fairly easy to source in the University library, in bookshops, and online, many of the original French studies of Truffaut have become so rare and expensive that it was necessary to undertake a research trip to La Cinémathèque Française, and La Bibliothèque du Film François Truffaut, in Paris, as well as The British Library in London to source these items.

In terms of visual sources for the thesis, several documentaries on Truffaut, which would have otherwise fallen into obscurity, have been mercifully uploaded to the Internet by way of VHS and DVD transfers. I am thinking specifically of Jeff Morgan's two-part BBC production, *François Truffaut: The Man Who Loved Cinema* (1996) and Anne Andreu's documentary, *François Truffaut, une autobiographie* (2004). A trip to La Cinémathèque Française was also necessary to find the elusive documentary, and 1993 Cannes Film Festival entry, *François Truffaut: Portraits volés*, directed by Michel Pascal and Serge Toubiana.

One of the motivations for undertaking a thesis which looks at Truffaut and silent cinema is the fact that no single study of this particular subject exists. The resulting thesis is a product of piecing together information from a multitude of sources and many of my own observational studies. In fact, I owe a huge debt to the archivists of silent films on the Internet, films which had previously fallen into obscurity or were, imaginably, the privilege of museums or hard core film collectors. Withall (2014, p.2) attests to the renewed interest in silent cinema viewership and scholarship in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He recalls the silent film festivals which sprang up in the 1980s; the discontinued Thames Screenings on television (Channel 4) and at London Film Festivals in the 1980s and early 1990s, returning to the present day, in which silent films are available readily on the home platforms of DVD and Blu Ray.

Moreover, Abel (1996) discusses the potential of relating lessons from silent cinema to the films of the modern day. He conceives of:

[...] a potentially critical, utopian public sphere, a theorised space within which the cinema, however transformed, can “function as a matrix for challenging social positions of identity and otherness, a catalyst for new forms of community and solidarity.” To study early cinema, and the different ways it could have developed, therefore, is to see more clearly that postmodern media culture may be characterized by a similar opening-up of new directions and possibilities and that it is imperative that we intervene on the side of promoting their development.

(Abel, 1996, p.14)

Moreover, Hutchinson’s article (2011), written in the wake of the release of Michel Hazanavicius’s “silent” film, *The Artist* (2012), discusses the potential Oscar success and audience appeal of such a “retro” movie (two levels on which the film eventually succeeded) as well as the renewed interest in silent cinema. Discussed here is Woody Allen’s ode to the 1920s, his film *Midnight in Paris* (2011); Martin Scorsese’s film, *Hugo* (2011), featuring silent film pioneer, Georges Méliès; as well as the potential of Pedro Almodóvar remaking his film *The Skin I Live In* (2011) in the silent mode. She states that we are to be reminded of what we lost when synchronised sound came in.

In the next section is a review of the literature I have encountered in my research that focuses on prominent filmmakers who shared Truffaut’s adoration of silent cinema, as well as an analysis of recurrent terminology associated with silent cinema and *le secret perdu*.

Literature Review

What further affirmative writing on Truffaut and silent cinema exists?

As I have already stated, my initial research into the subject of Truffaut and silent cinema was purely observational. For instance, I had witnessed in Truffaut's Antoine Doinel films the protagonist's profuse gesticulations, particularly in the latter films, which appeared to pay homage to the visual comedy of silent cinema. Knowing that Truffaut was a true savant of the cinema, I knew that these little references, and others throughout his body of work, were not incidental. At this point, I was lacking bibliographical evidence, thus my first objective was finding material further to the work of Gillain (2013) which supported the notion of Truffaut's relationship with silent cinema. At the beginning of the research process, I came across the inevitable "red herrings". For instance, to my surprise, André Bazin, a man whom Truffaut owed a great deal, differed greatly from him in his opinion of silent cinema. In Bazin's view, the arrival of sound improved a technically impaired silent cinema. Bazin believed that the years 1928-30 did not signify a breakdown in cinema, but a healthy development. (Bazin in Graham and Vincendeau, 2009, p.65).

It was reading Truffaut's collaborative work with Hitchcock (1984) which opened my eyes to his interest in silent cinema and how he was not merely passionate about it but, at heart, valued it above sound cinema which, by his estimation was not, contrary to popular opinion, an advancement in the field of moviemaking. (Truffaut, 1984, p.61). Hitchcock (in Truffaut, 1984, p.61) wholeheartedly agrees that silent cinema was "the purest form of cinema", and did not necessitate the major transitions that arrived with sound, such as cinema's subjugation to a "theatrical" form. In support of Truffaut and Hitchcock's argument against sound cinema, Renoir (2008, p.94; 95) recalls welcoming the new technology with open arms before realising it was a monster that would turn the profession of filmmaker upside down. In

much the same way as Truffaut would react to the maligned *cinéma de qualité* of the 1940s in his famed *Cahiers du cinéma* article, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français' (1954), Renoir expressed a mistrust of working with people of a theatrical persuasion who believed that the dialogue was the only aspect of the sound capture that mattered, forgetting all the other sound effects which, in Renoir's opinion, could be as eloquent as the dialogue itself.

In his revealing article, 'Donner du plaisir ou le plaisir du cinéma', originally a preface to Belfond's French edition of Bealey's *The Book of the Cinema* (1979), Truffaut (2008, p.38-40) suggests that sound cinema was lacklustre from the beginning, further suggesting that it eventually found its so-called "voice" in simply remaking films from the silent cinema, similar to the way in which filmmakers of the sound era would often remake black and white films into colour. Truffaut makes the point that, with each technical innovation, cinema loses its poetry at the hands of "intellectualism". By this, Truffaut means that, largely, the modern men of cinema are trying to be "clever" with their use of the medium, thinking less on a human level about its fundamental emotional capacity which was the concern of silent filmmakers. He laments the fact that such innovations will help the film industry to live and survive but it will lessen the status of cinema as an art form. For cinema to survive as an art form, it must not substitute realism for fantasy and therefore should not rely on the "unfavourable" genre of documentary. Wishing not to disparage sound cinema entirely (since, by virtue of the times in which he lived and worked, it was his livelihood), Truffaut concludes the article by stating that cinema is essentially a shared effort between man and machine and that cinema remains at its best when man uses machine to realize his own desires, thus allowing the spectator to enter into his "dream".

The books of film criticism which Truffaut authored (2007 and 2008) were a revelation to me in that they acted as directories to some of the films and filmmakers which would become the subject of this thesis. A large portion of both studies are given over to the aforementioned

silent film veterans, Hitchcock and Renoir. In my research, these two filmmakers have proven to be extremely close mentors to Truffaut throughout his career to the extent that they are often rightly esteemed as ‘father figures’ to a man who struggled with the lack of a genuine biological father all his life. Another reason for their mutual importance is the fact that they both lived in and therefore, connoted, Hollywood, the birthplace of cinema. Truffaut would make numerous visits to the homes of both filmmakers until they died, a year apart from each other. Given certain similarities, it is no surprise that many academics speak of Hitchcock and Renoir together. That is why I have decided to discuss my findings on their influences together, in the following section.

What impact did silent film veterans Hitchcock and Renoir, Truffaut’s “cinematic fathers”, have on the director?

Many of Truffaut’s films are frequently described as a balance between the influence of Renoir and Hitchcock, something Allen (1986, p.124) calls the “Hitchcock plus Renoir equation”. Truffaut is considered “Renoirian” by virtue of the fact that, as Allen (1986, p.164) indicates, both directors show a demonstrable love of humanity and cared deeply for the relationship between characters and the actors who played them. Furthermore, Truffaut is said to often film in an impartial, non-judgemental manner, channelling the aforesaid Renoir mantra of “Everyone has their reasons” (Allen, 1986, p.104). Alfonsi (*in* de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.280) recalls how Truffaut was christened the “New Renoir” following Renoir’s death, out of his fidelity to cinephiles and the cinema-going public in general. Moreover, Truffaut himself contributed a preface to Bazin’s study on Renoir (1973). Bazin himself (1973, p.21) attests to the fact that Renoir’s silent work, while technically imperfect,

had its importance in foreshadowing the themes that would appear in his sound work, for which he is better remembered.

Counterbalanced by the Renoirian influence is that of Hitchcock, the man to whom Truffaut (in Rabourdin, 1985, p.27) gives the title the “high priest” of cinema. Richer (in Bergala et al., 1985, p.103) explains that, alongside Truffaut’s Renoirian preoccupations of the world of sentiments and the spontaneity of cinema, comes the Hitchcockian concern for precision in constructing a scene. Similarly, Insdorf (1994) discusses Hitchcock’s and Renoir’s influences on Truffaut respectively. However, at one juncture, she succinctly explains Truffaut’s attempt at a Hitchcock/Renoir equilibrium:

Hitchcock’s influence can best be seen in the economy of shots, drama within the frame, and sympathy for weak characters.

Thematically, the Master’s underlying pessimism would be tempered by the sympathy Truffaut found in Renoir’s films. Restless behind Hitchcock’s peephole, Truffaut would return to the window which is symbolic of Renoir’s more expansive vision.

(Insdorf, 1994, p.67)

In his efforts to truly connect with the sort of cinema which he and his *Cahiers du cinéma* colleagues adored, Truffaut would not only write about his preferred directors in publications but would correspond directly with them, and in many cases, meet them in person and develop a fruitful relationship. As was particularly the case with Jean Renoir and Alfred Hitchcock, Truffaut found paternal figures in the absence of a biological one:

Animé par une passion de séduire, de conquérir, François Truffaut est allé à la rencontre des maîtres qu’il admirait, et dont il devenait presque inmanquablement l’ami : André Bazin, Jean Genet, Henri

Langlois, Jean Cocteau, Roberto Rossellini, Henri-Pierre Roché, Jacques Audiberti, Max Ophuls, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Renoir... Tous ont été autant de pères, de repères possibles. Le cinéaste de *La chambre verte*, qui faisait dire au personnage de Julien Davenne sur le point de mourir : « Ils disent qu'il y a un vide. Ils disent que la figure n'est pas achevée... », a toujours laissé place aux vivants comme aux morts, ainsi de ces grandes figures tutélaires, Balzac, Proust, James Irish, Léautaud, Queneau, Henry Miller, Lubitsch ou Chaplin... Pourtant, dans cette famille d'élection, une place est restée vide, celle du seul homme de qui François Truffaut n'eut pas le courage de se faire connaître : son vrai père... Quelques mois avant sa mort, Truffaut, déjà malade, dans l'intention d'écrire une biographie, fit un dernier détour par l'enfance : « C'est sous ce signe-là, en vérité, confiait-il à son ami Claude de Givray, que je ferai passer le début de mon livre, *Le Scénario de ma vie*, cette citation de Mark Twain qui résume le mystère de la naissance : « Il est bien chanceux le Français qui peut dire qui est son vrai père. »

(de Baecque and Toubiana, 2001, p.15 ; 16)

Following Hitchcock and Renoir, the most recurrent silent cinema figure associated with Truffaut's work is Charlie Chaplin. The following section details some of the findings on the *grande vedette* of silent cinema whom the French affectionately call 'Charlot'.

What impact did silent film veteran Charlie Chaplin ('Charlot') have on Truffaut?

Truffaut (in Rabourdin, 1985, p.14) details his own fervent viewing habits as a child at the cinema and how he felt cocooned in that environment, away from familial troubles, thanks to cineastes such as Chaplin. It is no surprise, therefore, that Gruault (in Gillain, 2013, p.4) sees Chaplin as another father figure for Truffaut and, equally, a custodian of *le secret perdu*. In fact, Truffaut (in Bergala et al., 1985, p.162), stating that his religion is cinema, raises Chaplin to the status of 'God'. (As an atheist, 'God', according to Christian religion, did not exist for him). Chaplin stands apart from Renoir and Hitchcock, in the context of the silent years, given that he was a compound of both 'celebrity' and 'artist' at a time when cinema was largely considered popular entertainment and not a serious art form. Guigue (in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.278) also shows how Chaplin, in his work, spoke a "universal language" which was consumed and understood by all. Truffaut (2007, p.20) proves that this language is not only universal but 'ageless', since Chaplin's cinematography appears to defy technological advances.

What has proven interesting is the interlinked nature of the Chaplin aspect of my research, since he was undoubtedly also an influence on Renoir and Hitchcock. For example, Truffaut (in d'Hugues et al., 1986, p.134) links the slapstick comedy of Renoir's *Tire au flanc* (1928) with Chaplin's early works, if only by virtue of the sheer joy with which both were filmed. The work of d'Hugues, et al. (1986) was the only dedicated study of French silent cinema in my research, covering individual production details and providing interesting insights into Truffaut's direct influences. D'Hugues et al. (1986, p.134) discuss how Renoir's *Nana* (1926) was a direct influence on Truffaut and how he considered it important and prophetic of Renoir's work in the sound era.

Furthermore, Hitchcock (in Truffaut, 1984, p.26) describes how he was also influenced by Chaplin as well as his contemporary, Buster Keaton. Brion (in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.94) makes the suggestion that Truffaut is notably quiet on the subject of Keaton for fear of undercutting the importance of Chaplin in the realm of silent comedy. Truffaut (2008, p.70) does distinguish Keaton, alongside Erich von Stroheim and D.W. Griffith, as one of three directors who were artists universally misunderstood, in particular by the intellectual elite, who considered cinema a minor art form at the time. Truffaut goes on to say, however, that they made an exception for Chaplin, who was unanimously considered the most popular actor in the world following the end of the First World War. Despite Keaton's lesser importance here, Truffaut (2008, p.39) credits him alongside Ernst Lubitsch and Howard Hawks as a director who worked harder than many of his *confrères* in the name of giving more pleasure to audiences. Allen (1986, p.64) perceptively compares the Truffaldian character Antoine Doinel (and, by extension, the actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud) to Keaton by virtue of his expressionlessness when he is looking at a poster of a baby in the third Doinel film, *Baisers volés* (1968). In my view, Allen provides a springboard for further research into Truffaut and the work of Buster Keaton.

Incidentally, Henri Langlois, one of Truffaut's cinephilic "blood brothers", says in the documentary, *Two in the Wave* (2010) how Keaton is partly to be thanked for developing cinemagoers' visual sensibility:

If the Cinémathèque had shown subtitled films or complete films, and not shown Murnau's *Nosferatu* without subtitles, as it was made, then it would have been a very nice show, a nice theater [theatre] in Paris, but not a museum. Some people see a Keaton film with Czech subtitles and grumble: "I don't understand a thing." If they don't get Keaton without subtitles, well... Because of the Czech subtitles,

people developed what I call an education of the eye. The eye has developed. Its skills are sharper.

(Two in the Wave, 2010)

A corollary to my research into these ‘silent comedians’ was, an arguable off-shoot of silent comedy, namely the Monsieur Hulot films by Jacques Tati, made from the late 1940s into the early 1970s. I discovered that Allen (1986, p.63) cites the various homages to Tati in Truffaut’s fourth Antoine Doinel chapter, *Domicile conjugal* (1970), namely the appearance of a Hulot-esque figure on the platform at a metro station; and the difficulties with American technology Doinel has at his workplace, coupled with his struggles to communicate with his colleagues in English, which replicate the struggles the old-fashioned Hulot has with a modern, mechanised world in the Tati films, *Mon Oncle* (1958), and *Playtime* (1967). Both Holmes and Ingram (1998, p.24) and Insdorf (1994, p.21) make us aware of Truffaut’s appreciation of Tati as a self-made man of the cinema, a fellow *auteur*. While Tati’s work bears mentioning here, it does not find its way into the main body of the thesis given that, while his films have certain properties of silent cinema, they are not literally silent. Nevertheless, as is the case with Buster Keaton, a study specifically on Tati and Truffaut would, in my estimation, be of great value.

Bazin and Truffaut (in Bazin et al., 1958, p.4) talk to Jacques Tati about how he has been influenced by Chaplin through the medium of his hapless character, Monsieur Hulot, whose visual comedy, and minimal speech, conjure up memories of Chaplin and other silent comedians. However, Tati (in Bazin et al., 1958, p.4) makes the distinction between his Hulot character and Chaplin’s “Tramp” character by saying that Hulot is not an incredible character, he is just like everyday people, finding his way out of a situation by employing means which are, unbeknownst to him, comical. On the other hand, Chaplin’s character

garners praise from the audience by employing a “gag”, an action which will allow him to facetiously overcome a difficult situation. The following section details the findings on other “men of the cinema” who connect Truffaut with silent cinema and, by association, *le secret perdu*.

What other influences connected with silent cinema had an impact on Truffaut?

French film director Abel Gance, is famed, above all, for his 6-hour masterwork, *Napoléon* (1927). On this subject, I was particularly taken with a quotation from Gance himself: “J’ai filmé *Napoléon*, parce qu’il était un paroxysme dans une époque qui était elle-même un paroxysme dans le temps.” (Gance *in* Truffaut, 2007, p.49). I think it is quite apt that Truffaut should mention this quotation in his own article since, to my mind, Truffaut could also suitably be considered a “paroxysm” in the context of making cinema in the paroxysmal era of the French *Nouvelle Vague*. Moreover, King (1984, p.2) describes how Gance is an exception to the erroneous idea that sound is an important added component in silent cinema because of his technical prowess and his ability to experiment visually. The work of Lanzoni (2015), which ably contextualises French cinema at the beginning of motion picture history and thereafter, describes how the *cinéma d’auteurs* preceded the *Nouvelle Vague* and was associated with directors such as Gance and Renoir. In fact, Truffaut himself cites Renoir as an *auteur* in his polemical article, ‘Une certaine tendance du cinéma français’.

Another significant director to come to my attention was Carl Theodor Dreyer. Of Danish origin, he was considered by virtue of his French-made silent classic, *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* (1928). Gillain (2013, p.181) perceptively points out that Dreyer is the subject of one of the books on filmmaking that arrives in a parcel for the film director, Ferrand (Truffaut) in *La nuit américaine* (1973). Truffaut (2007, p.70) talks of his personal meetings with Dreyer

and Dreyer's contribution to helping the effort to reinstate Henri Langlois as President of the Cinémathèque Française, which is significant since, as Insdorf (1994, p.20) points out, this was the institution where film enthusiasts, such as Truffaut, consumed a variety of films, including the "silents".

Later in the research process, I came to realise that a chapter incorporating a comparison between Truffaut and his *Nouvelle Vague* contemporary, Jean-Luc Godard, could usefully form part of this study. Godard serves as a point of juxtaposition and has proven to be a filmmaker who is constantly revising his *modus operandi*, particularly when he notably transitioned from film to the medium of video in the 1980s. Contrastingly, Truffaut remained steadfast in his love of the cinematic past and was set on rekindling this love in his own work. Andrew and Gillain (2013, p.xvii; xviii) point out that the films of Godard have, lamentably, invited more academic criticism in the past, despite the fact that Truffaut's work is, in their view, considerably more rounded and emotionally evocative.

The work of Myrent and Langlois (1995) shows us the extent to which the aforementioned Henri Langlois was one of the first true European cinephiles. Unlike the written studies on Truffaut *per se*, this study does much to address the combat between silent and sound films taking place in the late 1920s. Gillain (2013, p.208; 209) shows how Nestor Almendros, a frequent Truffaut cameraman, praises silent cinema photography. Amiel (*in* de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.284) talks of how Truffaut had a mistrust of using colour film, despite his confidence in Almendros's abilities. For Truffaut, colour appeared to betray a mystery and beauty that black-and-white cinema held. The preference for black-and-white would seem to hark back to the silent years. (While silent cinema was not always black and white and often included toning qualities, this statement does seem applicable to at least a collective 'cinema of yesteryear'). It is perhaps no surprise that Truffaut's unintended swansong, *Vivement*

dimanche! (1983), would be shot in black-and-white, a throwback to the other notable Truffaut-Almendros collaboration, *L'enfant sauvage* (1970).

Finally, there is Jean Gruault, Truffaut's regular screenwriter, the man who, by means of his introduction to the work of Gillain (2013), provided the key to this research on *le secret perdu*. Gruault (in Bergala et al., 1985, p.87; 88) discusses at length the projects he and Truffaut collaborated on and, pertinently, Truffaut's affiliation with the past. Truffaut himself (in Gillain, 1988, p.285) describes how Gruault, equally a sentimentalist, spent his time watching Chaplin films, amongst others, in original 8mm home format.

What do key French and English terms associated with silent cinema reveal about Truffaut's connection with it?

“Secret”

Nestor Almendros was quite pessimistic about the notion of a “secret”. Thinking about Truffaut's *L'enfant sauvage*, a film on which he worked, he says that the film is a “homage to the photography of silent films” (Almendros in Gillain, 2013, p.208). Contrarily, Almendros states in his memoirs (1984) that the secrets of silent cinema have ultimately disappeared in the modern cinematic age and it is still “necessary to rediscover these techniques.” (Almendros in Gillain, 2013, p.209). In a similar vein, as I have previously stated, Andrew and Gillain (2013, p.xv), in the more recent past, project their fears “that inspiration might dissipate, that a secret might be lost”.

Most of the references to silent cinema connoting a “secret” are in the work of Gillain (2013). Gruault (in Gillain, 2013, p.4) makes the observation that, in fact, “one secret can hide another” and that if Chaplin, for instance, was not the guardian of the lost secret, he was at least the guardian of a lost secret, one which he spent the whole of his life searching for.

Indeed, Gillain (2013, p.xxiii), reflecting on her work, suggests the theory that there are not one but several secrets. She expresses her wish that each viewer will break into Truffaut films, which she affectionately calls “beautiful ivory eggs”, in order to uncover their “secret constructions”. Later on, Gillain (2013, p.5) relates the lost secret to “a nostalgia which haunted [Truffaut]”, and which he sought to replicate in his own films.

Gillain (2013, p.9) even suggests that the secret(s) of Truffaut’s work may be unintentionally apparent, a product of Truffaut’s subconscious. Truffaut himself confirmed that he did not always understand his films initially and did not want to, instead waiting several years before analysing them, allowing himself some critical distance. (Truffaut in Gillain, 2013, p.9). It is also clear that the concept of the lost secret is inextricably linked to “the creation of emotion”, an ability which Truffaut learned directly from Hitchcock. (Truffaut in Gillain, 2013, p.9; 10). Similarly, Fanne (1972, p.111) describes the Hitchcockian secret as finding out the “real” via the “unreal”, creating in each scene an imbalance, a tipping of the scales. Collet (1977, p.68), on the subject of Truffaut’s *Tirez sur le pianiste* (1960), explains Truffaut’s skill in taking the audience from moments of anguish to moments of euphoria. He describes the secret of what he terms “redoubtable metamorphosis” as being Hitchcockian humour. Insdorf (1994, p.95) paraphrases Renoir’s mantra, “Everyone has their reasons” by saying, that as far as Hitchcock’s cinema is concerned, with its voyeuristic components, its tagline should be “everyone has his secrets”.

