Richard Neupert A History of the French New Wave Cinema (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2002)

From *Ciné-Clubs* to Film Journals

The film culture of the late 1940s helped jump-start the nearly fanatical *cinéphilia* that came to characterize 1950s Paris. After the war, previously banned or heavily edited films played prominently in French theaters and *ciné-clubs*, including *L'Atalante* (Vigo, 1933) and *La règle du jeu* (*Rules of the Game*, Renoir, 1939) as well as many revivals of American and other international motion pictures from the past. Between 1946 and 1955, young cinephiles such as Eric Rohmer, François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard, among scores of others, immersed themselves in moviegoing but also in the parallel activities that made "*cinéphilia*" so rich in France. *Ciné-clubs* and journals were popping up all over Paris and even sprouting up in many provincial towns. One of the most famous *ciné-clubs* was Objectif 49, which was organized by André Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, and Alexandre Astruc, along with Jean Cocteau, Robert Bresson, and Roger Leenhardt. At another, Studio Parnasse, young cinephiles met regularly on Tuesday nights and debated the films after the screenings. Rohmer's own Ciné-Club du Quartier Latin met on Thursdays and attracted many of the same participants.

Rohmer also went on to publish his *Gazette du cinéma* in 1950 as a sort of outgrowth of his *ciné-club*. While his journal lasted only one year, it marked an important transition in French film criticism by combining an older generation of critics from *Revue du cinéma* (including Astruc) with new writers, such as Godard, Truffaut, and Rivette.[55] When Bazin, Doniol-Valcroze, and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca created their first issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1951, it was merely one of many French voices on world cinema, but it, like Rohmer's *Gazette*, helped bridge a gap between the past (they dedicated their first issue to *Revue du cinéma*'s Jean George Auriol, who had vanished one year earlier) and the future of film studies. Interestingly, Bazin and Doniol-Valcroze learned too late that in Rouen there was already a small publication titled *Cahiers du cinéma*. It is important to note that much of the New Wave's eventual audience sat right alongside the young critics and future filmmakers in the *ciné-clubs* and the Cinémathèque française, or read about the debates over film history and film style in the many new film magazines. The New Wave would not fall from the sky in the late 1950s, nor would its audience appear magically out of thin air. Serious film buffs were carefully nursed along and encouraged by the conditions of postwar film culture.

France has a long history of critical and historical writing about the cinema, dating from the 1910s. By the end of World War II, however, the number and quality of French film journals were at an all-time high, picking up where many 1920s journals and publications had left off. Post-World War II magazines and journals devoted exclusively to cinema included titles such as *Cinévie*, *Cinévogue*, *Cinémonde*, *Ciné-Miroir*, *Paris-Cinéma*, *Raccords*, *L'Age du cinéma*, and even *Saint Cinéma de près*. Cinema was seen as the most modern of all art forms, and its recent pivotal role in both propaganda and resistance had clearly proven to everyone the cinema's dynamic cultural power, which was occasionally exaggerated into mythic importance. During the war, the cinematic wing of the French Resistance, Comité de libération du cinéma français (CLCF), had even published its own underground film journal, *L'Ecran français* (The French Screen). Begun as a newsletter in 1943, *L'Ecran* continued as an important cultural force after the war, publishing until 1953. During the war, *L'Ecran* was used to inform cinema personnel about practical issues, review films, and remind everyone that some day a purification of collaborators in the industry would seek revenge. It was in *L'Ecran* that Georges Sadoul wrote many of his famous reviews and that Alexandre Astruc wrote about the "*caméra-stylo*." Even Jean-Paul Sartre, writing in *L'Ecran*, entered into debates with film critic André Bazin over films such as *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941). Writing in 1945, just before *Citizen Kane*'s premiere in Paris, Sartre criticized Welles's movie as overly fatalistic and a pure example of bankrupt bourgeois American filmmaking, while Georges Sadoul dismissed it as excessively expressionistic and a mere "*exercice du style*." Later, in *Temps modernes*, Bazin disagreed with Sartre and Sadoul, championing *Citizen Kane*'s modernity and democratic traits.[56]

Battle lines were thus defined by political as well as aesthetic alliances, and the pages of French film journals, like the question-and-answer sessions at local *ciné-clubs*, featured impassioned and often eloquent praise and criticism. One of the dividing lines was whether American films should receive the same critical attention as French or other national cinemas. The Blum-Byrnes agreement of 1946 had further fueled the issue by increasing the number of non-French films that could be shown on French screens to 70 percent. There was a resulting leap: during the first half of 1946, only 38 American films were shown in France; during the first half of 1947, the number jumped to 338. French intellectuals, interested in the artistry and power of the cinema, had to take a stand as open to or opposed to American cinema. The two leading camps were defined by *L'Ecran* (whose editorial board included Jean-Paul Sartre and

Georges Sadoul, as well as André Malraux, Marcel Carné, and Henri Langlois) versus Bazin, Doniol-Valcroze, and Roger Leenhardt, among others, who wrote in a number of journals, including *Revue du cinéma* and eventually *Cahiers du cinéma*. The Communist *L'Ecran*, which had long editorialized against Hollywood films, charged after the war that Hollywood was seducing away French audiences with big budgets and Technicolor the way American soldiers had seduced French women with chocolates and nylons. Then in 1949 they viciously attacked Hitchcock, whose *Rope* (1948) had just been praised by Jacques Doniol-Valcroze in *Revue du cinéma*.