Gillain (2013, p.227) makes the point that studying Truffaut’s filmmaking process involves tapping into the emotions that were engendered in him as a young cinemagoer. In his filmmaking, the emotions carried forth by the filmmakers of Truffaut’s childhood were blended with his own. Holmes and Ingram (1998, p.58) point out that Le Berre (1993) and other critics have also succeeded in pointing out that Truffaut’s work operates on several levels, concealing a secret. On a higher plane of thinking, Truffaut (in Gillain, 2013, p.149),

in an attempt to understand “the secret of his art” articulates the ambition of achieving “a form of secret persuasion”, in which he wants viewers to feel as if they have seen shots that were not in fact there and, moreover, to explore their own background and past.

Monaco (1976, p.74) discusses how Truffaut’s *L’enfant sauvage* falls into a category of filmic fascination with stories about beast children, citing Mowgli and Tarzan, among others. He says how, in watching these characters, men potentially “harbor [harbour] a secret hankering after a natural existence.” Similarly, Gillain (2013, p.209) points out that the film is about “the secret of origins”. Perhaps in a sense Truffaut himself is like the Wild Child, wishing to return to the origins of cinema and dispensing with the frills that, according to him, define the modern cinema.

“Muet”/”Silent”

The work of de Baecque and Guigue (2004) analyses the work of Truffaut in the form of a dictionary of key associated terms. One of Guigue’s contributions, a section on the word, “Muet”, or “Silent”, revealed that, although the word in French can serve as a collective term meaning “silent cinema”, it is also a reference to the medical condition, ‘mutism’, with certain characters in Truffaut’s films, for example, *L’enfant sauvage* (1970) and *La chambre verte* (1978), having speech and hearing difficulties. He makes the point that the inclusion of such characters is a debt to silent cinema but that, by the same token, even though the Doinel character in Truffaut’s cinema is extremely talkative, he is also defined by his silent film-style gesticulations. (Guigue in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p. 277; 278).

Moreover, Guigue (in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.277; 278) describes how some other of Truffaut’s characters, without actually having an auditive deficiency, decide to adopt a “voluntary mutism”. He gives the example of Oscar (Sebastien Marc) in *L’argent de poche* (1976) who, born of an American soldier and a young Frenchwoman, does not know which

language to adopt and consequently expresses himself by whistling. Secondly, Kyoko (Hiroko Berghauer), Doinel's Japanese mistress in *Domicile conjugal* expresses herself visually in several different ways: using flowers; changing her outfits (either traditional or occidental); or by other actions, such as letting her bracelet fall into the water so Doinel will redeem it for her. The underlying theme here is that defective verbal communication can be overcome by some form of expression other than words, which links into the emphasis on visual expression or, better said, visual language, about which more in the following section.

“Language”/“Langage”

Lanzoni (2015, p.33) points out that, as far back as the early 1920s, Louis Delluc, one of the avant-garde French filmmakers who was, like Truffaut, a film critic turned director, nursed the hope that the cinema would become “a liberated form of popular culture mainly through symbolic expression and psychological explorations” and he “underscored the crucial importance of a photogenic aesthetic as filmic language [...]”. (Delluc in Lanzoni, 2015, p.33).

Lanzoni (2015, p.34) describes how the *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers of the 1960s acknowledged the film work of their forefathers, including Chaplin, amongst others, and brought with them a new “cinematic language” which comprised techniques such as “visual associations” and a “nonlinear narrative discourse” which ultimately adhered to an illogical sequencing of events which emphasised the notion of the imaginary. Astruc (in Houston, 1963, p.97), writing in his notable 1948 article entitled “The Birth of the New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo” says how cinema gradually becomes a ‘language’ in which the visual aspect of film frees itself from a position in which it is there “for its own sake” and becomes a means of writing, comparable to the written word itself.

The work of Gillain (2013) speaks most profusely about Truffaut channelling a cinematic or visual language in his work, also the *modus operandi* of the silent cinema. Using psychoanalytical strategies, Gillain conveys the notion that the use of a cinematic language triggers an emotional reaction in both the filmmaker and, in turn, the viewer, which gives the latter an insight into the subconscious issues of the former. (Gillain, 2013, p.xxxiii; xxxiv). Gillain (2013, p.219) gives several working examples of this technique. For example, she describes how, in Truffaut's *L'enfant sauvage*, despite a multitude of attempts on the part of Dr. Itard (Truffaut) to teach the Wild Child how to speak, visual communication in the form of an exchange of glances triumphs over written or spoken language. Similarly, Gillain (2013, p.198) makes the point that, concerning Truffaut's *Baisers volés* (1968), the "most natural language" that Truffaut ever spoke in any of his work is attributed to "genial improvisation". For example, in Truffaut's *Domicile conjugal*, in an attempt to "recover the cinematic language of a bygone era", he seeks to present situations in the most indirect way, implying a certain amount of distantiation.

Gillain (2013, p.283) describes how Truffaut, in an interview with journalists from the film journal, *Cahiers du cinéma*, in 1982, laments how there is an aspect of authority which the early pioneers of cinema had, (since it was their own language and so they could afford to adopt a "radical solution"), which has disappeared forever, buried beneath *le cinéma de qualité* which was predicated on clichés and which took all elements of surprise away from the spectator. Monaco (1976, p.36) puts forward the idea that, for example, where the Antoine Doinel series is concerned, it has a dual function where it is both a film series about the work and love life of Antoine Doinel, and, on another level, an intimate film series about film language itself. Equally, Monaco perceptively points out that the first two Doinel films, namely *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) and *Antoine et Colette* (1962) are shot in widescreen ratio whereas the last two films, *Baisers volés* (1968) and *Domicile conjugal* (1970) were

“regular width”.¹ Monaco suspects that opting for the more “mature” aspect ratio was a “test of faith”, that is to say, a dedication to the films and filmmakers of silent cinema.

Furthermore, Monaco (1976, p.97) goes on to make the point that by looking at the “language” of cinema, Truffaut is analysing the relationship between author and film and, alternately, film and audience. As Truffaut is a man of the cinema, by implication so are we, the audience, equals in the creative process of cinema. Truffaut (in Rabourdin, 1985, p.93) demonstrates how even in a film with a contemporary setting or, rather, a futuristic one, as is the case with *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), he appeals to his love for the visual aspect of silent cinema, making it so that half the film is dialogue and the other half is visual, save for the music of Bernard Herrmann which, as Truffaut humorously puts it, will perhaps rescue certain viewers from potential ‘boredom’.

“Gags”

Gruault (in Gillain, 2013, p.2) describes how it seemed that the “lost secret” of which Truffaut speaks, could be described as “gags”, which are interlinked to the effect that they form a story, i.e. they are expressed visually despite the use of intertitles in the film. Furthermore, Gillain explains how Truffaut’s *Domicile conjugal* shows that “Gags, improvisation, and wordplay are uppermost in a story in which the scene forms the narrative unit” (Gillain, 2013, p.190). Also Truffaut (1984, p.49), when questioning Hitchcock about his trait of featuring cameo appearances in his films, beginning with *The Lodger* (1927), asks whether it was intended as a gag, a superstition or even a solution to having a shortfall of actors. In reply, Hitchcock (in Truffaut, 1984, p.49) says that the cameo was variously a practical solution, a superstition, and, finally, a gag. Truffaut (1984, p.60) remarks on the

¹ At the time of publication of Monaco’s writing (1976), *Baisers volés* and *Domicile conjugal* would have been considered the last two Doinel films. In fact, the final Doinel film, *L’amour en fuite*, was released in 1979. However, like the previous two Doinel films, *L’amour en fuite* maintains the “regular width” picture ratio.

profusion of “sight gags” he saw in a version of Hitchcock’s *Champagne* (1928), after which Truffaut and Hitchcock discuss their most memorable moments of the film.

Interestingly, Allen (1986, p.214) describes how Truffaut’s *Vivement dimanche!* contains a series of homages to the films of yesteryear which, for unwitting spectators, could be considered “original gags” woven into the film. De Givray (in Bergala et al., 1985, p.84) recalls how, on the set of *Domicile conjugal*, the actor Jacques Robiolles sketched out a gag, which Truffaut initially discarded, then reappropriated in another scene, giving it instead to another actor, namely, Jean-Pierre Léaud. While a seemingly unfair act on Truffaut’s part, de Givray justifies Truffaut’s action saying that, in hindsight, the gag was too important to relegate to a secondary position in the film. De Givray points out that, in a similar way, in *Les quatre cents coups*, Truffaut gave to Léaud’s character, Doinel, more traits of his childhood friend, Robert Lachenay, than of himself. De Givray says that one of Truffaut’s strengths lay in the selection of elements which he introduced to the characters in his films. Fanne (1972, p.107) recalls how Truffaut described, during the filming of *Jules et Jim* (1962), how his ever-faithful “continuity girl”, Suzanne Schiffman, would make a count of both the “funny” scenes and the “sad” scenes to create a so-called “juste mesure” (Fanne (1972, p.108) and also points out the importance of verbal gags in particular films.

Structure of the thesis

The opening chapter, entitled “Truffaut and The Past”, will look at the main influences who helped contribute to Truffaut’s decision to reappropriate elements of the silent cinematic past in his own filmmaking, namely Jean-Luc Godard; Henri Langlois; Jean Gruault; and Nestor Almendros. I discuss Godard and Truffaut on a more egalitarian footing with regard to their beginnings in film criticism and their subsequent cinematic differences, instead of resorting

to a discussion about their bitter relationship, or, better said, lack of relationship, in the later years, as many critics (as well as the sensationalist press) have latterly done. Discussion proceeds to Henri Langlois, co-founder of La Cinemathèque Française, and one of the first true archivists of cinema, with whom Truffaut shares the passion for preservation and a literal belief that ‘silence is golden’. The next important figure, Jean Gruault, was Truffaut’s regular screenwriter, a background figure for whom silent cinema was both a hobby, lovingly shared with Truffaut, and an influence for their collaborative work. Finally in the discussion there is Truffaut’s long-serving cameraman, Nestor Almendros. Both bearing the knowledge of the ways of silent cinema, Truffaut and Almendros seek to put them into practice on film.

The second chapter, “Truffaut and the French Impressionists: influences in domestic cinema” looks at the French cineastes who influenced Truffaut through their silent filmmaking. After establishing the importance of domestic cinematic output, and the significance of the cinema auditorium itself, for Truffaut as a child, analysis moves to Jean Renoir and Abel Gance, two *auteurs* of French silent cinema whose work was inspired by the pre-war efforts of filmmakers such as Georges Méliès and the Lumière brothers. For Renoir and Gance, cinema is shown to be ultimately more about showmanship than fidelity to an intricate ‘language’. (Truffaut *in* Gillain, 1988, p.50). Coupled with Danish filmmaker, Carl Theodor Dreyer, of French-made *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* fame, Renoir and Gance are shown to be directors whose work runs the gamut of both human emotions and human experiences.

The third and final chapter, “Truffaut’s international influences”, seeks to chart the directors working further afield whose work made an impression on Truffaut and his colleagues at *Cahiers du cinéma*. Alfred Hitchcock is posited as a director who understood the meaning of expressing oneself almost exclusively in visual terms in the silent years, and whose silent work has a tendency to explore male/female relationships, which are often permeated with his trademark ‘suspense’. Finally, the direction of this study turns to Charlie Chaplin, one of the

first true 'celebrities' of cinema who garnered adoration through a universal language which embraced visual comedy, which is proven, in essence, to be a defence mechanism against the ills of life.

CHAPTER 1: TRUFFAUT AND THE PAST

Truffaut's relationship with the silent films of cinema's first thirty years is highly predicated on his relationships with three key individuals: Jean-Luc Godard; Jean Gruault and Nestor Almendros. Firstly, although Godard is an esteemed film director in his own right, the mere mention of his name frequently connotes Truffaut, and the simmering rivalry between the two men which would eventually reach its climax with an exchange of irate letters in 1973. This resulted in the irremediable breakdown of their relationship thereafter. Putting this episode in their lives to one side, I am keen to analyse their creative similarities and differences, and, ultimately, their differing relationships with regard to silent cinema, which were fostered in the early days as budding film writers for *Cahiers du cinéma*. This is pertinent since their histories were intertwined as a result of the *Nouvelle Vague* launching them both.

The second focal point of this chapter is that folkloric figure of the cinema, Henri Langlois. A collector of films, his labours resulted in the creation of the famed Cinémathèque Française film archive in Paris, which Truffaut and the *Cahiers du cinéma* team frequented to better their film education and, most importantly, to discuss cinema. The penultimate point of interest is frequent Truffaut collaborator, screenwriter Jean Gruault, with whom Truffaut shared an interest in all things historic, including the cinema of Chaplin, and who would contribute a substantial preface to Anne Gillain's Book: *François Truffaut: Le Secret perdu* (1991). The final point of interest will be Truffaut's similarly frequent collaborator, Nestor Almendros, the award-winning cinematographer with whom Truffaut cultivated images akin to silent cinema by virtue of the authentic equipment they used and the knowledge of such films they possessed.

Jean-Luc Godard

It is easy to forget that, despite their differences in social background, and the fact that their names would become synonymous with the well-documented breakdown of their relationship in the 1970s, Truffaut and Godard were both originally of the same ilk, in terms of film background. They were both budding young journalists of the *Cahiers du cinéma* group (despite Truffaut initially having more prominence as a writer, thanks in large part to his polemical article, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français', a scathing attack on the dissatisfying *cinéma de qualité*). Unsurprisingly, they both initially admired the same filmmakers and were eager to learn from them. In a documentary on their relationship entitled *Two in the Wave*, writer Antoine de Baecque talks of their mutual enthusiasm for the same films, in the beginning:

These were the Young Turks of *Cahiers du cinéma*. André Bazin called them the Hitchcock-Hawks clan, because of their love for Hitchcock and Howard Hawks. To learn directing, they choose models, references. They learn to see, to direct, to create scenes, by choosing their mentors – film masters. François Truffaut, when he was 22, wrote letters to a few directors: "I admire you, and I want to meet you. I want to write about you in *Cahiers du Cinéma*." Of those who received this note: Renoir, Buñuel, Ophuls, Gance, Rossellini, Lang, Ray... most of them answer, flattered by this single-minded love for them and their work. The most important for Truffaut and Godard is Alfred Hitchcock.

(*Two in the Wave*, 2010)

It is necessary to acknowledge that, in terms of his stance on silent cinema, Godard was appreciative of its majesty. In fact, Godard himself acted in a short homage to silent film directed by Agnès Varda entitled, *Les fiancés du pont Mac Donald ou (Méfiez-vous des lunettes noires)* (1961). Court describes the premise and synopsis:

The film was [...] an excuse, in Varda's own words, to get Godard to remove the shades he customarily wore, and to reveal his eyes to the camera in the process. The fact that they were friends helped, as she recalls, that he agreed to shoot this script about sunglasses where he has to take them off, allowing the camera to capture the large eyes which reminded Varda of Buster Keaton. [...] In the short, a pair of lovers part on the MacDonald bridge on the Canal de l'Ourcq in the 19th arrondissement of Paris. Because of the sunshades he is wearing, the male protagonist (played by Godard) thinks he witnesses his lover (Karina) fall on her way down to the banks of the river to meet a premature death. Shedding tears over her tragic passing, he finally removes his sunglasses, revealing an expression not unlike Renée Jeanne Falconetti's in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* to the camera's close focus: consumed with emotion, unguarded, vulnerable. Through the naked eye, meanwhile, the same character soon starts seeing life in a positive light again, realising that his darling is in fact still alive. Before they seal their reunion with a kiss at the top of the bridge, Godard's character throws his shades into the canal exclaiming "Maudites lunettes!" as the piano playback fades out.

(Court, 2018)

In actuality, it is not difficult to trace the references to silent films Truffaut admired, and which are detailed later in this thesis, in Godard's early works. For example, it is not mere coincidence that Court has found a comparison between Godard and Falconetti in Dreyer's *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), since clips from the film feature prominently in Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962), a film about a Parisian woman called Nana (Anna Karina) who falls into prostitution while trying to make it in movies. Danks deconstructs the scene which marries Godard's work with that of Dreyer:

[...] Nana's response to Jeanne's tears is, of course, tears of her own – though Jeanne's tears are less straightforwardly motivated by her material surroundings than are Nana's, which are shed at the movies (a response she obviously shares with many spectators). But this sequence also has other curious and sympathetic qualities. The silence of Dreyer's film – it was made at the very end of the silent era and 'silence' becomes a key principle of the film – is equally respected by Godard's. He also allows *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to run relatively unimpeded for some time, an approach that is generally uncharacteristic of this trope. The off-centre, often literally decapitating framing that characterises passages of Dreyer's film, is also paralleled by Godard's. This suggests that we can read this sequence as both homage and an act of identification by the director. Godard loves Dreyer's work but he also identifies and associates himself with the cinema and sensibility of the earlier director (who was still alive and artistically active when Godard made his film). (Danks, 2010)

Moreover, the fact of Godard calling the protagonist Nana is almost certainly a reference to the protagonist and namesake of Émile Zola's novel, *Nana* (1880) about a theatre actress turned high-class prostitute. This story was first filmed by Jean Renoir in 1926, a film which Truffaut admired and which is discussed later in the thesis. Equally, Karina bears a similarity to the actress playing the protagonist of Renoir's film, his then-wife, Catherine Hessling.

Godard praises Renoir's dexterity as a director:

Il y a deux grandes classes de cinéastes. Du côté d'Eisenstein et d'Hitchcock, il y a ceux qui écrivent leur film de la façon la plus complète possible. Ils savent ce qu'ils veulent, ils ont tout dans leur tête, ils mettent tout sur le papier. Le tournage n'est qu'une application pratique. Il faut construire quelque chose qui ressemble le plus possible à ce qui a été imaginé. Resnais est de ceux-là, et Demy. Les autres, du côté de Rouch, ne savent pas très bien ce qu'ils vont faire et ils cherchent. Le film est cette recherche. Ils savent qu'ils vont arriver quelque part, et ils ont des moyens pour cela, mais où exactement ? Les premiers font des films cercles, les autres, des films lignes droites. Renoir est un des rares qui fassent les deux ensemble, c'est ce qui fait son charme.

(Godard, 1985, p.39)

Like Truffaut, Godard praises silent filmmaker, Charlie Chaplin, to the hilt, as a liberated filmmaker who pushed the boundaries of the medium and brought a human touch to his films:

Il est au-dessus de tout éloge puisque c'est le plus grand. Car quoi dire d'autre ? Le seul cinéaste, en tout cas, qui peut supporter sans

malentendu le qualificatif si fourvoyé d'humain. De l'invention du plan-séquence dans *Charlot boxeur* à celle du cinéma-vérité dans le discours final du *Dictateur*, Charles Spencer Chaplin, tout en restant en marge de tout le cinéma, a finalement rempli cette marge de plus de choses (quels autres mots employer : idées, gags, intelligence, honneur, beauté, gestes ?) que tous les cinéastes réunis le reste du cahier. On dit aujourd'hui Chaplin comme on dit Vinci, ou plutôt Charlot comme Léonard. Et quel plus bel hommage, en ce milieu de vingtième siècle, rendre à un artiste de cinéma que de citer ce mot de Rossellini après la vision d'*Un roi à New York* : « C'est le film d'un homme libre ! »

(Godard, 1985, p.88)

However, at odds with Truffaut, and somewhat ironically given his aforementioned collaboration with Varda, Godard, although appreciative of the majesty of silent cinema in its own time, did not believe it could be truly recreated in the modern day, or at any other time:

[...] ces grands films ne peuvent plus se faire aujourd'hui, ou en tout cas, plus de la même façon. Ainsi, le cinéma muet était plus révolutionnaire que le cinéma parlant, et les gens comprenaient mieux, bien que ce fut une manière beaucoup plus abstraite de parler. Aujourd'hui, si on mettait en scène à la manière de Chaplin, les gens comprendraient moins bien. Ils diraient : mais quelle drôle de manière de raconter une histoire. Je ne parle même pas des films d'Eisenstein.

(Godard, 1985, p.113; 114)

It is important to remember that, shortly following Truffaut's debut feature film, *Les quatre cents coups*, he would collaborate with Godard, helping him to release his first successful feature, *À bout de souffle* (1960), with Truffaut providing the story. During a similar time of relative stability in their relationship, Truffaut stated his philosophy on the two kinds of cinema that he believed to exist, and posits Godard among these chosen directors:

Je crois par exemple qu'il y a deux sortes de cinéma : la « branche Lumière » et la « branche Delluc ». Lumière a inventé le cinéma pour filmer la nature des actions, *L'Arroseur arrosé*. Delluc, qui était un romancier et un critique, a pensé que l'on pouvait utiliser cette invention pour filmer des idées, ou des actions qui ont une signification autre que celle évidente, et puis, éventuellement, lorgner vers les autres arts. La suite ? C'est l'histoire du cinéma avec la « branche Lumière » : Griffith, Chaplin, Stroheim, Flaherty, Gance, Vigo, Renoir, Rossellini (et puis plus près de nous Godard), et de l'autre côté la « branche Delluc » avec Epstein, L'Herbier, Feyder, Gremillon, Huston, Bardem, Astruc, Antonioni (et plus près de nous Alain Resnais). Pour les premiers, le cinéma est un *spectacle*, pour les seconds, il est une *langue*.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.50)

Truffaut is seen to align Godard with the 'Lumière branch', the directors who favour the idea of cinema as 'spectacle', and not as 'language', as do the 'Delluc branch', according to his philosophy. Interestingly, sometime later, in contemplating this statement by Truffaut,

Godard puts himself, alternatively, somewhere in the middle. He wants to bridge the gap by making films which are fantasy, with documentary connotations:

Il y a au cinéma, disait Truffaut, le côté spectacle, Méliès, et le côté Lumière, qui est la recherche. Si je m'analyse aujourd'hui, je vois que j'ai toujours voulu, au fond, faire un film de recherche sous forme de spectacle. Le côté documentaire, c'est : un homme dans telle situation.[...] Le côté spectacle vient dans *Une femme est une femme*, de ce que la femme est une comédienne, dans *Vivre sa vie*, une prostituée.

(Godard, 1985, p.41)

Godard's venturing into the realm of documentary, and therefore realism, a quality which would later typify his more political work, would be the first point of disagreement between him and Truffaut. The unwillingness of both Truffaut, and his mentor, Alfred Hitchcock, to resort to documentary filmmaking is made clear by Holmes and Ingram:

It is evident that, contrary to the established norms of genre films which sought to ensure watertight credibility in terms of aspects such as characters, motives, setting, plot and theme, neither was willing to make particular efforts to achieve and maintain realism, their aims lay elsewhere. For Hitchcock, realism was not a challenge: it was too easy to achieve; it was for people without imagination. As far as Truffaut was concerned, ultimately it led only to the documentary – and he had scant regard for that form of the medium.

(Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p.100)

If a documentary can also be thought of as political film, where Godard is concerned, this would be a second point of disagreement. According to Truffaut, for a film to work effectively it cannot have political leanings. He talks about how he believes cinema has to be apolitical because an artist is truly apolitical, and therefore too affected by his emotional involvement in a film:

A man must vote, but not an artist. He cannot. He needs to try to discover what is interesting in the other person's point of view. [...]
There are communist directors in France, and it is they who should be asked to make films about the workers. [...] I refuse to put love at an opposite pole to the *bourgeoisie* or the police. Policemen fall in love too.

(Truffaut in Graham and Vincendeau, 2009, p.179)

In fact, de Baecque cites Truffaut's statement about how he believes film should not be made to toe the line with a certain (political) idea but rather should be made in spite of it, as something conciliatory. Truffaut uses the artist, Henri Matisse, by way of example:

In troubled periods [...] the artist hesitates; he is tempted to abandon his art and to make his art subservient to an idea. Through film he becomes a propagandist. When this thought occurs to me, I think of Matisse. He lived through three wars untouched. He was too young for 1870, too old for the war of 1914, a patriarch in 1940. He died in 1954 between the wars in Indochina and Algeria having completed his life's work, his fish, women, flowers, landscapes framed by windows. The wars were trivial events in his life. The thousands of

canvases were the serious events. Art for Art's sake? No. Art for beauty, art for others, art that consoles.

(Two in the Wave, 2010)

Essentially, Amiel describes succinctly the differences between Godard and Truffaut as filmmakers with the same inherent creative concerns, but with very different solutions to those mutual concerns:

[...] Truffaut cherche à faire accepter sa liberté par un système que Godard, lui, ne cesse de provoquer de plus en plus violemment. Quand l'un prend les moyens de traiter avec les distributeurs, avec les coproducteurs américains, grâce à la structure des Films du Carrosse – qui reste exemplaire dans l'histoire des auteurs-producteurs –, l'autre se veut extérieur au système, utilisateur occasionnel des structures, placé très souvent, de ce fait, en situation de quémander autant que de vilipender. Sur ce plan, comme sur bien d'autres, les deux cinéastes posent les mêmes questions, mais y répondent tout à fait différemment. En l'occurrence, il s'agit d'échapper à l'emprise de studios omnipotents, et d'imposer le point de vue d'auteurs susceptibles de choisir leurs collaborateurs, de rester maîtres de leurs sujets et du traitement de ceux-ci. La réponse de Truffaut est réaliste, pragmatique, participative ; celle de Godard est plus tranchée, idéaliste et aléatoire. Ce sont en tout cas des solutions individuelles.

(Amiel in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.182)

The transitory decade of the 1960s, while a fairly fruitful period for Truffaut in terms of output, would mark the first point at which, amid the political revolutionary chaos to which

Godard was wilfully aligning himself, Truffaut was desperately trying to find what he considered to be a 'juste milieu', and the potential limitations that came with that:

Tant pis pour ceux qui ne verront pas qu'à travers le fil de nos questions se profile l'idée que, selon nous ['Cahiers du cinéma'], la recherche de cette position du « juste milieu » est peut-être aussi une « expérience-limite », de la part de quelqu'un qui fait comme si le cinéma relevait encore d'une machine flamboyante, à son apogée. Par-delà les effets de modernité dont il se méfie. Et c'est avec toute cette énergie qu'il met à faire « comme si » que Truffaut nous semble poursuivre l'héritage de ce cinéma classique, aujourd'hui, en 1967 déjà, en 1980 toujours, avant, pendant et après la période moderne de l'art cinématographique. C'est ce hiatus qui nous passionne.

(Toubiana in de Baecque, 2001, p.166)

Therefore, this 'juste milieu' or 'happy medium' could be understood as Truffaut's willingness to create a steady output of films, with the requisite that they may be made in the manner of, as Toubiana puts it, 'cinéma classique'. The fact that Truffaut has succeeded without a need to innovate and move with the times, as Godard did, contributes to the 'fascinating' image Toubiana holds of him. Toubiana goes on to say that, in a paradoxical way, Truffaut, in 'speaking cinema' makes the past feel so alive that he renders it 'present':

Nous avons envie d'écouter la parole de Truffaut sur le cinéma, de le faire parler des films, des siens comme de ceux des cinéastes qu'il admire, d'entendre un discours qui s'énonce à partir d'un savoir global (savoir n'est pas le bon mot, il faudrait plutôt parler de connaissance) parce qu'issu d'une approche multiforme de quelqu'un

qui fut cinéphile, critique, et qui pratique depuis vingt ans, sans interruption, l'art de la mise en scène. A ces activités s'ajoute l'art de parler du cinéma, c'est-à-dire de rendre vivante, présente, cette connaissance du passé, ce plaisir (de faire) du cinéma.

(Toubiana in de Baecque, 2001, p.166)

The fact that Truffaut and Godard's solutions to the same cinematic concerns are so radically different is conceivably predicated on their upbringing:

For Godard, [he had] a background in the uppermost bourgeoisie, with a very sheltered childhood until his parents' rift after the war; for Truffaut, a far more modest upbringing, as everyone knows. This would result in radically different connections to the realm of cinema. On one hand, there is Godard, an iconoclastic bourgeois anarchist who "has fouled his own backyard," as Truffaut facetiously and lucidly wrote. On the other hand, there is Truffaut, head of a small film enterprise, obsessed with the economics of his business, Les Films du Carrosse, whose survival depended on making some profit, this, nevertheless, going hand-in-hand with a fierce drive for independence that even made him reject the official honors the French Republic tried to bestow on him.

(Marie in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.305; 306)

Moreover, Truffaut would testify to Godard's lack of morality in dealing with matters of the cinema, especially his ability to manipulate his so-called '*camarades*' for the purpose of self-advancement:

[...] Even at the time of the New Wave, friendship worked differently with him. Because he was very gifted and very good at making people feel sorry for him, we forgave him for his meanness, but everyone will tell you, the devious side that he is no longer able to conceal was already there. We always had to help him, to do him favors [favours], and wait for a low blow in return.

(Truffaut in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.304)

Such was Godard's capricious behaviour that he would effectively renege on the *Nouvelle Vague* and moviemaking in general before, as Marie (in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.305) puts it, attempting to reconnect with *Nouvelle Vague* colleagues some years later, then suggesting, in a letter, a collaboration on a book for the publishing house, Gallimard, which would seek to redress the state of cinema:

The letter was addressed to "Dear Claude, François, and Jacques (in alphabetical order)," and adds, Can't we have a "discussion"?

Whatever our differences, I would be interested in finding out *in viva voce* what's become of our cinema. ... We could make it into a book for Gallimard or some other house. ... While a reunion of just two of us might be felt as too explosive, with four of us there should be a way of underplaying the differences in potential so some connections could get through. Best regards, anyhow, Jean-Luc.

(Marie; Godard in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.305)

Godard's idea was hastily put down by Truffaut in yet another fiery letter. By contrast, as Toubiana (in de Baecque, 2001, p.167) points out, it was the morality of cinema that was Truffaut's main preoccupation. As is evident, more than anything his films were 'about' cinema, and the maladies of the characters in his films were really the maladies of cinema which Truffaut would try to remedy:

Un discours sur le cinéma dont l'essence tourne autour d'une morale du métier. Comme si Truffaut s'était fixé pour tâche, vis-à-vis de lui-même et vis-à-vis du public, de ne pas détériorer l'outil de travail qu'est pour lui le cinéma (métier qui donne l'emploi du temps le plus libre et le plus agréable du monde [...]), d'où ce respect des acteurs qu'il ne faut pas laisser en moins bon état qu'on ne les a trouvés, après le tournage d'un film ; d'où ce souci de ne pas faire perdre d'argent aux producteurs, de retrouver sa *mise* après chaque film pour en engendrer un autre ; d'où ce souci de conquérir le public à chaque coup, de le respecter *et* de l'épater en même temps, avec le cinéma. D'où ce mélange unique peut-être d'inquiétude profonde (il sait bien *quand même* que le cinéma est malade, que les fissures craquèlent l'édifice de la machine autour de lui) et de professionnalisme, cette folie « rentrée », intérieure aux normes d'une machine qui tourne en toute quiétude. La même folie qu'on trouve chez les personnages centraux de ses films.

(Toubiana in de Baecque, 2001, p.167)

Marie (in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.311; 312) points out that Godard and Truffaut, by the 1970s, had film trajectories which were to become very different. 1968 represented the peak

of Godard's career and the gaining of a strong international reputation. However, he would demolish all his achievements by going underground and making political films as part of the "Dziga Vertov" collective, using the pseudonym of Soviet director Denis Abramovitch. Godard would also venture into the new, experimental world of video. However, Truffaut would continue to be as much of a visible presence as he had been before and remained steadfastly in the realm of cinematic moviemaking. The result was that, in 1981, a year which signified the beginning of a new era, and a new president, Truffaut would fill the creative gap left by Godard, and would thus dominate the media.

De Baecque concludes his Truffaut/Godard documentary by saying that it was the two filmmakers' love of cinema that brought them together but, so fierce were their passions, and so different were they in other aspects of character, it would be cinema that would ultimately tear them apart:

Ce qui les réunit à l'origine c'est bien sur leur amour du cinéma – qui ne les quittera d'ailleurs jamais. Mais surtout leur rejet des films de la Qualité. Frères d'armes ils le furent, certes, mais le temps d'une guerre qu'ils livrèrent comme critique. Pour le reste ils n'eurent rien en commun. Ni leur milieu, ni leur tempérament, ni leur conception du monde et des autres. C'est parce qu'ils firent face à un même ennemi qu'ils se rallièrent, non parce qu'ils partageaient positivement des valeurs ou des croyances.

(Two in the Wave, 2010)

As life would have it, Godard, still alive today and making films, has had the last word on their fatal relationship, in his typically cryptic method of speaking:

Pourquoi me suis-je querellé avec François ? Rien à voir avec Genet ou Fassbinder. Autre chose. Heureusement demeurée sans nom. Idiote. Demeurée. Heureusement, alors que tout le reste devenait signe, décoration mortelle, Algérie, Vietnam, Hollywood, et notre amitié, et notre affection du réel. Signe, et chant du signe. [...] ce qui nous enchaînait plus fort que le faux baiser de *Notorious*, c'était l'écran, et l'écran seul. C'était le mur qu'il fallait faire pour s'échapper de nos vies, et seul ce mur, qui allait s'évanouir derrière la gloire, et les décorations, et les déclarations, rageuses, dont avec trop d'innocence nous le saturions. Saturne nous dévora. Et l'on se déchira, peu à peu, pour ne pas être mangé le premier. Le cinéma nous avait appris la vie. Elle prit sa revanche [...]

(Godard in Jacob and de Givray, 1988, p.7; 8)

In his own way here, Godard, all too late, seems to be bringing a détente to their quarrel, equating the struggles of life with the struggles of cinema. In a rare instance, Godard seems to lament the loss of his former friend and colleague who, like Truffaut's idol, Chaplin, had a humility that Godard could never possess, in life or in film.

Henri Langlois

A second great influence on Truffaut was co-founder of the famed Cinémathèque Française and fellow cinephile, Henri Langlois. In the political and social upheaval of 1968, while Truffaut was trying to make his third chapter in the Antoine Doinel series, *Baisers volés* (1968), he would famously halt production in an effort to reinstate Henri Langlois as

President of La Cinémathèque Française after his dismissal at the hands of the Gaullist government. However, their relationship is much more profound, as Truffaut was a long-time patron of the Cinémathèque, ever since he was a humble film enthusiast. In much the same way that Truffaut struggled to succeed in various schools as a child, coupled with his problem of truancy, Langlois performed badly in school. In one instance, Langlois made an honest yet ill-fated attempt to convince his teacher of the importance of one of the Silent Greats:

Henri was incapable of being a rank-and-file high school student. Gustave Langlois never understood how his son, who excelled in history and literature, could return home one day with a zero- the most unequivocal failing grade possible – in French composition. Far from feeling guilty, Henri rejoiced in his zero: It merely indicated his teacher's incapacity to broaden his own cultural horizons. The assigned subject was "The Comic and Comedy." Henri Langlois had quite simply attempted to make his teacher fully aware of the work of Charlie Chaplin.

(Myrent and Langlois, 1995, p.13; p.14)

Langlois evidently shared Truffaut's passion for a cinema that had become artistically fettered by the coming of sound:

Between me [Langlois] and the silent cinema is above all a great love. Try to imagine yourself in the mind of a young man who adored the cinema and who suddenly found himself transplanted from the films of Lang, Feyder, and Lubitsch into such French horrors as *Les Gaités de l'Escadron* or *La Tendresse*. It was awful. People accustomed to

watching a certain kind of cinema were tortured by the arrival of sound.

(Langlois *in* Myrent and Langlois, 1995, p.18)

More profoundly, at one end of the spectrum, a filmmaker like Jean-Luc Godard sees cinema as founded on a mistake, as an art form inferior to the primitive art forms of painting and writing, but nevertheless a fortuitous one, as he states on a commentary to his film, *Une femme est une femme* (1961):

L'invention du cinéma repose sur une erreur gigantesque: enregistrer l'image de l'homme et la reproduire en la projetant jusqu'à la fin des siècles. En d'autres termes : croire qu'un ruban de celluloïd se conserve mieux qu'un livre, qu'un bloc de pierre ou même que la mémoire. Cette étrange croyance fait que de Griffith à Bresson, l'histoire du cinéma se confond avec celle de ses erreurs : erreur de vouloir peindre des idées mieux que la musique, de vouloir illustrer des actions mieux que le roman, de vouloir décrire des sentiments mieux que la peinture. Bref on peut dire qu'*errare cinematographicum est...* Mais cette erreur semblable à Ève dans le jardin d'Éden deviendra fascinante dans un film policier, tonifiante dans un western, aveuglante dans un film de guerre, et enfin, dans ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la comédie musicale, ce sera une erreur séduisante. »

(Godard, 1985, p.20; p.21)

Alternatively, Langlois sees the cinema as an art form in its own right, and, as such, it should be accorded the same rightful importance as the others. Thus the elevation of silent cinema to this status led to a proliferation of film clubs:

Henri, who assiduously frequented the clubs, held a point of view rare at that time. He firmly believed that the cinema is an art in the same way that painting and music are – an art, furthermore, whose history remained largely unknown and, more serious by far, whose vestiges and artifacts [artefacts] were in danger of disappearing. Each period of history produces an art form born of the technology of the moment. Henri was convinced that the silent repertory constituted a veritable *chanson de geste* of the cinema, but unlike the cycles of Old French epic poems celebrating the deeds of heroes, this latter-day heritage stood a very good chance of becoming lost forever. [...] The undeniable triumph of talking pictures and the corresponding necessity of saving silent masterpieces inspired the ciné-clubs to band together. The first French Federation of Ciné-Clubs was formed in 1929, with Germaine Dulac as president and Jean Mitry as secretary.

(Myrent and Langlois, 1995, p.19; 22)

Langlois was able to appeal to the journalist side of his father, Gustave, in giving him an article proposal entitled “Classics of the Silent Screen” in 1935 which helped lay the foundation for his establishment of La Cinémathèque Française:

The introduction of talking pictures having put an end to the production of silent films, this form of cinema can no longer evolve and belongs to the past. Therefore, the silent film escapes those

passing fashions and infatuations that ordinarily skew critical observation. This results in a privileged state of affairs, permitting us to judge works of the past as if they were contemporary and therefore restore perspective. In some circles, film preservation is arousing growing interest. The creation of cinémathèques is likely. We have thus deemed it worthwhile to review a large number of silent films to see if, in the course of such a study, “screen classics” emerge. By this we mean those works that display a life of their own, whose value as spectacle emerges intact whatever the era, for the film stands independent of time.

(Langlois in Myrent and Langlois, 1995, p.24)

Myrent and Langlois talk about the achievement of silent cinema at the Cercle du Cinéma, precursor to the Cinémathèque, and how a lack of musical accompaniment meant that the silent classics achieved their true visual potential, a quality for which Truffaut was always striving in his own films:

Through its programming choices, its absence of formal discussion, and its conviction that silence was indeed golden, the Cercle du Cinéma truly distinguished itself from other ciné-clubs. Twenty years later, Langlois would write: This repertory theater [theatre] had finally come into being, and everyone was talking about it. It would be impossible to evoke the almost religious atmosphere that prevailed. Up until then, it had seemed inconceivable to show a film without musical accompaniment. The only exceptions to this rule had been the quasi-clandestine projections of Soviet films, announced by

a tiny note tacked to the wall of the José-Corti bookshop on rue Blanche. In a huge theater [theatre] in Belleville, the *Battleship Potemkin*, left to its own devices, fascinated, returned as it was to its inherent rhythm, which no sound ventured forth to disturb. Unaccompanied was always the manner of presentation at the Cercle du Cinéma, and whatever anyone says, this austerity corresponded to the very essence of the silent art. So it was that, week after week, month after month, the climate grew that would eventually make possible the creation of the Cinémathèque.

(Langlois in Myrent and Langlois, 1995, p.28; 29)

After Langlois' reinstatement at La Cinémathèque Française in 1968, he and Truffaut continued to enjoy a harmonious friendship until his death in 1977.

Jean Gruault

There were two men with whom Truffaut shared the steadfast passion for silent cinema in a practical manner. The first is Jean Gruault, Truffaut's frequent screenwriter-collaborator. Gruault would work in a writing capacity on the following Truffaut films: *Jules et Jim* (1962); *L'enfant sauvage* (1970); *Les deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971); *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975); and *La chambre verte* (1978).

Gruault also contributes a lengthy preface to Gillain's *Francois Truffaut: le Secret perdu*, in which we are made to understand first-hand the depth of Truffaut's passion for the silents:

[Truffaut] confessed his regret that he had not been born sufficiently early to start off as a filmmaker during the last years of the silent era and the very beginning of the talkies. He had a feeling that he had

missed something, an experience that had been unique and irreplaceable [...] During the five or six years that had immediately preceded the appearance of movies with sound, exceptional conditions, which have never been replicated since, allowed the flowering of a surprisingly large number of first-rate works, considering such a short time span, and François would have liked to have been there, with Chaplin, Lubitsch, Hawks, Dwan, Walsh, Ford, Hitchcock, Gance, Duvivier, Renoir, and several others.

(Gruault in Gillain, 2013, p.1)

According to Gruault, Truffaut envied a perceived innocence that he believed resided within the cinematic audiences of that era, which made it easier for filmmakers to be innovative in what they were doing. By contrast, Truffaut considers the audiences of his generation and after to be a lot less impressionable. According to Truffaut, the silent audience had:

[...] a freshness of spirit, a mental agility that stimulated the imagination of directors, leading them to refine their style, to perfect their narrative strategies “by using images,” to the point where, as with Murnau, they could communicate what was happening without any intertitles at all. While he thought that spectators of his time were less naïve, better informed, more cultivated, and also more intellectual, in many cases (which for François was not far away from being a defect), he also found them lazier and, according to him, through a boomerang effect, this laziness was communicated to filmmakers, who sent it back to the spectators – and so on...

(Gruault in Gillain, 2013, p.1; 2)

Moreover, Gruault goes on to say that for Truffaut his mission to relate himself to silent cinema was not merely an interest, but a paternal quest in order to please the substitute fathers of cinema in the absence of a steadfast paternal one. After only ever knowing his stepfather, Roland Truffaut (from whom François took his surname), Truffaut would go on to uncover the identity of his biological father, a Jewish dentist named Roland Lévy, though father and son were never reunited:

François wondered who his father was (we considered many projects that would have dealt with this theme). I know only too well who mine was. But our true fathers, those that we would have chosen for ourselves, were the same, and we tried to be sons that were not too unworthy of them. François had their photos on his desk at the “Carrosse” they were Lubitsch and Chaplin, the guardians, if not of *the* lost secret, at least of *a* lost secret, one of those he was searching to find all through his life, and perhaps the only one (as his final films attest) that he succeeded in finding.

(Gruault in Gillain, 2013, p.4)

Perhaps the most fruitful of the Gruault-Truffaut collaborations was *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*, a film which details the story of Adèle, the daughter of esteemed writer, Victor Hugo, and her gradual descent into madness through her unrequited love for a British soldier, Albert Pinson (Bruce Robinson). According to Gruault, the film's opening scenes had to be a homage to the work of Chaplin. Furthermore, in their preparation for films such as this relating to the silent era, they watched films such as: *Variété* (1925), a silent drama directed by E. A. Dupont; and

Chaplin's *L'Opinion publique* (1923), also known as *A Woman of Paris: A Drama of Fate*, a feature-length drama directed by Chaplin himself:

Au moment d'*Adèle H.*, il m'avait rapporté des Etats-Unis *Variétés* de Dupont, dont Hitchcock lui avait parlé comme d'un film-clé. Il y avait *L'Opinion publique* aussi. Dans *Adèle*, au départ, chaque scène devait correspondre à un film de Chaplin. Et, quand on a démarré le travail pour notre dernier projet sur Paris 1900, on se réservait des matinées où il me passait à la vidéo *Ragtime* de Forman, qu'il adorait, et *L'Opinion publique* pour me stimuler dans un certain sens, le sens dans lequel il allait de plus en plus et qui était : « Comment te serais-tu débrouillé au temps du muet avec telle situation ou pour exprimer telle chose ? » Ça le hantait de plus en plus.