L'Ecran considered Hitchcock a talented craftsperson churning out overly polished Hollywood products, and, like William Wyler and other supposed Hollywood auteurs, he was contrasted to the real artistry of modern European auteurs. In one of many counterattacks, Jacques Rivette eventually wrote in Rohmer's *Gazette du cinéma* that "Hitchcock is the only director to have understood that the cinema can evoke a Dostoevski-like world, which is a purely moral world."[57] When *Cahiers du cinéma* was begun in 1951, it was precisely to champion a wider brand of film criticism that allowed serious critical attention to Hollywood as well as to all other vibrant modes of film production. André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, with significant aid from Léonide Keigel and Joseph-Marie Lo Duca, launched *Cahiers du cinéma*. But while *Cahiers* would become the most internationally famous of all these journals, it should not be considered as an isolated source of film criticism. Rather, one of the best ways to understand the role of *Cahiers* in relation to film culture and the New Wave is to see it as one voice among many that were reshaping the discourse around film criticism.

While *Cahiers du cinéma* is typically identified as Bazin's venture, and he certainly did dominate its aesthetic range in the 1950s and help determine the apprenticeship and directions for many of its young critics, the journal owed its initial success and even its existence most heavily to Jacques Doniol-Valcroze's efforts. Bazin, already ill with tuberculosis in 1950, relied on Doniol-Valcroze to put together the initial financing and the original team of critics. Doniol-Valcroze wanted to continue the work begun by Jean George Auriol at *Revue du cinéma*. With his postwar experience as a journalist and critic for *Cinémonde* and *Revue du cinéma* and simultaneously as editor-in-chief for the fashion magazine *Messieurs*, Doniol-Valcroze had learned well the tasks of organizing a journal, locating sponsors, and preserving harmony among the contributors.[58] He was

also actively involved with Jean Cocteau in organizing Objectif 49, where he met Léonide Keigel, then an exhibitor, who would provide the initial financing for a small publishing company, Editions de l'Etoile, to prepare the new cinema review. Bazin was resting in a sanitarium and Doniol-Valcroze retained his principal job at *Messieurs*, so they hired Joseph-Marie Lo Duca, also a "new critic" from *Revue du cinéma*, to organize the first issues. Not only did Lo Duca prove an excellent writer, with access to the latest American films guaranteed by Keigel, but he also designed the format and "look" for the first yellow *Cahiers du cinéma*, though Doniol-Valcroze chose the name (over Bazin's suggested *Cinématographe*).

From the first issue, *Cahiers* established its tone with a brief dedication to the memory of *Revue du cinéma* and its editor, Auriol. The editorial promised that *Cahiers* would provide faithful and rigorous attention to all of world cinema, a cinema, they noted, that had just provided such amazing titles as *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*, Bresson, 1950), *Miracle in Milan* (De Sica, 1951), and *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950), among others, in only the preceding few weeks. The first issue included André Bazin on depth, Doniol-Valcroze on Edward Dmytryk, an article on cinema versus television, and a letter discussing cinema from Uruguay. Further, while histories often reduce the contributions of *Cahiers du cinéma* to its unified call for auteurism and a new cinema, throughout the 1950s it printed a surprisingly rich variety of articles and perspectives. Doniol-Valcroze and others strove to maintain the notion of a true "*cahiers*," or notebook, in which many different documents could coexist. Antoine de Baecque's mammoth history of the journal, *Les cahiers du cinéma*, helps clarify the policies at *Cahiers*, revealing that opposing perspectives were allowed since the editorial board considered each article for its own coherence rather than for whether it fit some narrow polemic or aesthetic agenda. Obviously, however, simply offering so much attention to American films was in itself a sort of aesthetic manifesto, and *Cahiers* never shrank from openly explaining and defending some of its editors' controversial positions.