(Gruault *in* Bergala et al., 1985, p.87; 88)

According to Truffaut, Gruault was also a silent film hobbyist, a likeminded person who shared Truffaut's love of literature, as well as film: "[Gruault] passe son temps à regarder de vieux Griffith et de vieux Chaplin dans des copies en 8mm. » (Truffaut *in* Gillain, 1988, p.285). Le Berre also weighs in on their mutual interests:

[...] [Gruault] partage avec Truffaut, outre la passion littéraire et le goût de la petite histoire individuelle et saugrenue, la nostalgie du « *secret perdu* » du cinéma muet, dont il collectionne les premières bandes : références et images communes seront souvent échangées presque implicitement pour résoudre les difficultés du travail en cours.

(Le Berre, 1993, p.26)

Referring to the production of *L'histoire d'Adèle H.*, Gillain states how, in trying to film in the tradition of the masters, Truffaut wanted to rekindle the emotions evoked by the films of his childhood, with Chaplin being a focal point, when he would play truant and sneak off to the cinemas of Paris, unbeknownst to his parents:

[The] intertextual allusiveness, which almost entirely vanished in the final draft of the screenplay, reflects, like the choice of music, a desire to anchor the story in the cinematic past. This inclination links up with the autobiographical project that informs Truffaut's entire oeuvre. In all the films he made, he tried endlessly to reproduce his experience as a young spectator. His aim was to recover the emotions of this hidden personal film that had formerly been evoked by the works of the masters. Their secret becomes merged with his own. With *Jaubert*, Truffaut went back to the origins of the masterpieces of his youth. For him, the choice of Chaplin was justified in many ways – as a homage to the genius of cinema, to silent cinema – but it was also determined at a deep level by the very subject matter of the film.

(Gillain, 2013, p.226; 227)

On the other hand, Gruault posits the idea of the obsession with silent cinema as equally being derived from Hitchcock, with the wish to express oneself first and foremost in visual terms. He continues to make the point that, although his collaboration with Truffaut, *Les deux Anglaises et le continent*, accords much importance to the script, each dialogue scene is

accorded important visuals, which complement the story of the love triangle and the barriers between the three main protagonist lovers:

Cette obsession du cinéma muet venait d'Hitchcock, c'était la volonté de pouvoir exprimer les choses autrement que par des paroles. Or, surtout depuis la télé, on a tendance à tout résoudre par des paroles. A l'époque des *deux Anglaises*, on ne disait pas du tout ça, mais si vous regardez le film attentivement, tous les passages retenus dans le livre sont liés à quelque chose de visuel, les promenades en vélo, des choses qu'on pouvait montrer. Le texte a énormément d'importance, mais c'est exactement l'atmosphère des films muets suédois ou des films sentimentaux de Griffith avec Mae Marschall et Lillian Gish, avec ces scènes où l'on voit deux amoureux de chaque côté d'une barrière en train de discuter. Il y a une barrière dans *Les deux Anglaises*. Le cinéma muet, c'étaient les grands sentiments, la simplicité, la clarté.

(Gruault in Bergala et al., 1985, p.88)

Nestor Almendros

The final integral figure in Truffaut's efforts to recreate the effects of silent cinema is Spanish cinematographer, Nestor Almendros. He would collaborate with Truffaut on: *L'enfant sauvage* (1970); *Domicile conjugal* (1970); *Les deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971); *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975); *L'homme qui aimait les femmes* (1977); *La chambre verte* (1978); *L'amour en fuite* (1979); and Truffaut's last film, *Vivement dimanche!* (1983).

Perhaps the most fruitful and most documented of their collaborations is *L'enfant sauvage*, about a boy found living in the wilderness (Jean-Pierre Cargol) who is raised and

domesticated by Dr. Jean Itard (Truffaut). The establishing shot of the woman picking vegetables in the woodland is immediately grounded in the cinematic past with the use of the iris technique, a silent cinema trope which proliferates in the course of the film, as well as the silent cinema-esque black-and-white photography. Gillain cites Almendros's musings on the film in his memoirs entitled *A Man With a Camera* (1984):

The Wild Child is a homage to the photography of silent films...

Their style, without any touching-up, had the precision of a fine drawing that has disappeared today... The techniques of silent cinema achieved an exceptional degree of refinement, but its secrets would disappear with the death of its creators. It is necessary to rediscover these techniques. [...] Each image in *The Wild Child* reflects the beauty of this early cinematic gaze on the world, which, in film, came to be associated with the regular use of the iris for punctuation.

Coming to the conclusion that the iris-effects able to be obtained by contemporary techniques were too mechanical, Truffaut succeeding in finding some actual equipment from the silent era, "an antediluvian vestige" (*vestige antédiluvien*), that was used for the shooting. A film about the secret of origins, *The Wild Child* also celebrates the origins of cinema itself. From the first shot, an iris aperture on a black screen isolates a peasant woman in a forest. It is through a female glimpse that the existence of the wild child is revealed. [...] He settles himself among the branches and rocks himself with a slow movement, to and fro. The camera draws back in a zoom, and an iris-out closes this first sight of the wild child. [...] The development of a relationship

between Itard and the child is enacted in the course of the film. We have to wait until the final image in the movie before the child returns the gaze of which he is made the object at its opening.

(Almendros in Gillain, 2013, p.208; 209)

Ultimately, the visuals in the film would serve to remind us as spectators of Truffaut's main interests, as attested to by Gillain: "At the end of the story, the language of action triumphs over writing, the image over the word, reality over its representation – a triple homage to childhood, to cinema, and to Bazin" (Gillain, 2013, p.219).

Summary

It is through these rather disparate men of the cinema that Truffaut was able to foster his mission of giving silent cinema a sort of cinematic renaissance within his own work. While Godard initially seemed a film devotee, of a similar schooling, it took his eventual stance as a rejecter of all things past, in a moviemaking sense, to allow Truffaut to go forth and distinguish himself from fellow *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers, principally Godard, as "a man apart". He was evidently aided in his mission by Langlois, one of the first figures in cinema to see the medium as an incontestable art form, who helped Truffaut by virtue of his work as a film archivist and the creation of La Cinémathèque Française, a cultural hub where Truffaut and his *Nouvelle Vague* contemporaries found their feet in the film world, and where fruitful filmic discussion began. Finally, we have taken into account the direct collaborators Gruault and Almendros, without whose expertise in film writing and cinematography respectively, Truffaut's cinematic dreams may never have been fully realised.

CHAPTER 2: TRUFFAUT AND THE FRENCH IMPRESSIONISTS: HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH DOMESTIC CINEMA

For François Truffaut, the significant impact of war was a spur to redress the state of cinema in the post-war years. It was the function of cinema as emotional saturation for Truffaut during his early life which made the medium so important to him as a film critic and filmmaker in later life:

Emotional deprivation, and a consequent need both for a refuge and for some help in making sense of the world, led the child François Truffaut to the cinema. [...] What Truffaut absorbed during these years was a particular cinematic heritage, shaped both by the history of the first forty-five years of French cinema and by the particular circumstances of the Occupation, and this in turn would help to mould his own work as a film-maker.

(Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p.13)

I believe that it is the same fascination and mystery that surrounds silent cinema today that fascinated Truffaut in his time, as described in his book *Les films de ma vie* (1975). Even though his study on film is chronological, I think it is fitting that the section on silent cinema begins the book. Even the title “Le Grand Secret” conjures up images of childhood wonder and mystery, the same emotions that Truffaut felt as a young spectator in the cinemas of Occupied France:

La première partie s’appelle “*LE GRAND SECRET*” parce qu’elle est consacrée à des metteurs en scène qui ont commencé leur carrière avec le cinéma muet et l’ont poursuivie dans le parlant. Ceux-là ont quelque chose *de plus* et Jean Renoir dans « *Ma Vie et mes films* » a

décrit la fascination qu'ils exercent sur leurs cadets. « ... Je suis poussé par les questions insistantes de jeunes collègues pour qui tout ce qui précède le parlant apparaît aussi lointain et mystérieux que le déplacement des grands glaciers dans la période préhistorique. Nous autres, les ancêtres, jouissons chez eux d'une estime analogue à celle que les artistes modernes accordent aux graffiti des cavernes de Lascaux. La comparaison est flatteuse et nous apporte la satisfaction de constater que nous n'avons pas follement gâché la pellicule. »

(Truffaut, 2007, p.31)

While, according to Holmes and Ingram (1998, p.13), the Occupation was a time of fruitful domestic film production which engendered an escapist pleasure for Truffaut, and a large part of the urban population of occupied France, the war would bequeath a proliferation of films which belonged to the (later) maligned *tradition de qualité*. This was “a safe, studio-bound, script-heavy, often literary cinema”, in which filmmakers ploughed the same furrow with little differentiation. (Film

Reference,<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/New-Wave-FRENCH-FILM-CULTURE-IN-THE-1950s.html>, no date). Such a cinema would become the object of stern criticism in Truffaut's polemical article, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français' (1954), in the film journal, *Cahiers du cinéma*.

In reaction to the problem, Truffaut espoused the theory known as *la politique des auteurs* which celebrated the film director as an “artist whose personality or personal creative vision

could be read, thematically and stylistically, across their body of work.” (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012, p.26). Hess attests to the wartime connotations of this auteur policy, saying:

[it] was, in fact, a justification, couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in the years immediately after the war [...]

(Hess, 1974)

Against the criticism found in Truffaut’s article, the few privileged directors exalted by virtue of being *auteurs* and not mere *metteurs-en-scène* include Jean Renoir and Abel Gance, whose work will be discussed at length in this chapter. The efforts made by Truffaut to save cinema at this time are akin to the work of the French Impressionist film directors some thirty years earlier, a group which included Renoir and Gance. These artists sought to create an avant-garde domestic cinema to rival America’s classical Hollywood cinema, this time in the aftermath of the First World War. Their films display “a fascination with pictorial beauty and an interest in intense psychological exploration.” (Cine Collage, no date).

According to Lanzoni, with demands being placed on all industries for the sake of the war effort, coupled with the immense influence of Hollywood, the French film industry would begin to recede. In fact, on a larger scale, silent cinema as a whole was cursed as a result of the First World War, since it precipitated the financial crisis which coincided with silent pictures’ end in 1929; and the development of talkies, which forever defined the original concept of motion pictures. (Lanzoni, 2015, p.25). One of the French silent filmmakers who enjoyed pre-First World War esteem, and whose name and traditions the French Impressionists were keen to further, was Georges Méliès. In line with Truffaut’s philosophy

on film, Prédal argues that Méliès could be considered the “first auteur”, given that he was the: « concepteur unique, seul maître d’ouvrage tout au long de la chaîne de fabrication, mais auteur aussi au sens de créateur d’un univers personnel et imaginaire sans aucune référence réaliste’ » (Prédal in Ince, 2008, p.1).

Méliès used his talents as a magician to popularise cinema of the *la féerie* tradition, or “Cinema of Attractions”. Ezra attests to the importance of the verisimilitude of Méliès’ films to the course of cinema history:

What appeared on the screen seemed real, and this very realism seemed magical – but it was not long before film’s seemingly magical effects, such as dissolves, splicing, and multiple exposure, became the basic vocabulary of realist film. Film history is in fact the story of this shift, the process of turning magic into reality; and Méliès is the magician who first performed this feat.

(Ezra, 2000, p.2)

After the demise of Méliès’s production company, Star Film, due to financial problems, and the wartime decline of the French film industry as a whole, the French Impressionists were keen to keep the cinematic memory of Méliès alive: “After the war, avant-garde filmmakers would pay tribute to Méliès in their own productions, which alluded to the film pioneer’s work as nostalgically (and parodically) as Méliès himself had invoked the marvellous innocence of an earlier age” (Ezra, 2000, p.20). For example, filmmaker René Clair would pay tribute to Méliès in two of his films: firstly, by reappropriating the emblem of Méliès’s production company on the hearse in his film, *Entr’acte* (1924) (Thiher, 1979, p.16); and secondly, in *Voyage imaginaire* (1926) by including a sequence in which a group of fairy-tale

characters have been put out to pasture, attached to which is the intertitle: “No one believes in fairies anymore [...]” (Ezra, 2000, p.21).

Closely allied to Georges Méliès are the so-called pioneers of cinema, the Lumière brothers, inventors of the Cinématographe device, and producers of short films which were an attempt at realism, such as the famous *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (1896). Moreover, their short, *L'Arroseur arrosé* (1895), is referenced in Truffaut's film, *Les mistons* (1957) (Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p.79). Houston notes how the work of Méliès and the Lumière brothers is complementary in the course of cinema history:

Cinema began in observation, with Lumière's train pulling into that distant station, yet within a few years George Méliès was demonstrating where fantasy might take it. The cinema of fact and that of fancy, the cinema which observes and the cinema which imagines, continually co-exist and overlap.

(Houston, 1963, p.18)

So influential was the cinema of the Lumière brothers and Méliès that Truffaut ascribes their names to one of two branches of cinema to which his influences, Renoir and Gance, are more closely aligned. In doing so, he also partitions the group of French Impressionists as a whole. (The following quotation is also cited in Chapter 1 in which it was used to contrast the ways in which Truffaut and Godard look at film history):

[...] il y a deux sortes de cinéma : la « branche Lumière » et la « branche Delluc ». Lumière a inventé le cinéma pour filmer la nature des actions, *L'Arroseur arrosé*. Delluc, qui était un romancier et un critique, a pensé que l'on pouvait utiliser cette invention pour filmer des idées, ou des actions qui ont une signification autre que celle

évidente, et puis, éventuellement, lorgner vers les autres arts. La suite ? C'est l'histoire du cinéma avec la « branche Lumière » : Griffith, Chaplin, Stroheim, Flaherty, Gance, Vigo, Renoir, Rossellini (et puis plus près de nous Godard), et de l'autre côté la « branche Delluc » avec Epstein, L'Herbier, Feyder, Grémillon, Huston, Bardem, Astruc, Antonioni (et plus près de nous Alain Resnais). Pour les premiers, le cinéma est un *spectacle*, pour les seconds, il est une *langue*.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.50)

Therefore, Renoir and Gance are said to consider cinema to be a form of spectacle, rather than a language.

Jean Renoir

In line with the idea of cinema as spectacle, Renoir made a short film in Méliès's style entitled: *La petite marchande d'allumettes* (1928), which, along with *Nana* (1926); and *Tire au flanc* (1928), forms the most significant body of his silent work, and would help to inspire the better-known films of later years such as *La Grande Illusion* (1937) and *La règle du jeu* (1939). It is a well-established fact that Renoir exercised a considerable influence on Truffaut not just as a filmmaker but as a friend or, more profoundly, as a paternal figure for which Truffaut was constantly searching. When Renoir moved permanently to Los Angeles, Truffaut would make many trips to visit "le patron" and his wife, and to engage in lengthy discussions about cinema (Herpe in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.334). After all, it was Renoir's film *Le Carrosse d'or* (1952) which inspired the name of Truffaut's production company, "Les Films du Carrosse" (Insdorf, 1994, p.70).

Herpe talks of how Truffaut, as a young critic at *Cahiers du cinéma*, was determined to justify the importance of Renoir's silent work which was often overlooked or misunderstood:

Le jeune homme se situe dès lors à la pointe d'une contre-lecture du parcours de Renoir : elle consiste à réévaluer ses films réputés mineurs d'avant-guerre, comme *Tire-au-flanc* ou *Sur un air de Charleston* (« ce qu'il reste de ces douze cents mètres est fort réjouissant de spontanéité et de loufoquerie échevelée »), à faire justice de la légende d'un talent amoindri par le travail à Hollywood, et, enfin, à nier l'essoufflement dont on taxe le vieux cinéaste...

(Herpe *in* de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.333)

Renoir's *La petite marchande d'allumettes* is based on a 19th century short story by famed Danish writer, Hans Christian Andersen, detailing the imaginative musings of an impoverished girl (played by Renoir's first wife, Catherine Hessling), who tries unsuccessfully to make a living by selling matches to passers-by in the street. This film of "enchantment" confirmed, according to de Hugues et al., the birth of a new cinematic luminary:

C'est une des rares réussites de la féerie du cinéma, un conte doucement caressé d'une lumière qui a l'air de venir d'Andersen lui-même et où Catherine Hessling dans sa neige, Catherine Hessling au pays des jouets, Catherine aux pieds du bon agent de police, Catherine emportée dans une chevauchée d'ombres chinoises, composent des images ravissantes, qui firent croire qu'un nouveau poète était né à l'écran.

(De Hugues et al., 1986, p.134)

Using *La petite marchande d'allumettes* as a point of comparison, I would like to look at Renoir and Truffaut's shared preoccupation with the oneiric image of the flame and its associations of life and death. In Renoir's film, the little match girl tries desperately to distract herself from the cold and hunger which will eventually kill her by lighting one of her matches and holding it close to her for warmth and comfort. This is an act which engenders happy hallucinations: she imagines she is holding, instead, a sparkler; and believes she can see a glorious sun, followed by twinkling Christmas tree lights in the sky. However, contrary to her naïve thoughts that the flame will keep her alive, the image of the flame connotes the spectre of death, an idea for which she is later reproached when a bystander makes a comment to another woman while looking at the girl's corpse, at the end of the film: "Croyez-vous, ma chère, quelle sottise de penser qu'on peut se réchauffer avec des allumettes."

Similarly, in Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*, based on the famous science fiction novel by Ray Bradbury, the image of the flame is seen naively by the forces of law and order as a positive thing – an antidote to the perceived dangers of knowledge, and so books are systematically incinerated by the firemen. However, these actions engender a madness in the male protagonist and fireman, Montag (Oskar Werner), as the destruction of books brings about a consequent fear of the unknown, a state in which ignorance is not bliss.

In his dream sequence, the flame is no longer seen as an image of salvation, but instead, destruction. After previously going out on patrol, Montag had witnessed the scene of the woman book collector who wished to die in her house, surrounded by her books. The books are set aflame and, unsettlingly, she appears to float blissfully in the air while engulfed by the flames. This episode is recreated in Montag's dream sequence in which the book collector is replaced by Montag's friend, Clarisse (Julie Christie). Like the little match girl in Renoir's *La*

petite marchande d'allumettes, Clarisse stares at the flame as a thing of wonder before dropping it onto the books around her, thereby securing her own death.

Moreover, in Truffaut's *La chambre verte*, Julien Davenne (Truffaut) uses a candle flame as part of his shrine to the dead, a symbol of peace. However, the flame, by extension, is a part of Davenne's obsession with the dead in preference to the living, which will eventually kill him. Similarly, in Truffaut's *La sirène du Mississippi* (1969), fire taken on the meaning of death, as in the death of a relationship or marriage when Marion (Catherine Deneuve) flees Louis (Jean-Paul Belmondo) with the majority of his bank account in tow, he promptly burns her remaining underclothes in a close-up shot.

Gillain talks of the premonitory association of the flame (or, better said, fire) and shoes, in Truffaut's work, citing a particular instance in *Jules et Jim*:

[...] the initial fire that catches Catherine's nightgown forms an internal rhyme with the cremation fire at the end, but the close shot of Catherine's foot under the table creates another rhyme with the close-up of her foot on the accelerator of the car in the murder/suicide scene. Both images recur through all of Truffaut's films: the reader will recall the many shots of fire and women's shoes in his oeuvre.

(Gillain, 2013, p.xxi; xxii)

This technique is somewhat prefigured by Renoir in *La petite marchande d'allumettes*, as he includes several close-up shots of the match girl's tattered shoes, which are ill-suited to the snowy weather conditions, and, arguably, a prefigurement of her demise. A forewarning comes to her in the words of the kindly policeman: "Avec des chaussures pareilles, vous feriez mieux de retourner chez vous." Furthermore, the idea of snow as another signifier of destruction and demise is an idea which recurs in the films of Truffaut. At the end of *Tirez*

sur le pianiste, Charlie (Charles Aznavour) flees the criminals with the love interest, Léna (Marie Dubois) and they end up at his brother's retreat in the snowy mountains.

Gillain, referencing the words of Truffaut himself, demonstrates how the snow sequence came from a simple concept, one which was fostered with silent cinema in mind:

As far as [*Shoot*] *The Piano Player* is concerned, I think that I made it on account of a single image. In Goodis's book, at the end, there is a little house in the snow, with fir trees, and a small sloping road, and a car glides along it silently, without one being able to hear the noise of the motor. I wanted to re-create this image. [...] These two primal images of cars moving along in well-defined settings highlight the non-verbal nature of inspiration. Truffaut loved wordless scenes where, as in silent movies, *mise-en-scène* produced meaning through the use of bodies and spaces.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 2013, p.xx)

However, the snow cabin only provides temporary refuge and soon a shoot-out develops between the brothers and the gangster criminals, Momo and Ernest (Claude Mansard and Daniel Boulanger). This results in the death of Léna. Similarly, in Truffaut's *La sirène du Mississippi*, a film which receives a special dedication to Jean Renoir at the beginning, there is a similar ending in which the film's fateful lovers, Louis and Marion, take refuge from the law in a small cabin in the snowy mountains. Paradoxically, while the cabin could be said to be a place of sanctuary, (Marion declares after they leave, "Elle était pas mal, cette cabane"), it is also the place of Louis's attempted murder at the hands of Marion, who puts rat poison in his coffee.

When the pain-stricken Louis confronts Marion with the knowledge of her devious plan, while she tries to ply him with yet more poisoned coffee, she promptly regrets her actions, and tries to articulate her painful feelings of love: “Je viens à l’amour, Louis. J’ai mal, Louis. Ça fait mal. Est-ce que c’est ça, l’amour? Est-ce que l’amour fait mal?”. Equally, Louis declares the mixed feelings that love gives him, both literal and metaphorical: “Tu es si belle. Quand je te regarde, c’est une souffrance. [...] C’est une joie et une souffrance. » (*La sirène du Mississippi*, 1969). The final lingering shot shows Louis and Marion leaving the temporary security of the cabin behind. As they walk away hand-in-hand, they naturally stumble in the snow. However, on a more profound level, this ‘stumbling’ represents the precariousness of their future path, which we presume will end in Louis’s death.

However, Antoine Duhamel’s unsettling closing music highlights the sympathy that Truffaut as director has for these two souls, and how he laments the irresolution of their problems, in much the same way as Renoir would have in this type of situation. Gillain talks about the Renoirian imagery surrounding the painful union of man and woman:

Dedicated to Renoir, *Mississippi Mermaid* alludes to a passage from *La Marseillaise* in which the revolutionary and royalist troops fraternize instead of fighting with one another. The name of the island of La Réunion commemorates this event. This film buff’s metaphor strikingly illustrates the subject of a film that follows an attempt to achieve a “reunion” of the split-off feminine with the masculine. Such a return to unity is difficult, full of conflict, and painful [...]

(Gillain, 2013, p.198)

In fact, the aforementioned closing exchanges between Louis and Marion are recreated in Truffaut’s *Le dernier métro* (1980) between Marion (Deneuve, again assuming the role of the

female protagonist, and carrying the same character name) and Bernard (Gérard Depardieu), as the lines of a theatrical play. In fact, these lines are repeated numerous times throughout the film as, predominantly in the point-of-view perspective of the play's director, Jean-Loup Cottins (Jean Poiret), we witness the extracts of numerous rehearsals and performances. Returning to the ending of *La sirène du Mississippi*, we see how profound Louis's love for Marion is in the fact that he is prepared to die for her, conscious as he is of her plans to murder him. When she hands him the poisoned coffee, he says:

Remplis-le jusqu'en haut. Je sais ce que tu es en train de faire, et je l'accepte. Je ne regrette pas de t'avoir rencontrée, je ne regrette pas d'avoir tué un homme pour toi. Je ne regrette pas de t'aimer. Je ne regrette rien. Seulement, ça me fait très mal dans le ventre, ça me brûle partout. Alors, je voudrais que ça aille vite, très vite. Remplis-le.

(La sirène du Mississippi, 1969)

Evidently, Louis has received his 'poisoned chalice' both in the literal sense of the poisoned coffee and in the figurative sense of his receipt of Marion as a lover. Men falling victim to the dangerous charms of women is an idea which is extremely prominent in Renoir's *Nana*, based on the 19th century novel by Émile Zola, detailing the tumultuous life of a theatre actress turned prostitute. In the film, Count Muffat (Werner Krauss) is so transfixed by Nana (Catherine Hessling) that he cannot accept her impending death. In a trance-like state, he enters Nana's chamber where he risks exposing himself to the smallpox contagion.

Monaco says how:

[*La sirène du Mississippi*] is pervaded by the spirit of Renoir, not only because of its similarity with *Nana* [...] but more importantly because

it investigates the bond between a man and a woman against a background of the full range of human experience.

(Monaco, 1976, p.67)

Truffaut is keen to emulate Renoir's understanding of humanity, and, to a point, an impartial view of characters and situations, particularly where adultery is concerned. The notion that "Tout le monde a ses raisons" is one articulated by the character, Octave, played by Renoir in one of his sound films, *La règle du jeu*, but it is a philosophy which is present from the beginning of his filmmaking career. Allen explains how Truffaut fostered these ideas, and relates them to Truffaut's work:

What is distinctive in this film [*La Peau Douce*] about the cinematically hackneyed subject of adultery is the treatment, the style and the tone which Truffaut brings to it. His originality in *La Peau Douce* lies in his extraordinary capacity to combine severely restrained, impartial observation of his characters with a real sympathy and sensitivity to their problems. His tolerance, embracing Renoir's view that everyone always has his reasons, implies also a refusal to judge. Truffaut's concern with detailed but neutral observation discourages identification with any one character and, as in the Antoine Doinel cycle, prompts a feeling of sympathy tinged with sadness for their not uncommon circumstances.

(Allen, 1986, p.104)

While Truffaut and Renoir are keen to show impartiality in film, one cannot deny the proliferation of *femmes fatales* or *vamps* in the work of both directors. Truffaut explains how

the *femme fatale* was a theme integral to pre-war cinema as a whole and helped inspire him to adapt *La sirène du Mississippi*:

What seduced me when I read *La sirène du Mississippi* was that William Irish had treated in it a subject traditional in the pre-war cinema: it's *The Devil is a Woman*, *The Blue Angel*, *La Chienne*, *Nana*. The theme of the vamp, of the *femme fatale*, subjugating an honest man to the point of making a rag-doll out of him, had been treated by all the cineastes I admire. I said to myself that I must too [...]

(Truffaut in Monaco, 1976, p.66; 67)

Indeed, in Renoir's silent work, nowhere is the treatment of the *femme fatale* more apparent than in *Nana*. According to Truffaut, it is this film which comes to embody the themes on which Renoir's sound films would be based:

On trouve dans *Nana* ce qui deviendra la thématique de Renoir : l'amour du spectacle, la femme qui se trompe sur sa vocation, la comédienne qui se cherche, l'amoureux qui meurt de sa sincérité, le politicien éperdu, l'homme créateur de spectacles.

(Truffaut in d'Hugues et al., 1986, p.134)

In a similar vein, the majority of Truffaut's films are about men who are brought to their knees by the fervent sexuality of women. One way in which this sexuality is expressed on film is through the fetishisation of female footwear. For example, in *Nana*, Renoir gives us a

protracted shot of our female protagonist (Catherine Hessling) suggestively flicking the damaged heel of her shoe, backstage in the theatre, in medium close-up. There is also a scene in which Nana recklessly plays billiards with the expensive presents received from her lovers. An unconventional medium close-up shot shows Nana's legs and heeled shoes under the billiards table, partially concealed by her flowing dress, and decentred in the frame. Moreover, there is a scene in which Nana is getting changed after her bath and her mistress helps her into casual boots. A close-up focuses on the shoes and the bottom of her bare legs before we notice her towel has dropped to the floor, after which she is aided into her dress by the servant.

Such a fetishism is also present in Truffaut's *Le dernier métro* in which, for example, during a love scene between Marion (Catherine Deneuve) and Lucas (Heinz Bennent) where they fall into each other's arms on the floor. In a moment of subverting cinematic norms, the camera pans away from the oft-expected shots of the couple's embrace to focus on Marion's stockings and shoes. Returning to Nana's treatment of men in Renoir's film, there is one instance in which a male lover is literally 'brought to his knees'. Count Muffat (Werner Krauss) is playfully disciplined by Nana and forced to crawl around on the carpet like a dog, in a position of sexual submissiveness.

While Truffaut openly admired this sort of scene it is interesting how, in the case of *La sirène du Mississippi*, he has updated the style of filming to fit the subject matter to the 1960s, and to take into consideration woman as a more comprehensible figure:

La scène où le baron, dans *Nana*, s'abaisse jusqu'à faire le petit chien pour obtenir des marrons glacés, celle où Emil Jannings crie

«cocorico » dans *L'Ange bleu* sont des scènes que j'admire. Mais je suis incapable de les tourner. Peut-être est-ce aussi pour cela que j'ai transposé *La Sirène* de nos jours. Parce que de nos jours, ce n'est plus comme ça. Une fille, aujourd'hui, n'est plus une vamp, une garce. Elle est un personnage beaucoup plus compréhensible. Et la victime n'est plus complètement une victime. Le noir et le blanc sont devenus gris. J'ai donc, malgré moi, affaibli les contrastes entre les personnages au risque de dédramatiser un peu le sujet.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.246)

While, indeed, the female protagonist, Marion, is shown to be a more developed, up-to-date female character, this does not stop Louis from making a highly misogynist monologue, affixing her to the image of a man-eater:

Tu ne penses qu'à toi, t'es pas une fille égoïste, tu es l'égoïsme à toi toute seule. Tu crois que tu es une vraie personne, que tu es unique. Mais c'est faux, tu fais partie d'un tas de filles qui se multiplient. Pas vraiment des garces, des aventurières ou des putains, mais des sortes de parasites qui vivent en dehors de la société normale. Vous n'êtes ni des femmes, ni des jeunes filles. Vous êtes des souris. Ce que vous êtes d'ailleurs, ça n'a pas de nom exact. Des écervelées avec la tête pleine d'idioties ou la tête vide. Vous êtes amoureuses de votre corps, vous pensez qu'à vous mettre au soleil, vous passez des heures à vous trafiquer le visage. Vous ne passez pas devant une voiture sans vous regarder dans le pare-brise.

(*La sirène du Mississippi*, 1969)

However, in a rather refreshing moment, one which is again reminiscent of Renoir's impartial viewpoint, Marion justifies her behaviour frankly when she is making a record for Louis:

Je ne suis pas toujours très gentille avec toi. Je te fais la tête, mais remarque, c'est toujours à cause de l'argent. Dans ma première place, mes patrons se disputaient toujours à cause de l'argent. Ma patronne me disait : « Regardez, Marion, regardez bien. Quand il y a plus de foin à l'écurie, les chevaux se battent. » Tu comprends, c'est pour ça que je ne supporte pas la pauvreté, car c'est la médiocrité. Ça, je ne peux pas.

(*La sirène du Mississippi*, 1969)

This is a rather progressive, emancipatory view of women which is rare for Truffaut, who was, according to many, a misogynist. However, despite moments of seriousness, this is not to say that women are treated in Truffaut's films without a touch of humour befitting Renoir's style, as confirmed by Allen:

Touches of truculent humour, typical of Renoir, such as the sequence in which Catherine Deneuve strips to the waist in an open sports car and a passing motorist drives into a post, are characteristic of Truffaut's frequently jocular asides on a theme – here women as the cause of men's downfall.

(Allen, 1986, p. 134)

Furthermore, Insdorf attests to this fluidity of genre in the work of both directors:

Truffaut displays Renoir's influence, for it is as impossible to delineate the borders in his physical/psychological landscape as it was

in *Grand Illusion*; the work of both directors finally insists that boundaries are arbitrary inventions to rationalize the complexity of experience. This includes the frontiers of genres in that *Mississippi Mermaid* moves back and forth between comedy and drama in the manner of most of Renoir's films, from *The Little Match Girl* (1928) to *The Little Theater of Jean Renoir* (1969).

(Insdorf, 1994, p.102)

Another theme that Renoir deals with, and which is taken up by Truffaut, is the sexual precocity of women. Catherine Hessling, Renoir's first wife, plays the roles of Nana and The Little Match Girl at the ages of 26 and 28 respectively. However, due to her youthful features, she could pass for a considerably lower age, hence why she is particularly suitable for the latter role. Bazin discusses the importance of Hessling to Renoir's work:

[...] this remarkable doll-faced girl with the charcoal circles under her great bright eyes, and the imperfect but strangely articulated body reminiscent of the figures in certain Impressionist paintings, was an extraordinary incarnation of femininity. She was a curious creature, at once mechanical and living, ethereal and sensuous. But it seems to me that Renoir saw her less as a director than as a painter. Enchanted by the unique beauty of her body and her face, he worried less about directing the *actress* in her dramatic role than he did about photographing the *woman* from every possible angle.

(Bazin, 1973, p.17)

Truffaut pursues the idea of early sexual development tied to an unorthodox childhood in *La sirène du Mississippi* where Marion gives a backstory monologue to a vengeful Louis:

Quand on sort de l'Assistance publique, on est abruti ou complètement révoltée. Je me suis jetée dans la vie. À 14 ans, j'avais ma première paire de talons hauts. C'est un homme qui me les avait achetés. Avant d'aller chez mes patrons, je les laissais en consigne, puis je les reprenais à ma première sortie. Arrivée dans une nouvelle place, je volais de l'argent dans la poche de mon patron. Puis je piquais des billets dans son portefeuille et je finissais toujours par partir avec le portefeuille. On m'a envoyée en maison de correction. On devait ôter ses vêtements avant le dortoir et les laisser dans le couloir. Le dortoir était fermé à clé. Même les fenêtres n'avaient pas de poignées. Entre les rondes des gardiennes, on faisait des concours de masturbation. Le plus dur au début, c'était s'habituer à dormir la lumière allumée toute la nuit. C'est depuis ce temps-là que je ne peux pas dormir dans le noir. J'étais jolie. Je me débrouillais bien avec les garçons. [...]"

(*La sirène du Mississippi*, 1969)

The problems of male/female relationships in Renoir and Truffaut's films are often viewed through the medium of mirrors. In Renoir's *Nana*, there is a scene where our female protagonist is sitting at her mirror, making herself up after her bath. Before she puts on her makeup, she takes a brief, hard look at her reflection, her chin rested on her hand, filmed in an over-the-shoulder shot. Subsequently, when Nana's admirers arrive, we see the young male character known as the "smoocher" at the side of Nana, kissing her hand and caressing

her. In one respect, the depiction of a woman in front of a mirror was made by Renoir out of a predilection for his father, Auguste Renoir's work as a painter:

“I was beginning to realize,” he said, “that the movement of a scrubwoman, of a vegetable vendor or of a girl combing her hair before a mirror frequently had superb plastic value. I decided to make a study of French gesture as reflected in my father's paintings.”

(Renoir in Bazin, 1973, p.17)

Much as in horror films, the mirror is accorded quite a bit of significance and can be described as the bearer of secrets, an all-seeing eye. Indeed, akin to the events in certain horror movies, there is a scene in *Nana* in which another admirer of hers, Georges (Raymond Guérin-Catelain) commits suicide. Nana's expressionistic reaction to the sight of the corpse is shown in full view. In the shot, we are presented with an irregular eye-match, with the corpse remaining in the scene as a mirror reflection only. In Truffaut's *Baisers volés* (1968), the object of the mirror is seen as an unsettling window into Antoine Doinel's subconscious. We witness first-hand the mental torment over his love life, as he repeats the names of his lovers “Christine Darbon” and “Fabienne Tabard”, with increasing urgency. He finally ends up painfully repeating his own name which highlights his own identity crisis. The use of the mirror as a facility for subjectifying (or attempting to subjectify) a character that has been objectified is shown in an example from Truffaut's *L'enfant sauvage*:

A remarkable shot shows the image of the three males in a mirror. Itard, placed behind the boy, offers him an apple, the reflection of which the boy sees in the mirror. Books on the shelves frame the

glass of the mirror. Here, as in *Fahrenheit 451*, the apple of knowledge is set in direct relation to cultural objects. The wild child grabs it, with the intention of eating it. This action, reflected in the mirror, marks his potential access to the status of a subject, whereas the preceding scene had reduced him to the condition of an object, naked on an examining table.

(Gillain, 2013, p.211)

Truffaut has clearly absorbed this notion of identity and mirrors from the work of Renoir:

Jean Renoir ne filme pas des situations mais plutôt – et je vous demande ici de vous remémorer l’attraction foraine qui s’appelle le « Palais des Miroirs » - des personnages qui cherchent la sortie de ce Palais et se cognent aux vitres de la réalité. Jean Renoir ne filme pas des idées mais des hommes et des femmes qui ont des idées et ces idées, qu’elles soient baroques ou illusoires, il ne nous invite ni à les adopter ni à les trier, mais simplement à les respecter.

(Truffaut, 2007, p.66)

The mirror will rear its head again in *Le dernier métro* where a love scene between Marion and Lucas is filmed through a mirror. The mirror again represents a window into their precarious love-life, since Bernard (Gérard Depardieu) is the third part of an apparent ‘love triangle’. Finally, the theatrical setting of *Nana* is important to Truffaut and, imaginably, an inspiration for his film, *Le dernier métro*:

[...] in *Le dernier métro* I could satisfy my desire to make a film about the theatre. I mean, you visit friends performing on the stage, you watch them from the wings, you feel the fascination. It’s so

intriguing: the personal life which goes on behind the curtain. It's "see you at the stage door" and they're off – back onstage. I mean, it's having fiction and reality in one shot. You have seen those scenes in the wings so often in films – and it's always magical, whatever the film. So we know the theatre's a magical place.

(Truffaut, 2008, p.40)

In *Nana*, Renoir candidly shows us the trials and tribulations of backstage work in the theatre. We see first-hand Nana's tempestuous reaction to her being upstaged when another actress gets the lead role in a play. There is a significant moment in one of the opening scenes of Truffaut's *Le Dernier métro* where Bernard is privy to the conversations between Marion and her director, Jean-Loup Cottins (Jean Poiret) in the adjoining room. They discuss refusing an actor for the lead role because of his Jewish heritage. This scene is delivered in a point-of-view shot, from Bernard's perspective, which moves from left to right, and back again. In one of the final scenes of the film where Bernard is clearing his dressing room in the theatre, after witnessing his successor in rehearsal, he says "C'est une leçon de l'humilité. Nous sommes tous remplaçables".

This is a notion reiterated by Truffaut : « Je pense que Sartre a raison d'appeler des « salauds » tous ceux qui croient que leur existence était indispensable, mais j'approuve Renoir quand il réfute la formule habituelle ; personne n'est irremplaçable. » (Truffaut in Rabourdin, 1985, p.95). As can be expected of a director in the experimental era of silent cinema, Renoir was interested in technical innovation in filmmaking, certainly more so than

Truffaut some thirty years later. In fact, Truffaut's apparent aversion to modernity is highlighted by Guigue:

Par tempérament, Truffaut n'est pas moderne. Il travaille en costume-cravate même sur les plateaux de tournage et préfère écrire des lettres plutôt que téléphoner. Il dit lui-même être tourné vers le passé. Et jamais il ne cherche, dans ses films, à témoigner de son époque, bien au contraire.

(Guigue in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.301)

All the same, it is curious how *both* directors have been, at one time or another, hindered by advances in technology. The success of *La petite marchande d'allumettes* was hampered by the arrival of sound and the high expectations of the film-going public that came with it:

Le parlant est arrivé pendant *La petite marchande d'allumettes*, ce qui n'a pas été favorable à la sortie de ce film. *La petite marchande d'allumettes* n'a pas eu de chance. La maison qui sortait *La petite marchande d'allumettes*, a essayé de faire une espèce de sonorisation musicale, qui existe encore. Mais le public voulait que ça parle, que les acteurs ouvrent la bouche et que des mots sortent. Si bien que *La petite marchande d'allumettes* a eu son essor arrêté par l'arrivée du parlant.

(Renoir in Bazin et al., 1957, p.23 ; 24)

It should be said that the critical success of this film was hampered in spite of its avant-gardist technique:

La petite marchande d'allumettes apparaît sans doute aujourd'hui avec *Nana* et *Tire au flanc* comme le plus intéressant et le plus instructif des films muets de Renoir. Mais, en dépit de son avant-gardisme technique, il n'appartient guère en effet à l'onirisme expressionniste d'un certain cinéma d'alors : si la technique est expressionniste, le style est impressionniste. Plus exactement, ce qui amuse Renoir, c'est de faire de l'impressionnisme sur l'expressionnisme. Les truquages ne sont pas ici pour leur illusion féérique, mais pour leur réalisation mécanique ou leur matière optique. Ce sont des jouets au second degré.

(Bazin in Bazin et al., 1957, p.64)

In a sense, the inevitability of technological advancement posed a problem to artistic freedom. While Truffaut too was interested in commercial success, it is curious how, in favour of artistic freedom, Truffaut decided not to move with the tide and, instead, with the cooperation of his long-serving cameraman, Nestor Almendros, went to great lengths to create the effects of silent days. One device that stands out in the films of Truffaut is the reappropriated iris technique, notably in *L'enfant sauvage* and *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* In wanting to authentically render the iris punctuation technique, Truffaut and Almendros sought out a piece of original equipment: an antediluvian vestige (Gillain, 2013, p.209). It is important to mention that the repeated use of iris effects in all of Renoir's films, an innovative technique in the silent era, was merely to suggest the passing of time. Truffaut,

however, would repeatedly use the iris for perhaps no other reason than to create a nostalgic pastiche. He was careful to point out he used the iris discerningly, however, with relevance to the epoch in which the story is set:

Je crois que c'est essentiellement pour ne pas « abimer » l'image. Je trouve que l'on a tort de présenter les films se déroulant dans un cadre ancien avec des moyens trop modernes. C'est comme pour la couleur, il faut être très prudent. Le zoom, par exemple, est une invention moderne, je l'emploie, mais d'une manière invisible. Dans *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* de Pasolini, j'aimais le film mais les zooms me gênaient. Je veux bien admettre que le cinéma existait à l'époque de Jésus-Christ, mais pas le zoom ! Tandis que les fermetures à l'iris, sur des visages, cela nous ramène à Griffith, j'ai l'impression que l'adaptation à l'époque se fait mieux. Déjà, *L'enfant sauvage* était conçu dans cet esprit.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.285)

Finally, I would like to discuss Renoir's *Tire au flanc*, a light comedy about the shenanigans of a group of army troops. Renoir confirms that, on completion of this film, he was more secure in the direction he was going concerning filmmaking:

Quand j'ai fait *Tire au flanc*, j'étais un peu plus en possession de mes moyens, je commençais à savoir où j'allais. Je ne le savais pas encore très bien, parce qu'on ne le sait jamais – même maintenant, je ne le sais pas – mais enfin je croyais avoir une espèce de direction. Je

commençais déjà à comprendre que je pouvais me laisser aller à certains côtés de mon caractère sans trop choquer le public.

(Renoir in Bazin et al., 1957, p.18)

Interestingly, the inspiration for this film partly came from a mutual love of Renoir and Truffaut, Charlie Chaplin, about whom I will speak in more detail in the following chapter:

Tire au flanc, manifestement tourné dans l'allégresse et l'improvisation absolues, demeure, aujourd'hui encore, un chef d'œuvre du *cinéma vivant*, un petit cousin de *Charlot Soldat* et de *Charlot au music-hall*. Il y a là plus d'antimilitarisme que dans tous les pamphlets, poétiques comme *Hôtel des Invalides*, ou psychologiques comme *Amère Victoire*.

(Bazin in Bazin et al., 1957, p.65)

Tire au flanc is also interesting by virtue of the director's use of an agile camera, something later popularised at the time of *La Nouvelle Vague* filmmaking.

Abel Gance

My analysis of domestic film influences now turns to Abel Gance and his silent masterpiece, *Napoléon*. Attached to the film are two quotations which I believe are somewhat applicable to Truffaut. The first is by Napoléon himself, as quoted in an intertitle in the film: « Je voudrais être ma postérité et assister à ce qu'un poète me ferait penser, sentir, et dire. » ».

Truffaut had such a great sense of life and, more importantly, of death, and he recognised the importance of eulogy in life and in film.

Truffaut's obsession with death is brought to the fore in *La chambre verte* in which he plays Julien Davenne, a man obsessed with the past and the memories of his deceased friends. The second quote is by Gance himself: "J'ai filmé *Napoléon*, parce qu'il était un paroxysme dans une époque qui était elle-même un paroxysme dans le temps. » (Gance in Truffaut, 2007, p.49). Truffaut, a paroxysm himself, burst on to the film scene at the time of the eclectic film landscape in the late 1950s and early 1960s, on the cusp of the social revolution which would occur in the mid to late 1960s. *Napoléon* includes frequent agile camerawork and plenty of exterior shooting which would become symptomatic of *Nouvelle Vague* filmmaking, an idea confirmed by film director, Lindsay Anderson, in his narration of Kevin Brownlow's documentary about *Napoléon* entitled *Abel Gance: The Charm of Dynamite* (1968). Explaining Gance's filming techniques in more detail, Lanzoni shows how he was a precursor to a *Nouvelle Vague* director:

First conceived for a triple screen, Gance envisioned, then orchestrated, an innovative version of wide-screen vision, which employed three synchronised cameras to be projected on three separate frames (triptych screen). Gance's cinematographers (among whom was the young Henri Alekan) achieved a new fluidity in their camera work that resulted in high realism and a fast editing style (for example, cameras flying through the air on wires, falling off cliffs, or strapped to a runaway's horse back during battle scenes).

(Lanzoni, 2015, p.37; 38)

Arguably the most famous scene in *Napoléon*, the one featuring ‘triptych’ images of battle, is imitated by Truffaut in *Tirez sur le pianiste*:

[...] in *Shoot the Piano Player* we find iris techniques that call back to silent film: an oval of Schmeel fading out between Charlie and Theresa in bed, or the three ovals of Plyne (specifically recalling Abel Gance’s visual experiments) as he sells his employees’ addresses to the gangsters.

(Insdorf, 1994, p.26)

Thinking anew about *Tirez sur le pianiste* and the ‘snow sequence’ which, as I have observed, has become synonymous with confrontation, we also see the young Napoléon (Vladimir Roudenko) in Gance’s film, still at boarding school, discovering, in an albeit playful way, his penchant for battle in the midst of snowball fighting.

Carl Theodor Dreyer

Finally, analysis moves to Carl Theodor Dreyer, who was Danish but popularised in France due to his French-made masterpiece, *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc*. Truffaut commends Dreyer’s dexterous use of soundless images which, rather than being limiting, show a fidelity to events as they historically played out:

Si je pense à Carl Dreyer, ce qui me vient tout d’abord à l’esprit, ce sont des images blanches, les splendides gros plans silencieux de *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* dont la succession sur l’écran est l’équivalence exacte du dialogue serré, échangé entre Jeanne et ses juges à Rouen.

(Truffaut, 2007, p.68)

Indeed, *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* features a multitude of emotional, tear-stricken facial close ups of Joan of Arc (Maria Falconetti) at various stages of her interrogation. Truffaut pays faithful homage to these in *Domicile conjugal* when Christine (Claude Jade) finds out about the affair between Antoine (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and the Japanese girl, Kyoko (Hiroko Berghauer). Dressed in a kimono and sitting cross-legged in their apartment, a tear rolls down Christine's cheek as the music strikes a devastating chord and the camera (from Antoine's point of view) zooms in gradually, as he enters their apartment. Aligning with Truffaut's obsession with death is the scene in Dreyer's film when Joan, at the head of the pyre, foresees her own death in the image of a skull being dug up, scattered amongst the earth. Dreyer is evidently held in high esteem by Truffaut as he ranks him with the other cinematic forebears, from whom much can be learnt:

Carl Dreyer est mort, il a rejoint Griffith, Stroheim, Murnau,
Eisenstein, Lubitsch, les rois de la première génération du cinéma,
celle qui a d'abord maîtrisé le silence puis la parole. Nous avons
beaucoup à apprendre d'eux et beaucoup à apprendre de la blancheur
de Carl Dreyer.

(Truffaut, 2007, p.70)

Summary

It is from Jean Renoir that Truffaut learned to respect the treatment of his films' characters, regardless of their circumstances, making for a much more egalitarian viewing experience than the films of his other "cinematic father", Alfred Hitchcock. 'Mirrors' are objects in the cinema of Truffaut and Renoir which act as a portal into the soul of the characters. However, it is also from Renoir's silent tenure that Truffaut learnt much about the fetishistic portrayal

of women. Moreover, the work of Gance and Dreyer was an inspiration to Truffaut by virtue of their technical innovations in cinema which allowed them to explore deeply the different facets of human emotion.

CHAPTER 3: TRUFFAUT AND HIS INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

It is the overarching interest of the *Cahiers du cinéma* team of the 1950s in international cinemas, as well as domestic output, which helps to explain Truffaut's passion for a wide breadth of filmmaking. Most notable is that of Hollywood. Holmes and Ingram explain how, according to the *Cahiers* team, auteurist cinema did not have to be original to be successful, and, in fact, as an auteur, to be conscious of prior notions of popular entertainment was seen as a positive thing:

[...] the *Cahiers* team did not subscribe to an elitist or hierarchical view of cinema, finding their 'true *auteurs*' as often amongst the makers of Hollywood B-movies, as amongst the less commercial French directors [...] An authentic *auteur*, they seemed to feel, could impose his [*sic*] personal vision even on the production-line methods of the Hollywood studio system. Cinema as entertainment industry, and cinema as art, were not mutually exclusive categories. Working within and against the *genre* codes of the popular cinema was seen not as a constraint but as a further creative possibility.

(Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p.26)

It was in this particular intellectual climate that Truffaut esteemed directors like Alfred Hitchcock, (who transitioned from his native British cinema to Hollywood), and Charlie Chaplin (another British émigré to the Hollywood system), among others. In so doing, Truffaut introduced an important new concept to film culture, and paved the way for the fruition of *Nouvelle Vague* cinema:

Truffaut's polemical attacks on the *tradition de qualité* and his championing of the work of Hollywood directors such as Alfred

Hitchcock [...] were not always rigorously fair or accurate, but they contributed to the development of a text-based film criticism that took popular cinema as seriously as 'art' films. As in the case of his colleagues Chabrol, Godard, Rivette and Rohmer, the period spent as a critic constantly engaged in the analysis and evaluation of films allowed Truffaut to formulate a view of what film should be which he was subsequently able to put into practice.

(Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p.27)

Furthermore, it is not mere coincidence that many of Truffaut's films in the *Nouvelle Vague* period and after, were made as co-productions between his own company, Les Films du Carrosse, and Les Artistes associés, the French subsidiary of the better-known film company, United Artists, founded by Chaplin and some of his contemporaries in 1919, in order to exercise artistic and financial control over their work, away from certain perils of subjugation to big studios. In a similar vein, looking back at the *Nouvelle Vague* in isolation, Truffaut comments on how this movement was not primarily concerned with aesthetics but was rather an attempt to regain the youthful independence that filmmakers enjoyed in the early silent period:

La Nouvelle Vague n'avait pas un programme esthétique, elle était simplement une tentative de retrouver une certaine indépendance perdue aux alentours de 1924, lorsque les films sont devenus trop chers, un peu avant le parlant. En 1960, faire du cinéma, pour nous, c'était imiter D.W. Griffith réalisant ses films sous le soleil de Californie, avant même la naissance d'Hollywood. A cette époque, les metteurs en scène étaient tous très jeunes, c'est ahurissant de voir qu'Hitchcock,

Chaplin, King Vidor, Walsh, Ford, Capra ont tous fait leur premier film avant l'âge de vingt-cinq ans. C'était un métier de gamin que celui du cinéaste, et ça doit l'être.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.63)

A key component of silent cinema is its non-verbal nature. It is unsurprising, therefore, that we see Truffaut's espousal of the non-verbal in his films, and a consequent emphasis on the visual. One of Truffaut's books of film criticism, *Les films de ma vie* (1975), is set in motion by a weighty section on the so-called "masters" of the silent era, entitled "Le Grand Secret", (as mentioned on p.54). Initially, this title may seem something of an oxymoron. To simplify it, filmmaking of the silent era is considered "secret" because it cannot be faithfully replicated by filmmakers who only ever knew the sound era. The tropes of silent cinema are completely lost or rejected by modern sound filmmakers. Moreover, as Gillain (2013, p.7) points out, such a secret is "grand" by virtue of the fact that silent filmmaking displays a universal language, and therefore shows universal appeal, due to its predominant absence of dialogue. In this vein, Truffaut talks about Hitchcock's "écriture", a term which, in this instance, does not literally mean 'writing', but rather Hitchcock's *mise-en-scène*. It is Hitchcock's 'philosophy', nascent in the silent era, of favouring the non-verbal, which is frequently demonstrated by the employment of protracted scenes that engender the famous Hitchcockian trait of suspense:

Dans l'écriture hitchcockienne le *suspense* joue évidemment un rôle important. Le *suspense* n'est pas, comme on le croit trop souvent, la

manipulation d'un matériel violent, mais plus exactement la dilatation de la durée, l'amplification d'une attente, la mise en valeur de tout ce qui nous fait battre le cœur un peu plus fort, un peu plus vite.

(Truffaut, 2008, p.86)

Conversely, Chaplin's use of the non-verbal is for comic effect, consisting principally of slapstick gags which, whether they directly involve child actors or not, recall the wonder and innocence of children and childhood. The same effect could be claimed for another so-called "silent" comedian and object of Truffaut's admiration, Jacques Tati, who courageously made virtually dialogue-free films in an era (the 1940s onwards) when silent cinema seemed all but forgotten by the mainstream cinema going public. Truffaut takes the analogy found in Chaplin's work and develops it in his own films in various ways, one of which is in the inclusion of mute children. While not completely silent, these children express themselves of necessity more through actions. Taking the aforementioned issues into consideration, what follows is a more thorough analysis of the work of Hitchcock and Chaplin respectively, and its impact on Truffaut as a filmmaker.

Alfred Hitchcock

This first section will look more closely at the relationship between Hitchcock, the "Master of Suspense", and Truffaut. So strong was Truffaut's admiration for Hitchcock, and so fervent his knowledge of his films, that Truffaut invited Hitchcock to collaborate on a series of recorded interviews about his career, which eventually became a book known as *Le cinéma selon Hitchcock*, or *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, for the English-speaking market, first published in 1966. Insdorf (1994, p.44) cites the following films by Truffaut as the most "Hitchcockian", attributable to their theme, tone, and technique. They will form the basis of the analysis undertaken in this chapter: *La peau douce* (1964); *Fahrenheit 451* (1966); *La mariée était en*

noir (1968); et *La sirène du Mississippi* (1969). It is not happenstance that these films were made through the course of the 1960s, a decade in which Truffaut's professional and personal relationships with Hitchcock were cemented, culminating in the release of the book. Moreover, these films are predominantly "Hitchcockian" thrillers featuring pathological male/female relationships. It is the oft-told story about Hitchcock's minor brush with the law when he was a child that gave impetus to much of the paranoia which pervades his thrillers:

I must have been about four or five years old. My father sent me to the police station with a note. The chief of police read it and locked me in a cell for five or ten minutes saying, "This is what we do to naughty boys."

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.25)

A similar scenario is integrated into Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups*, in the scene where Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is led to a police station by his father after committing the misdemeanour of stealing a typewriter from his father's workplace. Hitchcock's well-known fear of authority is, in some ways, similar to Truffaut's dislike of it, and this is reflected in the themes and treatment of the characters in their respective *oeuvres*. I am specifically recalling the incident where, after a short spell in the army, Truffaut deserted, and subsequently paid the price:

[Truffaut] est [...] déserteur, ou du moins, selon l'appellation officielle, en « état d'absence illégale ». Dans un premier temps, il ne se cache pas, fier de reprendre aux yeux de ses amis sa vie de cinéphile. Mais il devient dangereux de traîner la nuit, au cas où la police lui demanderait ses papiers. [...]

(de Baecque and Toubiana, 2001, p.127; 128)

After a short spell of staying with the family of André Bazin (the figurehead of the film journal, *Cahiers du cinéma*, into which Truffaut would later be integrated as a fully-fledged film critic), Truffaut, after being convinced by Bazin that it is less damaging to oneself to own up to the crime, is promptly arrested: “La tentative de conciliation échoue et François Truffaut est incarcéré sur-le-champ à la prison de la caserne Duplex pour absence illégale.”(de Baecque and Toubiana, 2001, p.128).

It is noteworthy that both directors appear to be ‘victimised’ by the system, a process which formed their identities as people, and brought about ideas which are reflected in both their bodies of work: “[...] Truffaut was one of the critics [...] who pointed out that Hitchcock’s films usually center [centre] on a transfer of identity [...] The point of departure for Hitchcock’s transfer is usually crime [...]” (Insdorf, 1994, p.52).

It was Hitchcock’s passion for silent cinema and his lament for a lost art that helped endear him to Truffaut:

[...] the silent pictures were the purest form of cinema; the only thing they lacked was the sound of people talking and the noises. But this slight imperfection did not warrant the major changes that sound brought in. In other words, since all that was missing was simply natural sound, there was no need to go to the other extreme and completely abandon the technique of the pure motion picture, the way they did when sound came in.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.61)

Hitchcock's own signature filmmaking style was, by his own admission, first fostered in the silent *The Lodger*, with a debt to German Expressionist cinema:

The Lodger is the first picture possibly influenced by my period in Germany. The whole approach to this film was instinctive with me. It was the first time I exercised my style. In truth, you might also say that *The Lodger* was my first picture.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.44)

The Lodger, based on the novel by Marie Belloc Lowndes, is the story of a mysterious man (Ivor Novello) who answers the advert of a 'room to let' at the Bunting residence in London. After the lodger takes a liking to the Buntings' daughter, Daisy (June Tripp), and begins exhibiting some mysterious habits, it is not long before the landlady, Mrs. Bunting (Marie Ault), suspects he could be the "Jack the Ripper"-style murderer known as the "Avenger", who is circulating London, killing blonde women. Hitchcock had spent some time working at the prestigious UFA studios in the early 1920s, during which time he had become acquainted with prominent film directors of the day, namely F.W. Murnau and Fritz Lang, who were working in the aforementioned tradition of German Expressionism.² The fabricated and paranoiac atmosphere of such films is recreated in *The Lodger*.

For example, there is a scene in which the residents of the Bunting household look up from the ground floor, to the floor above, contemplating the noise of the mysterious lodger as he

² German Expressionism is defined as: "an extreme stylization of mise-en-scène, with low-key, shadowy lighting, and at times highly fluid camera movement, which together evoke an atmosphere of foreboding, anxiety, and paranoia. These visual elements of film style combine with exaggerated performance techniques in stories with macabre or lowlife settings and themes." (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012, p.151).

paces up and down in the room that is being let to him. There is a transitory point-of-view shot from the family members' perspective, in which the ceiling becomes transparent, and we can see the movements of the male protagonist. Hitchcock explains the mechanics of this scene:

In his room the man paces up and down. You must remember that we had no sound in those days, so I had a plate-glass floor made through which you could see the lodger moving back and forth, causing the chandelier in the room below to move with him. Naturally, many of these visual devices would be absolutely superfluous today because we would use sound effects instead. The sound of the steps and so on.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.46; 47)

In terms of style, this film can be closely tied with Truffaut's *La mariée était en noir*, based on a novel by William Irish, who also wrote the book on which Hitchcock's sound picture, *Rear Window* (1954), was based. *La mariée était en noir* revolves around the recently widowed Julie Kohler (Jeanne Moreau) who seeks revenge on five men apparently involved in murdering her husband on the day of their wedding. Of note is a particular scene channelling the German Expressionist chiaroscuro effect of manipulating light and shadow, where Julie is in the church confessional. A crucifix-like image is created on her face by the light shining through the confessional window bars, as she explains to the priest that hunting the men is part of a missionary-like path from which she cannot deviate. This scene was evidently inspired by the episode in Hitchcock's *The Lodger* in which the film's namesake looks out of the window upon hearing a newspaper vendor heralding the news of another murder by the so-called "Avenger".

In a similar fashion, the external street light casts a crucifix-like reflection of the window bars onto his face. As we learn towards the end of the film, the lodger is also endowed with a personal mission to avenge a death, that of his sister, one of the murder victims. The Hitchcockian concept of the protagonist with a dual function is described by Insdorf, using examples from Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451*:

[...] Clarisse is the catalyst for Montag's conversion to "criminal" status. Because of her questions, he begins to think, implicates himself in her "guilt," and enters that great Hitchcockian tradition of a man who is both the hunter and the hunted. This theme reaches its climax when Montag and his men ride out to search the house of a suspected book-possessor – and it turns out to be his own.

(Insdorf, 1994, p.52; 54)

Another interesting aspect of the German Expressionist influence on Truffaut is the exposition of inner emotions or psychological states. There is a significant scene in *La mariée était en noir* where a dream-like sequence shows Julie's childhood aspirations of finding a "Prince Charming" and marrying him. This sequence, using multiple superimposed shots, shows Julie as a child out to play in her wedding dress, playing the record which becomes a recurrent device in the scenes in which, as an adult, she murders the male victims.

There is a similarly revelatory shot in Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, that of the rear of a travelling newspaper van. The two head profiles moving from side-to-side, with the motion of the vehicle, captured in the two circular windows gives the viewer the impression of a face, with the eyes moving warily from left to right. Hitchcock (in Truffaut, 1984, p.45) self-deprecatingly claims that this effect did not work. However, contrarily, this visual trope would appear to suggest the investigative qualities of the press as they attempt to uncover the

news of the successive murders; or, conversely, the apparent ‘all-seeing eyes’ of the elusive murderer. Concerning *The Lodger*, it is important to note that this was the first film in which Hitchcock made his trademark cameo appearance, something which Truffaut would re-create in some of his own films. Hitchcock talks of the function of this device:

It was strictly utilitarian; we had to fill the screen. Later on it became a superstition and eventually a gag. But by now it’s a rather troublesome gag, and I’m very careful to show up in the first five minutes so as to let the people look at the rest of the movie with no further distraction.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.49)

For perhaps similar reasons, it is interesting that the films where Truffaut appears in cameo (and not taking a principal role) are sparing. In the films of Hitchcock and Truffaut, one can also perceive a mutual interest in the influence of female sexuality over men. In Hitchcock’s *The Lodger*, the protagonist arrives in the room-to-let to find that it is decorated with paintings of blonde women, a device which the director teasingly uses to immediately connect the protagonist to the image of the murderer. He stares in wonder, as the camera provides a panning point-of-view shot from his perspective.

Equally, the focus on female portraiture (and its connotations of both sexuality and death) is apparent in *La mariée était en noir*. We see a nude female portrait hanging on the wall of the apartment of one of Julie’s victims, Bliss (Claude Rich). Also, we are given a point-of-view shot from Julie’s perspective in the gallery of the artist, Fergus (Charles Denner), as she observes the portraits of nude or suggestively posed women on the walls. Julie feigns the identity of a model in order that she can get close to Fergus before she kills him. It is telling

how the bow and arrow which form part of his portrait of her as the Greek hunting goddess, Diana, will be the artefact by which he dies.

In Hitchcock's *Champagne*, we see a focus on the filming of female legs and hosiery, a quality Renoir and Truffaut showed in their films *Nana* and *Le dernier métro*, respectively (as mentioned on p.67; 68). This film, a rare occasion where Hitchcock does "straight" comedy, is about a millionaire (Gordon Harker) who feigns bankruptcy in order to teach his flippant and spoilt daughter (Betty Balfour) a lesson in life, specifically, the value of money. There is, in the first instance, a scene which tracks the female protagonist's legs and heels. Subsequently, we see her attempt to earn money by getting a job advertising women's nylons. In one of the many instances of male sexist voyeurism, a man in the office of the advertising company stands behind her and uses the tip of his shoe to manipulate the back of her skirt so that he can judge her "assets".

This theme is further developed in a scene where Daisy, the love interest, is taking a bath. Rising steam from the bath helps to conceal her partial nudity as she undresses before performing her ablutions. A teasing medium close-up shot shows the tips of Daisy's naked feet as they move about playfully in the water. Moreover, Daisy, as a model in the film, is presented to us in a variety of showgirl outfits. This fetishisation of the female form and female clothing is equally seen in Truffaut's *La peau douce*. This film revolves around writer and magazine editor, Pierre Lachenay (Jean Desailly), who, while on a business excursion to Lisbon, begins an extramarital affair with a flight attendant called Nicole (Françoise Dorléac), with disastrous consequences.

In *La peau douce*, there is a long shot of Pierre Lachenay's wife, Franca (Nelly Benedetti), getting undressed in the bathroom, while he follows suit in the bedroom, presented in the foreground of the frame. In much the same way as we are shown the point-of-view shot from

the perspective of the male character in Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, transfixed by the veritable gallery of female portraits, so in *La peau douce* we see Pierre Lachenay moving through the hotel corridor, from a point-of-view perspective, eyeing the varied items of female footwear outside guests' bedroom doors. Concerning *La peau douce* as a whole, Truffaut talks of the simplicity of its genesis:

The Soft Skin originated from an image...of a couple in a taxi. I could see it as taking place around 7:30 pm. They are intending to have dinner. They are not married or, if they are married, they are married, with children, to someone else, an incredibly carnal kiss takes place in this taxi, in the midst of a big city.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 2013, p.xx)

Gillain goes on to explain how this image is linked to a greater interest, on Truffaut's part, in non-verbal expression: "Truffaut loved wordless scenes where, as in silent movies, mise-en-scène produced meaning through the use of bodies and spaces" (Gillain, 2013, p.xx). Holmes and Ingram mention the further proximity of *La peau douce* to the cinema of Hitchcock:

La Peau douce is a tale of (misplaced) passion and adultery, a *crime passionnel* culminating in a violent murder. While it is true that the film again owes much to Hitchcock – tension and suspense, often with nightmarish overtones, pervade many of the sequences, even the seemingly banal such as the race to the airport; the film is shot in black and white and is mostly situated in an urban environment [...]

(Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p. 95)

The quintessential Truffaut film that carries us into a fantastical reality is *Fahrenheit 451*. Following a similar path to *La peau douce*, this film favours the 'visual', and this is not just

coincidental. This notion ties in with the world of the story in which books are considered dangerous and, therefore, banned: “[...] shot, significantly, at the time when his “Hitchbook” was being published, *Fahrenheit 451* seems to exemplify the law of the master: “Whatever is *said* instead of being *shown* is lost on the viewer” (Truffaut in Gillain, 2013, p.162). This is perhaps best exemplified by the opening title sequence in which a series of different coloured zoom shots focus on a multitude of TV aerials, while the credits are not made visual but are rather narrated by actor, Alex Scott.

Hitchcock’s interest in emphasising the visual by using a minimum of dialogue, is aptly shown in his film, *The Farmer’s Wife* (1928), a comedy based on a stage play in which the widowed Farmer Sweetland (Jameson Thomas) asks his housekeeper, Araminta Dench (Lilian Hall-Davis) to help him find a suitable second wife. Despite the natural profusion of dialogue in the original play, Simsolo talks of how Hitchcock was keen to turn in the opposite direction with regards to including as little speech as possible:

Hitchcock’s first principle was to remove as many titles and insert titles as possible, and replace them with pictures, with skilful editing, to make it less “talkative” [...] So he wasn’t doing what some of his colleagues did at the time, simply illustrating filmed plays – shooting actors pretending to talk and placing titles with dialogue every 20 seconds for people to laugh. Not him. His style was different. But the story is about a couple getting together, a theme he always followed.

(Simsolo, *Introduction to The Farmer’s Wife*, 2007)

Hitchcock himself said of the process: “I don’t remember too much about *The Farmer’s Wife*, but I know that filming the play stimulated my wish to express myself in purely cinematic terms.” (Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.57). Hitchcock’s new philosophy with regard to

adapting stage plays for the screen, something in which he was not previously well-versed, set him apart from his contemporaries, in much the same way that Truffaut wanted to distance himself from the *tradition de qualité* method of filmed theatre. Truffaut elaborates on Hitchcock's inventiveness:

[...] the way in which you [Hitchcock] handled the adaptation from stage to screen reflects a tenacious effort to create pure cinema. At no time, for instance, is the camera placed where the audience would be if the shooting had been done from the stage, but rather as if the camera had been set up in the wings. The characters never move sideways; they move straight toward the camera, more systematically than in your other pictures. It's filmed like a thriller.

(Truffaut, 1984, p.55; 56)

The shots of the farmer, sitting pensively at the fireside, with the housekeeper, his future wife, fostering a romantic connection with her, are reminiscent of the amorous exchange between Marion and Louis in Truffaut's *La sirène du Mississippi*. Truffaut cites the German Expressionist influence in the film: "I might add that the setting recalls the Murnau films. The photography also suggests the German influence." (Truffaut, 1984, p.55). Hitchcock's dexterity in set design and the use of props is rendered once again in his comedy *Champagne*. Simsolo describes this method:

[...] he [Hitchcock] started something that would be recurrent later on, which was to order extremely big sets or enlarged objects for particular scenes. There is a scene where someone is drinking champagne and the camera is filming from the mouth's perspective, showing the glass approaching. He had an enormous glass goblet

made for this scene which cost a fortune. He was told it wouldn't work but it did. [...]. He had this idea that anything could be done in cinema – sets, all sorts of objects, models, anything at all to achieve movement, smoothness and rhythm. And he did.

(Simsolo, *Introduction to Champagne*, 2007)

Hitchcock himself reflects on his work for *The Farmer's Wife*:

I made a silent film, *The Farmer's Wife*, a play that was all dialogue, but we tried to avoid using titles and, wherever possible, to use the pictorial expression instead. I suppose the only film made without any titles at all was *The Last Laugh*, with Emil Jannings.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.31)

The final Hitchcock film for consideration is *The Ring* (1927), a drama about a three-way romance which takes place around the setting of a boxing troupe. Simsolo talks about its influence on Truffaut's contemporaries, and, again, its nod to German Expressionism:

American film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum would say it was Hitchcock's most Germanic silent film. The young components of the *Cahiers du cinéma* would be enthralled by it when they discovered it at the Cinémathèque in the 50s. It was praised by Rohmer and Chabrol in their book.”

(Simsolo, *Introduction to The Ring*, 2007)

Hitchcock himself recognised the importance of his film:

You might say that after *The Lodger*, *The Ring* was the next Hitchcock picture. There were all kinds of innovations in it, and I

remember that at the premiere an elaborate montage got a round of applause. It was the first time that had ever happened to me.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.52)

It can be said that the point-of-view shots of the characters boxing in Hitchcock's *The Ring* are reminiscent of the point-of-view shots of Pierre meeting the overly-inquisitive guests at the conference in Truffaut's *La peau douce*, a 'conflict situation' of his own. In addition, the fairground setting at the start of *The Ring* is reminiscent of the sequence in Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* where the young Antoine Doinel and his friend, René (Patrick Auffay) try out the centrifuge attraction which takes on the metaphoric image of the zoetrope, a primitive filmmaking device.

Hitchcock comments on subtle visual devices used in his film:

There were many things in that picture we wouldn't do today. For instance, there was a little party one evening after a boxing match. The champagne is poured out and it is all bubbly. They drink a toast to the heroine and then discover she isn't there; she's out with another man. And so the champagne goes flat. In those days we were very keen on the little visual touches, sometimes so subtle that they weren't even noticed by the public.

(Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.52)

Indeed, Truffaut was observant of these "little visual touches" and sought to replicate them in his own work. The close-up shot of the wedding ring on the hand in *The Ring* is similar to a shot Truffaut includes in *La peau douce*. There are also some innovative superimposition techniques in *The Ring*, such as the scene where the characters visualise the face on the boxing balloon, and the superimposition device highlighting the headiness of the party scene.

One can see resemblances between Hitchcock's film and Truffaut's *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* The facial reflections in the water of the characters in *The Ring* are reminiscent of the shots of Adèle in the aforementioned film, where she has nightmares of drowning, or when she is visualising the geographical stretches of the correspondence with her family. Bitsch et al. would make their thoughts on these visual touches known in a special Hitchcock tribute in an edition of *Cahiers du cinéma*:

[*The Ring*] C'est encore un aboutissement de la technique du muet, un festival de ce que l'on peut faire avec une caméra et beaucoup de talent. Hitchcock y consolide la voie sur laquelle il s'est engagé : les séquences de caméra subjective se perfectionnent (dédoublément de lumières et jeux de cordes traduisent les impressions d'un boxeur groggy, quelques perceptions d'homme saoul accompagnent l'évocation du repas de noce), la symbolique devient subtile et éloquente (le fameux bracelet représente un serpent). On ne compte pas dans *The Ring* les idées qui seront reprises et développées dans ses films ultérieurs [...]

(Bitsch et al. in Bazin et al., 1956, p. 9; 10)

Charlie Chaplin

I am now going to turn to Truffaut's second greatest non-French influence, Charlie Chaplin, or "Charlot", as he is affectionately known by the French. Truffaut describes the magnitude of Chaplin's 'celebrity' in his day:

Pendant les années qui ont précédé l'invention du parlant, des gens dans le monde entier, principalement des écrivains, des intellectuels, ont boudé et méprisé le cinéma, dans lequel ils ne voyaient qu'une

attraction foraine ou un art mineur. Ils ne toléraient qu'une exception, Charlie Chaplin – et je comprends que cela ait paru odieux à tous ceux qui avaient bien regardé les films de Griffith, de Stroheim, de Keaton. Ce fut la querelle autour du thème : le cinéma est-il un art ? Mais ce débat entre deux groupes d'intellectuels ne concernait pas le public, qui d'ailleurs ne se posait même pas la question. Par son enthousiasme, dont les proportions sont difficiles à imaginer aujourd'hui – il faudrait transposer et étendre au monde entier le culte dont Eva Peron a été l'objet en Argentine -, le public faisait de Chaplin, au moment où se terminait la première guerre mondiale, l'homme le plus populaire au monde.

(Truffaut in Bazin, 2000, p.10)

Gillain explains the extent of Chaplin's influence: "Chaplin's popularity fascinated Truffaut because of its universality, a quality, as we shall see, that was an essential aspect of his aesthetic system. " (Gillain, 2013, p.7). That said, not one of Truffaut's films is superlatively "Chaplinian" in the same way in which Hitchcockian moments have been shown to pervade Truffaut's work. However, many of the films contain Chaplin-esque references. There is even a reference to Chaplin in the fictitious world of Truffaut's *La peau douce*. One of the conference invitees says: "Last time [I went to the cinema] was to see Charlie Chaplin. To fix a clock, he opened it with a can-opener". After a little research, it transpires that the character is referring to Chaplin's film, *The Pawnshop* (1916), in which Chaplin, as a shop assistant, tries to compete with a fellow worker, with disastrous consequences. In point of fact, the words which preface Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921): "A picture with a smile – and perhaps, a tear" are applicable to almost any Truffaut film. The films of Truffaut that will be posited here for discussion against the films of Chaplin are, primarily: *L'histoire d'Adèle H.* (1975);

Jules et Jim (1962); *Une belle fille comme moi* (1972); *Fahrenheit 451* (1966); and *L'enfant sauvage* (1970).

Firstly, the universal quality of Chaplin's films, and his concern for humanity, are born out of the experiences of his own dolorous past:

« Charlie Chaplin, abandonné par son père alcoolique, a vécu ses premières années dans l'angoisse de voir sa mère emmenée à l'asile, puis, lorsqu'on l'y emmenait effectivement, dans celle de se faire rafler par la police ; c'est un petit clochard de neuf ans qui rasait les murs de Kensington Road, vivant ainsi qu'il l'écrit dans ses *Mémoires*, « dans les couches inférieures de la société. » Les débuts de la vie de Chaplin sont trop dramatiques pour que Truffaut ne soit pas ému, voyant même sans doute, toutes proportions gardées, certaines relations entre sa propre existence et celle du cinéaste de *The Kid*. Il écrit encore, à propos de Chaplin, dans la préface à l'ouvrage d'André Bazin et Éric Rohmer : « S'il n'est pas le seul cinéaste à avoir décrit la faim, il est le seul à l'avoir connue » [...]

(Brion; Truffaut *in* de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p.94)

Indeed, these are experiences with which Truffaut could identify. His own hardship as a somewhat neglected child undoubtedly had an impact on the film treatment of children and neglectful mothers, thinking particularly of *Les quatre cents coups*. His authorised biography details this hardship : “Après avoir vécu jusqu'ici ses plus belles années avec sa grand-mère, François est livré à lui-même dans un monde plus indifférent, voire hostile.” (de Baecque and Toubiana, 2001, p.32).

Both Chaplin and Truffaut, in their work, appear to be concerned with two notions: children, and adults with child-like qualities. Focusing first on the idea of child-like adults, each of Truffaut's characters, in much the same vein as Charlie Chaplin's recurrent 'tramp' character is, in the manner of a child, trying to establish his persona:

[Truffaut] concludes that the work of Chaplin, taken in its totality, "revolves around the major theme of artistic creation: identity" [...] It is not difficult to see the connection between this reading of Chaplin and almost any Truffaut film, from *The 400 Blows* to *The Story of Adèle H.* (via *Shoot The Piano Player*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Wild Child*); all of these center [centre] on characters in the act of creating their identities (Antoine through his "anti-social" experiences, Adèle through her diary), or responding to other people who attempt to form them (Charlie with Theresa and Lena, Montag in *Fahrenheit 451* with Clarisse and Linda). Like Charlot, Truffaut's characters tend to be outsiders, momentarily controlling the worlds they enter – as when they are in love – but ultimately powerless, and alone. They are bundles of energy and pain, triumph and loss.

(Insdorf, 1994, p.29; 30)

Moreover, in Truffaut's *Baisers volés* (1968), the scene where Antoine Doinel, now a corporal in the army, displays a range of facial expressions that make light of the disciplinary he is receiving from the general, is directly akin to the multitude of scenes in Chaplin's films where the tramp character makes comic gestures and laughs mischievously at his small victories against others, typically, the rich, and authority figures. There is the famous scene in Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925) in which The Tramp (Chaplin) makes bread rolls dance

using his cutlery, to impress a girl (Georgia Hale). This is a film about the tramp heading north to join in the Klondike gold rush, meanwhile being fettered by a blizzard, and forced to share a cabin with inhospitable company.

Another comparison can be drawn with Truffaut's final Doinel film, *L'amour en fuite* (1979). This film charts Doinel's tussling with (near) middle-age, his experience in divorce, and reflections on his tumultuous love affairs. There is a scene in which Doinel leaves his son, Alphonse (Julien Dubois), on a train. In a moment of playfulness, Doinel pretends to his son that the train is departing, when it is actually still stationary: a point of view shot from Doinel's perspective shows him shuffling his feet from left to right as he waves goodbye, appearing to disappear with the motion of the train. Doinel then promptly turns to leave. This scene is telling as, in Chaplin's work, the tramp's oversized "clown" feet are the focus of many gags, whether he is kicking out at perceived villains, or simply walking in the classic mannered way, cane in hand.

Furthermore, there are references to Chaplin films to be found in Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*. Stam talks of references: "[...] to Lumière and silent-era slapstick in the credit sequence, to Chaplin and *The Kid* later [...]" (Stam, 2006, p.98). Indeed, the opening of Truffaut's film shows its namesakes (Oskar Werner and Henri Serre, respectively) play sword-fighting and jumping on each other's backs, reminiscent of the *Keystone* comedy tradition in which Chaplin's career was forged. The boisterous accompanying title music by composer Georges Delerue, even conjures up images of the circus, or perhaps more poignantly, the vaudevillian or music-hall tradition, the point of accession into the world of performance arts for Chaplin, as for many of his contemporaries. Stam (2006, p.97) also makes the observation that the famous scene in which Catherine (Jeanne Moreau) dresses up as a man, complete with a drawn-on moustache, is analogous to Chaplin.

On the other hand, as previously noted, there is a great selection of Truffaut films which accentuate the qualities of children. Gillain states how:

Jean Gruault explains [...] that in *Adèle H.*, at the beginning, each scene had to correspond to a film by Chaplin. This intertextual allusiveness, which almost entirely vanished in the final draft of the screenplay, reflects [...] a desire to anchor the story in the cinematic past.

(Gillain, 2013, p.226)

There is a scene in which Adèle is in a bank and spies a boy hiding under the counter. She says to the child that she likes him and that her real name is Adèle. It is curious how, for obvious reasons, she is keeping her identity mostly secret, but she is, all the same, willing to confide in the boy, presumably because of his estimable innocence and uncorrupted nature.

In a similar vein is the appearance of the boy filmmaker in *Une belle fille comme moi*, who unwittingly solves a crime through his love of filmmaking. This film details the story of a woman, Camille Bliss (Bernadette Lafont), accused of murdering her former lovers, who manipulates student Stanislas Prévine (André Dussollier), who is using her as a case study for his academic thesis on female criminals. In a later stage of the film, Prévine and his secretary find the aforementioned boy filmmaker who they believe has the filmic evidence to release Camille from prison. In a moment of great comedy, the boy, Michou (Jérôme Zucca), appears, dressed in a waistcoat and bow tie, reminiscent of the impeccable directorial dress sense of Truffaut as an adult on-set.

In a moment of comic frustration, the boy initially refuses to show the film footage, as he states: “Je n’a pas fini le montage [...] Je ne peux pas montrer un film quand il n’est pas fini”.

(*Une belle fille comme moi*, 1972). These notions of freedom and innocence attached to children reflect Truffaut's philosophy on filmmaking more widely:

Je me classe dans cette série de réalisateurs pour qui le cinéma est un prolongement de la jeunesse, celui des enfants qu'on a envoyés s'amuser dans un coin, qui refaisaient le monde avec des jouets et qui continuent des jeux à l'âge adulte à travers les films. C'est ce que j'appelle le « cinéma de la chambre du fond », avec un refus de la vie telle qu'elle est, du monde dans son état réel, et, en réaction, le besoin de recréer quelque chose qui participe un peu du conte de fées, un peu de ce cinéma américain qui nous a fait rêver étant jeunes.

(Truffaut in Gillain, 1988, p.269; 270)

Furthermore, through his films, Truffaut has obviously taken an interest in children who suffer from mutism. The classic evidence of this is *L'enfant sauvage* in which the character, Dr. Itard (Truffaut) seeks to educate and domesticate a young boy who has been living an untamed existence in the forest. Guigue explains the debt to silent cinema:

À travers ses personnages qui s'expriment autrement que par la parole, Truffaut manifeste aussi sa dette à l'égard du cinéma muet. Cela est évident s'agissant de *L'Enfant Sauvage*, qui est tourné à l'ancienne, en noir et blanc avec des fermetures à l'iris qui rappellent les films des premiers temps. Ce cinéma des origines tire sa force de sa simplicité même. Fondé sur l'image seulement, sur les gestes et les mimiques des acteurs, il est compréhensible de tous. Les « Charlots » sont appréciés par les petits comme les grands, les intellectuels comme les manuels, et quelle que soit la langue maternelle de chacun.

Le muet correspond donc à un cinéma fédérateur où, sans parler, les hommes se comprennent à travers une langue universelle.

(Guigue in de Baecque and Guigue, 2004, p. 278)

I would also like to consider a Chaplin-esque moment involving a mute child in Truffaut's *La chambre verte*. As previously noted, this is a film about a French writer and First World War veteran, Julien Davenne (Truffaut) who becomes transfixed by the notion of keeping the memory of his dead friends and relatives alive. He has a special rapport with Georges (Patrick Maléon), the mute child, who lives with him and the housekeeper, Mrs. Rambaud (Jeanne Lobre). There is a wonderful scene in which Davenne is taking a wet shave in front of his bathroom mirror. Suddenly Georges appears, and begins imitating his actions in the mirror, after which Davenne playfully brushes shaving cream onto Georges's face. The idea of mutism as an emotional disorder can also be aligned with theories on autism, which Truffaut connects with Chaplin:

Je ne suis pas éloignée de penser que Chaplin, dont la mère est morte folle, a frôlé lui-même l'aliénation, et qu'il ne s'est tiré d'affaire que grâce à ses dons de mime (qu'il tenait justement de sa mère). Depuis quelques années, on étudie plus sérieusement le cas des enfants qui ont grandi dans l'isolement, dans la détresse morale, physique ou matérielle, et les spécialistes décrivent l'autisme comme un mécanisme de défense. Or, on le verra clairement à travers les exemples puisés par Bazin dans l'œuvre de Chaplin, tout est mécanisme de défense dans les faits et gestes de Charlot. Lorsque Bazin explique que Charlot n'est pas antisocial mais asocial et qu'il aspire à entrer dans la société, il définit, presque dans les mêmes

termes que Kanner, [a foremost researcher on autism] la différence entre le schizophrène et l'enfant autistique : « Alors que le schizophrène essaie de résoudre son problème en quittant un monde dont il faisait partie, nos enfants arrivent progressivement au compromis qui consiste à tâter prudemment un monde auquel ils ont été étrangers dès le début.

(Truffaut, 2008, p.72)

It is possible, therefore, to conclude that the cinema of Truffaut is not merely about children, but for children, or, better said, the innocent children within adult viewers, as evidenced by Collet:

Le cinéma de Truffaut, c'est trop évident, est fait pour les enfants, et je souffre de n'être plus assez innocent pour bien l'entendre. C'est donc cette innocence que je voudrais rejoindre, même si je la sais inaccessible. A cet égard, les meilleurs spectateurs des films de Truffaut seraient, à mes yeux, des gens tels que Henry Miller ou Joseph Delteil. Autrement dit des grands naïfs, des maîtres naïfs, des vrais vivants.

(Collet, 1977, p.10)

Summary

In summary, Alfred Hitchcock and Charlie Chaplin are very much Truffaut's *raison d'être* in terms of his vocation as a cineaste. This is evident, not just in the aforementioned film references, but also in the substantial amount of writing that Truffaut devotes to them.

Truffaut, an agnostic, admired Chaplin so much that he elevated him to the position of God, as documented by McCarthy:

[...] je me rappelle la seule fois où j'ai entendu Truffaut évoquer le nom de Dieu sans qu'il soit question de l'œuvre d'un cinéaste croyant. Apprenant que Bob Balaban, l'acteur américain avec lequel il avait travaillé dans *Close Encounters [of the Third Kind]*, venait d'avoir un enfant, il écrivit au nouveau-né ; « Que Charlie Chaplin vous bénisse. Puisque Dieu n'existe pas, il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu, il est là, sur l'écran ».

(McCarthy in Bergala et al., 1985, p. 162)

Finally, one only need look at Truffaut's appraisal of Hitchcock prior to his death to see the significance of the Master to him:

Tout s'apprend, mais tout ne s'acquiert pas et si les disciples peuvent prétendre, un jour ou l'autre, égaler la virtuosité du maestro, il leur manquera sans doute l'émotivité de l'artiste. Alfred Hitchcock reste, encore aujourd'hui, en 1980, même si son état de santé ni lui permet pas de tourner son cinquante-quatrième film, non seulement l'homme qui en sait le plus, mais aussi le cinéaste qui nous émeut le plus.

(Truffaut, 2008, p.88)

This is Truffaut's final tribute to the director as an artist of emotion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I intend to summarise my findings against three further essays featured in Andrew and Gillain's *A Companion to François Truffaut* (2013): "Truffaut and His "Doubles"" by Martin Lefebvre; "Digging Up the Past: *Jules et Jim*" by Elizabeth Ezra; and, finally, "Directing Children: The Double Meaning of Self-Consciousness" by Angela Dalle Vacche. Firstly, Lefebvre (in Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.35) considers Truffaut to be a director frequently misunderstood by critics of the past and that, to understand Truffaut fully, one must engage in a "very singular form of experience", engage in a universe in which are invested details of Truffaut's own life, and references, both opaque and transparent, to the films he loved. Pertinent to my own investigation of *le secret perdu*, Lefebvre states: "To watch Truffaut's films most productively is to look for the Big Secret they promise to reveal. This essay is written in that spirit". Ultimately Lefebvre acknowledges Truffaut's body of work as an "array of mirrors that point and reflect in several directions" some of which are, unsurprisingly, autobiographical (Lefebvre, 2013, p.35).

Indeed, as evidenced in my writing, this "Big Secret" or *secret perdu*, was, indeed, a "secret" on which others were let in. While Truffaut went some way to fashioning himself as a man who, by virtue of his cinematic tastes and his passionate investment in the past, was somewhat removed from his *Nouvelle Vague* colleagues, notably Jean-Luc Godard (whose constant need to reinvent himself makes him something of a cinematic chameleon), it took Truffaut's collaboration with certain other *hommes du cinéma*, to bring his quest for such a secret to fruition. Henri Langlois acted as Truffaut's kindred spirit, with an equal devotion to cinema as an art form in its own right, and not just its consideration as a fortuitous by-product of the medium of photography, for example. As a film archivist, Langlois helped categorise "cinema classics" and ensured their longevity at *La Cinémathèque Française*, where Truffaut and fellow cinephiles spent many hours. Similarly, screenwriter Jean Gruault, was, like

Truffaut, something of an anachronism in his own time. When they were scripting Truffaut's films, they indulged each other's fantasies about the past. Finally, cinematographer Nestor Almendros had the practical wherewithal to make Truffaut's fantasies of reappropriating elements of silent cinema a reality.

The word "anachronism" mentioned above is a key one concerning Truffaut. Lefebvre (2013, p.37) describes how in *La chambre verte*, Truffaut mixes both photographs which befit the period of the film (effectively the end of the silent cinema era, 1928) and photographs from his own lived past. Truffaut analogizes this collection of photographs to the notion of categorising his favourite auteurist directors, whom he wanted to make the object of his own metaphoric museum. His love of *auteurs* was such that he would go as far as defending even their failed work. The apparent photographic anachronisms of *La chambre verte* lead us to a deeper understanding of Truffaut's films in general, paralleled with the film universe of Hitchcock:

Details lying at the margins allow a "parallel" universe to emerge.

Not surprisingly, this duality may remind us of the "doubled" universe in Hitchcock's cinema, where what first appears to be a marginal detail – a windmill, a crop-dusting plane, a bottle of wine, a night's stop at a roadside motel – serves as a doorway onto an entire "other" and darker universe. In Truffaut, such marginalia serve as a passageway to the world of the "self".

(Lefebvre, 2013, p.38)

Previously, Gillain (2013, p.xxxiii; xxxiv; p.8) explained how Truffaut's cinema may function, in a more profound sense, as a secret passageway into his own subconscious, by virtue of its emotional matter, revealing details about Truffaut's past and interests.

Intriguingly, as part of the viewing experience, Truffaut's cinema is also said to uproot the spectator's own background and past, giving rise to the theory that "the secret of [Truffaut's art] lies in "a form of secret persuasion"" (Truffaut (in Gillain, 2013, p.148).

Fanne (1972, p.111) expanded on this idea, saying that Truffaut's films mimicked the Hitchcockian puzzle of extracting the "real" from the "unreal". Finally, the emotional journey on which Truffaut's viewers were taken was characterised by Collet (1977, p.68) as "redoubtable metamorphosis". Lefebvre goes on to linearly take Collet's view:

[...] Truffaut creates a network of internal references whereby one film is connected to another, or mirrors another. More specifically, his films repeatedly put the viewer in a position to say (quite literally): "I've seen this or I've heard this before." To my knowledge, no major filmmaker was ever so *self-quotational* and *self-allusive* as Truffaut.

[...] One cannot help but feel that something here exceeds the referencing of favorite [favourite] figures and the family album (the "extra-cinematic *autobiography-as-intimate-museum* game"), adding, if you will, a distinct extra layer to the phenomenon (the "cinematic self-referencing game"). Indeed, even viewers who do not recognise the content of these photos (who are not fully cognizant of the "first game") can nonetheless perceive their return in a second film (the "second game"). For the spectator who notices them as repetitions (to be sure these are somewhat marginal details, not easily picked up until pointed out), Truffaut appears to be quoting himself, creating an allusive connection between his films. As a result, such moments acquire a special value, something belonging to the *mise-en-scene*

that can, intentionally though unexpectedly, deflect the viewer's attention.

Lefebvre (2013, p.44; 45)

Like Hitchcock's cinema, Lefebvre (2013, p.45) points out that, akin to his colleagues at *Cahiers du cinéma*, Truffaut showed a diligence towards *mise-en-scène* over plot, seeing the former as the hallmark of auteurist expression. Lefebvre (2013, p.47) points out how moments of female fetishisation focusing on women's stockings proliferate in Truffaut's films. This created an effect not unlike Renoir's Hall of Mirrors theory (Truffaut, 2007, p.66), showing us that Renoir does not film ideas but instead the men and women who possess the ideas. Using the analogy of the circus attraction of the Hall of Mirrors, the characters are trying to find their way out of the attraction, being temporarily fettered by the "mirrors of reality". By virtue of repetition, these so-called "unobtrusive little details" become accentuated, creating a chain reaction of cinephilic engagement. As mentioned before, with Renoir's *Nana* and Truffaut's *Baisers volés*, for example, the mirror becomes, in a horror-like manner, a bearer of secrets, exposing the insecurities of the films' respective protagonists.

Lefebvre (2013, p.38) also describes how, in a Hitchcockian manner, Truffaut includes cameos in his films. However, while Hitchcock included cameos of himself which took on a utilitarian function at the beginning of his silent tenure (in *The Lodger*) before transforming variously into a gag and a superstition (Hitchcock in Truffaut, 1984, p.49), Truffaut included in his films not just cameos of himself but also people very close to him, whether they be colleagues, friends, or family, and was adamant about ensuring their committal to celluloid (Lefebvre, 2013, p.38; 39). Lefebvre (2013, p.39) makes the point that, while Truffaut's other cinematic hero, Renoir, was known to give roles to his associates, Truffaut did it to the degree that these appearances could be argued to be obtrusive. The fact that Truffaut goes

beyond featuring mere mementoes to the extent of including self-referential personages leads Lefebvre to consider Truffaut's oeuvre *sui generis*.

Truffaut's admiration for the aforementioned influences of Hitchcock and Renoir can be seen in Truffaut's biographical details, i.e. his close personal relationship as an eager pupil and surrogate son to his "cinematic fathers", as well as the substantial amount of film writing in evidence that was devoted to them. Ultimately, Truffaut (2014, p.88) eulogised Hitchcock as "an artist of emotion" who, like Truffaut, privileged the natural auditory deficiency of silent cinema in which actions, most definitely, spoke louder than words. While Hitchcock had a somewhat cutting attitude towards the treatment of his films' characters, Truffaut inherits from Renoir a non-judgemental attitude towards his films' characters and their situations, recalling vividly the latter's phrase, "Tout le monde a ses raisons".

Crucially, Lefebvre (2013, p.64) describes how Truffaut's films incite obsessive viewing and that the process of self-referencing on the part of the viewer may result in a feeling which cannot be easily explained, an idea which Lefebvre calls "that [feeling] which accompanies the *uncovering of a secret* or [...] *hearing out a confession*". In light of this, it is no surprise that the first two chapters of Truffaut's collection of film criticism (1975) entitled: "What do Critics Dream About?" and "The Big Secret" are given prominence. Lefebvre (2013, p.64) makes the point that Truffaut's own cinephilia has bred "cinephilic engagement" leading to the assertion that, while Truffaut doubtless cared for the box-office success of his films and the inclusion of average filmgoers in his viewership, by virtue of the "art of the little detail", his films were ultimately intended for true cinephiles, the kind that would patronize La Cinémathèque Française, of which fellow cinephile, Henri Langlois, was director and chief archivist. Lefebvre says that the significance of Truffaut's recurring visual tropes:

[...] lies in the sort of spectatorship they *cultivate* and in a type of experience that can only be achieved through repetition – in this case, repeated viewings – as an agent of singularity. Perhaps this *is* the Big Secret, after all. If so, it is the secret of the “initiate,” that which is possessed or *ought* to be possessed by the cinephile, the critic, the scholar, in that it distinguishes them from other spectators.

(Lefebvre, 2013, p.65)

Having this sort of cinephilic discipline is key for watching the aforementioned films: Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* and Abel Gance’s *Napoléon*. These are films which, although potentially considered protracted by their detractors, focus intently on evoking the spectrum of human emotions in their unashamedly soundless images. Both films achieve this, to various degrees, in their use of visual experimentation.

Ezra’s essay: “Digging Up the Past: *Jules et Jim*” details the specific representation(s) of the past in one of Truffaut’s most revered films. The essay is prefaced with the words:

In *Jules et Jim* (1962), the eponymous characters travel to a sculpture garden on an island in the Adriatic in search of an ancient statue. The men soon find what they are looking for: a carving of a woman with an enigmatic smile. Both Truffaut’s camera and the film revolve around the sculpture, whose image first captivates Jules and Jim when they see it in a slide show at the home of a friend. This sculpture prompts both men to fall in love with a woman because of her resemblance to it, much like the figure in the Botticelli painting that causes Proust’s Swann to become obsessed with the unsuitable Odette. The object of both friends’ passion is Catherine, played by

Jeanne Moreau. Like the sculpture, Catherine is one of a kind, exuding an aura that draws people to her while simultaneously keeping them at arm's length. The sculpture is from another time and another place, and the fascination it holds for the men is inextricably bound up with the temporal and geographical excavation they must perform (or, at least, imagine) in order to access it. A preoccupation with the past, and exoticism, are fused in Jules and Jim's idolatry of this woman, which is as archaeological as it is erotic.

(Ezra, 2013, p.434)

Given this analogy, I would argue that, for Truffaut, "idolatry" extends to silent cinema. It represents the artefact which has become "exotic". Weighed against the previously cited notion of the "anachronism", Ezra (2013, p.437; 438) posits the Johannes Fabian concept of the "allochronism" which describes immortalized and exoticised cultures, sanctified by the introduction of statues. Ezra states:

The geographical disjuncture performed by exoticism is mirrored in the temporal displacement of the film's World War I-era setting. The fact that *Jules et Jim* is a costume drama, combined with the fact that the sound is entirely postsynchronous, imposes a certain sense of belatedness on the viewing experience. Belatedness informs the film in many ways.

(Ezra, 2013, p.439)

Although postsynchronisation was not an uncommon practice in the 1960s, I would hazard that this "belatedness" was entirely deliberate on Truffaut's part, expressing a wish that, had the era in which he had been making this film been different, he could have made it in the

tradition of silent cinema. Instead the viewing experience itself becomes ‘anachronistic’ or, better said, ‘allochronistic’, if it is indeed possible to use to such a term in the context of conflicting film cultures. Ezra goes on to say:

The multiple layers of time traversed by the central characters throughout their emotional vicissitudes are rendered metaphorically in the film’s many allusions to archaeology. During their first trip together, to the coast, Jim, Jules, and Catherine pretend to be archeologists searching for a lost civilization. They unearth and pocket discarded objects (cans, cigarettes, broken china) that they find buried in the sand. This is an apt image for a film preoccupied with the return of the past. Jules, Jim, and Catherine are what Agnès Varda might call *les glaneurs et la glaneuse*, gleaners sifting through the flotsam of another age and making it part of their own; or they might be collectors, whose ambition, according to Benjamin, is to “renew the old world”.

(Ezra, 2013, p.440)

By this very definition, Truffaut is a *glaneur*, with a fondness for mementoes. One need only watch the scene in *La nuit américaine* where Truffaut, as the film director Ferrand, receives a package of books on his favourite auteurist directors, presented to us in a point-of-view shot, with Georges Delerue’s music adding sentimental overtones, to understand this.

Benjamin posits a complex yet highly revelatory definition of memory:

[It] is the medium of past experience, just as the earth is the medium in which dead cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own

buried past must conduct himself like a man digging ... The matter itself is merely a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination [of] what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand – like precious fragments or torsos in a collector’s gallery - in the sober room of our later insights.

(Benjamin, 2013, p.440)

Following on from this, it is interesting to analyse theories on how one can derive pleasure from the treatment of a past traumatic subject:

The pleasure derived from the artistic representation of traumatic events is also a component of what Dudley Andrew describes as the “soothing arts of preservation” depicted in *Jules et Jim*. While telling Jules and Albert about a soldier who died in the war after writing passionate love letters to a woman he barely knew, Jim mentions “a series of photos that I have of him. If you look at them quickly, it looks like he’s moving.” Andrew notes the characters’ many attempts to transform the minutiae of their lives into works of art: Jim’s drawing of Catherine jumping into the Seine and his autobiographical novel; Jules’ translation of Jim’s novel into German and his drawing of a woman’s face on a café table. Jules and Jim are acting not only as artists, but also as archaeologists of their own lives, at the very least ensuring their place in posterity, and so making the job easier for archaeologists of the future. Jules’ insect collection provides a visual analogy of this drive to preserve and display life, which is also

apparent in the way the film “fixes” moments through freeze-frame, so that their beauty is preserved for time immemorial, as Bazin writes, “enshrouded in an instant, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber.”

(Ezra, 2013, p.441)

Taking this quotation into consideration, Truffaut similarly waxes lyrical about his viewing experiences in the cinema as a child. Yet, sometimes these reflections belie the fact that Truffaut was escaping to the cinema, away from the trappings of a neglectful childhood, coupled with the fact that these recollections had for a backdrop war-torn, Occupation-era France. Ezra describes this effect of how cinema is both anaesthetising and, on the other hand, making us fully aware of life going on around us:

In a 2000 interview with Serge Toubiana, Jeanne Moreau invoked cinema’s capacity to halt the march of time: “Cinema is truly wonderful, because the way it stops time allows it to cancel out everything, even death.” But cinema has the peculiar ability both to stop time, resurrecting the dead, and to make us acutely aware of time’s passage.

(Ezra, 2013, p.442)

This leads us to Sorlin’s and Insdorf’s observations:

Sorlin argues that French cinema has, on the whole, been remarkably silent on the subject of the war. Even the filming of newsreels, he notes, was an activity in which “France was especially backward,” lagging behind other warring countries by several months. The presence of such footage in Truffaut’s film thus marks a somewhat

belated reappearance of an already belated medium. Moreover, as Annette Insdorf has pointed out, the newsreels belong to a different temporality from the rest of Truffaut's film: "Documentary footage of World War I which was shot at silent speed is cut into sound speed, resulting in a jerkiness that detaches us by making the war appear 'unreal' compared to the 'reality' of our story, particularly since the inset conveys how *movies* looked at the time." The fact that the footage is stretched to cinemaScope ratio (2:25:1) from its 1:33:1 original further distances the viewer from the war images, making them look slightly distorted. The newsreel images that flash across the screen do indeed seem to exist in a world apart from the film, severed from their original context like the "torsos in a collection" about which Benjamin wrote.

(Ezra, 2013, p.442; 443)

In fact, while Truffaut would have conceivably used these techniques to highlight the irreality of war, given the great displacement of time, they could have been used to show how the practice of cinema has changed and that here is an example of modernised and therefore 'corrupted' footage out-of-step with the context of its origins. Landsberg describes the sort of response one has to footage denoting a time period which one did not live through:

[The cinema is] "a site in which people experience a bodily, mimetic encounter with a past that was not actually theirs. In this sense, the cinema ... provide[s] the occasion for individual spectators to suture themselves into history." [...] Prosthetic memories [...] are "privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass

cultural representation of the past” and which, “like an artificial limb, often mark a trauma.”

(Landsberg, 2013, p.443)

Ezra (2013, p.443; 444) points out that, because the experiences of the past are not actually “lived”, they are being worked through as “secondary memory” by “empathetic witnesses”, much in the manner of, say, an historian who did not actually live the trauma. Moreover, Ezra (2013, p.444) highlights the existence of “unresolved conflicts” in the film which leads to the paraphrasing of Gruault’s statement regarding *le secret perdu*: “One secret can hide another” (Gruault in Gillain, 2013, p.4) into “one war can hide another”. Ezra (2013, p.444; 445) cleverly posits *Jules et Jim* as an artefact to be unearthed and resituated in a modern era. In fact, Ezra makes the point that this has already happened when a clip from the film was inserted into Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s resounding success, *Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain* (2001).

In the final essay of Andrew and Gillain’s Companion, “Directing Children: The Double Meaning of Self-Consciousness”, Vacche analyses in detail what children have brought to the cinema of Truffaut, and to cinema in general. It is prefaced by the words of Cocteau: “A child’s eyes register fast. Later he develops the film. ...” (Cocteau, 2013, p. 403). This idea could be easily applied to the young Jean-Pierre Léaud when, with his fresh young eyes, and in the guise of Antoine Doinel, he, with Truffaut’s aid, radicalised cinema. Vacche (2013, p.404; 405) reminds us of how *Les quatre cents coups* revolved around the theme of self-consciousness in childhood and the formation of one’s identity. Concerning the ending of *Les quatre cents coups*, Vacche comments on how “Doinel’s final and direct address to the viewer across the fourth wall seals a narrative based on silent routines, telling details, and an eloquent use of objects.” (Vacche, 2013, p.405). In fact, the last sequence of Doinel running

away from the youth detention centre is devoid of sound and, instead, communicates information through actions. Vacche describes how the innocence and self-consciousness of children contributes greatly to the cinema:

Both Truffaut and Léaud experienced a childhood with no innocence because of family issues, so that it is all the more ironic that their intertwined lives as adults, respectively in front of and behind the camera, relied so much on a cult of innocent youthfulness. Their shared search for a lost utopian origin found an outlet through the screen. In a more general sense, by returning use to the ground zero of childhood through the nonjudgemental vision of the camera eye, the cinema can engender fresh emotions, while it can also open us up to existential discoveries, ranging from curiosity towards otherness to the acceptance of differences. The direction of children in cinema aims at turning spectators into desiring, flexible, and intuitive beings, in clear contrast with the mature, well-centered [centred], rational, and all-knowing adults whose skepticism [scepticism] or discriminating eye might impede the redeeming powers of imagination and the healing transformation of memories.

(Vacche, 2013, p.405; 406)

In fact, Vacche describes how Truffaut uses the situation of both actor and character to transform Antoine into the sort of devotee of cinema that Truffaut was in his youth:

[...] Antoine receives neither care nor affection. The theme of being absent to oneself climaxes when Truffaut turns Léaud/Antoine into a

cinephile. We see him sneaking into the dark of the movie theater, a safe environment where he can match his absence from himself with moving images that are, like him, absent presences. Without an authentic life, Antoine finds one at the movies.

(Vacche, 2013, p.409)

This “shared” experience of cinema which accompanies both actor, character, and director, is made literal in the centrifuge sequence of *Les quatre cents coups*:

During a sequence in an amusement park, Antoine looks like a fly stuck to flypaper inside a spinning rotor where acceleration beats gravity, and exhilaration mixes with pain. He struggles to turn himself upside down, but manages only to reach the fetal position. Suddenly the rows of spectators observing him from above are seen from his point of view, from the inside out, until their faces dissolve, disfigured into a dizzying blur. For once relinquishing his directorial gaze, Truffaut himself joins his young actor inside the rotating drum which, looked at from outside in, resembles the zoetrope. Why did Truffaut stage this archeology of cinema and place himself right there onstage within it? [...] Inside the rotor he gives up the all-knowing gaze of high-angle shots and occupies the same spatial environment as Léaud, for the sake of the equality of bodies, director and actor alike. The laws of physics make no distinction among hierarchies of living creatures: neither age nor power count. Everything submits to this centrifuge in what amounts to an equalizing scientific experiment with director and actor serving as commensurable organisms. All

living beings are as important as insects for the span of a sequence, but unequal power relations are unavoidable in daily life, from the classroom to the family and to the street.

(Vacche, 2013, p.411)

Vacche (2013, p.410; 411) makes the point that, by virtue of the freeze-frame at the end of *Les quatre cents coups*, Antoine Doinel is immortalised in (cinematic) time. She declares that, throughout the Antoine Doinel saga, the stories change but the screen persona of Léaud as Doinel, despite his ageing, does not (Vacche, 2013, p.412; 413). Vacche draws on the comparison given by Truffaut's childhood friend, Robert Lachenay, between Doinel as largely a street urchin in *Les quatre cents coups*, and Charlie Chaplin, a comparison also drawn by Truffaut himself in his essay entitled: "Who is Charlie Chaplin?", in which he reflects, as previously mentioned, on the ways children are affected by growing up in various kinds of distress (Vacche; Truffaut, 2013, p.412; 413). Indeed, Chaplin is revealed as a deity figure for Truffaut who shared the pains and struggles of an unorthodox childhood and tried to overcome them via the means of physical comedy.

Vacche (2013, p.414) cleverly comments on the spread of the *Nouvelle Vague* influence into other film cultures thanks to the influence of *Les quatre cents coups*, resulting in Spanish director, Victor Erice, favouring the perspective of a child in his film, *El espíritu de la colmena* (The Spirit of the Beehive, 1973), in which the girl protagonist, Ana (Ana Torrent), contemplates the mysteries of the world:

In comparison to the bees' frantic motion and deafening buzz, a surreal slowing down of pace occurs as soon as the traveling projectionist arrives in the deserted and totally silent town square to transform the town hall into a makeshift movie theater. Ana's very

first screening is such an intense experience that an American horror classic becomes an opportunity to befriend a nonhuman being. Played by the huge Boris Karloff, the monster of Frankenstein is a child-murderer and the target of a whole town's revenge. Erice's camera probes the darkness of the hall until it rests on the fully lit screen on which the monster meets little Maria by a lake. Like a child, but playing with his lethal hands, he cannot quite distinguish good from evil either. Intrigued by how a plucked flower floats in the water, he unwittingly kills the innocent Maria, thrown into the lake as if she were another blossom.

(Vacche, 2013, p.415)

Vacche (2013, p.416) compares the fact that Truffaut in *Les quatre cents coups* shows Antoine watching a film in the cinema, to which he reacts with "just a hint of awe and guilt towards whatever moves on the screen in front of him." However, in contrast to a similar scene in Erice's *El Espiritu de la Colmena*, in which Ana watches the cinema screen in the newly-constructed cinema in her town intently, where we are shown scenes from *Frankenstein*, in Truffaut's film, the spectator is not afforded any glimpse of the on-screen content, highlighting the taboo pleasure of cinema emanating from Truffaut's own childhood experiences.

Self-Evaluation and Recommendations

The intention of this thesis was threefold: to contribute a study to the lamentably small canon of English academic literature on François Truffaut; to perform a concentrated study of Truffaut and his relationship with silent cinema, which has not hitherto been made; and, importantly, to attempt to develop an interest in bringing Truffaut back to a state of

prominence in film literature after some thirty years of relative inertia. While I am largely content with my findings on Truffaut and silent cinema, the attempt to uncover a singular *secret perdu* was vexing. I have had to make peace with the fact that the meaning of *le secret perdu*, according to the film literature I have explored and my own observations, is multivalent. Consequently, perhaps we should be talking about *les secrets perdus* or “lost secrets” (plural). Ultimately, if there was a lost secret (singular) which appeared to override others, it has gone to the grave with Truffaut. That said, perhaps this reality is part of the enjoyment of studying Truffaut, the challenge of discovering that he was not always transparent. After all, the man himself once said: “What interests me [...] is to contradict myself. [...] I like anything which is confused.” (Truffaut in Graham and Vincendeau, 2009, p.178). Recommendations for further reading are, naturally, *Francois Truffaut: The Lost Secret* (Gillain, 2013), without whose influence this study would have never come into being. My second recommendation is the recent *A Companion To Francois Truffaut* (2013) edited by Andrew and Gillain, with whom I still share the fear that, concerning Truffaut, “inspiration might dissipate.” (Andrew and Gillain, 2013, p.xv). Hopefully, my study goes some way to remedying this concern. Finally, I hope this thesis will prove interesting reading matter for other current and future Truffaut scholars.

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