Regardless of the practiced diversity, *Cahiers* established a set of favorite auteurs early on, including Charlie Chaplin, Jean Renoir, F. W. Murnau, and Edward Dmytryk. Yet the new young critics who joined the roster from the earliest days of the journal—Maurice Schérer (a.k.a. Eric Rohmer, who began writing for *Cahiers* at age thirty-one), Jacques Rivette (twenty-four years old), Jean-Luc Godard (twenty-two years old), Claude Chabrol (twenty-two years old), and François Truffaut (twenty years old)—

began, controversially, to shift increased attention to directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks, who were not as popular with some of the editors. These critics quickly earned the label "young Turks" for their fiery, often ruthless brand of criticism. Jean Douchet argues it was precisely because of these young critics, beginning in earnest in 1954, that the auteur concept became firmly entrenched at *Cahiers*. Rohmer and his friends began with short reviews but then quickly moved on to presenting lively interviews with directors, proving their passion for cinema and detailed knowledge of film history. "The directors (especially the Americans who were little accustomed to people discussing their work with such accuracy and depth) were dumbfounded and deeply impressed by these young writers' ideas. . . . The reputation of *Cahiers du Cinéma* began to grow. In Hollywood the review became essential reading and Fritz Lang, Joseph Mankiewicz, Samuel Fuller, and Nicholas Ray often posed for photographs with a copy of the magazine in their hand."[59] Their gift of auteur status to Hitchcock and Hawks as equivalents of Renoir and Bresson amounted to incendiary criticism during this era, but it also proved how quickly these young men had made their mark, building on Bazin's brilliant groundwork to move *Cahiers du cinéma* criticism firmly into the analysis of mise-en-scène.

Internal debates among critics were commonplace at *Cahiers du cinéma*, though the editors preferred to feature positive reviews and articles over negative ones, believing that only good cinema should receive attention. Before *Cahiers* critics could get reviews and articles published, they first had to convince their own colleagues that their arguments were valuable, while the editorial board regularly asked for revisions, if they did not reject the piece altogether. To a certain extent, the real labor of reshaping film criticism took place within the offices of *Cahiers du cinéma*, where some of the more impassioned and reckless articles were discussed, argued out, and finally revised before being printed. Belonging to the *Cahiers du cinéma* team in the 1950s brought with it a great deal of notoriety, but it also demanded a clear aesthetic perspective, long hours of highly focused dedication, and a strong enough personality to fight for one's ideas to be understood and finally printed. Truffaut's controversial "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" proved an excellent test case for the processes, critical challenges, and discursive power of *Cahiers* in the 1950s. But it should be noted that this sort of blunt attack on long lists of films and filmmakers was quite rare at *Cahiers*.

Truffaut's article, published in 1954, provided a scathing denunciation of some of the most respected films, writers, and directors of postwar France; his criticisms were generally leveled at titles such as *Les jeux interdits* (*Forbidden Games*, Clément, 1952) for moral as well as stylistic reasons. Unusual as "A Certain Tendency" was, its attack on the French "tradition of quality" was actually anticipated by Michel Dorsday's review of Christian-Jaque's *Adorables créatures*, in *Cahiers* number 16, in October 1952. Dorsday's review was titled "Le cinéma est mort" ("French Cinema Is Dead") and included the line, "Dead under the weight of its impeccable, perfect quality." Moreover, Dorsday listed other guilty parties in the overly polished recent French cinema, singling out directors Julien Duvivier and Jacques Becker, among others.[60] When Truffaut began writing for *Cahiers* in March 1953's issue 21, he defended several of Dorsday's targets, especially Becker, but he had already been at work on his most famous article, which would prove to be his own manifesto against dominant French cinema and would further establish the phrase "tradition of quality" as a derogatory label.

In December 1952, Truffaut, recently dishonorably dismissed from military service, gave his editors an initial version of his tirade against mainstream French cinema, with which Bazin "was not unsympathetic." Yet, Bazin suggested drastic reworking of Truffaut's proposed article and allowed Truffaut instead to write brief reviews to begin learning the trade of criticism.[61] It was not until January 1954, after more than one year of revisions and deliberations, that Doniol-Valcroze and Bazin agreed to publish "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema"; even then, Doniol-Valcroze published a careful editorial preparing the readers for Truffaut's "massacre," as de Baecque terms it. In his essay, Truffaut complained primarily that "tradition of quality" cinema depends too heavily on scriptwriters, especially Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, rather than on directors. He singled out these writers for their practice of seeking "cinematic equivalents" to "unfilmable scenes" from the novels they adapt. Truffaut, by contrast, argued they are betraying the spirit of their sources and adding their own "profanity and blasphemy" whenever possible. In marked contrast to these betrayals of both literature and cinema stand Truffaut's great auteurs, including Jean Renoir, Jean Cocteau, Abel Gance, and Jacques Tati, who all write their own dialogue and most of their stories.

Articles like Truffaut's bold "A Certain Tendency" should be seen as part of a very diverse and rich outpouring of reflections on the cinema, and not as the norm or the only perspective to come from *Cahiers du cinéma* in

the 1950s. Nonetheless, the "Hitchcocko-Hawksians" gradually gained power and attention, and Eric Rohmer even became coeditor alongside Doniol-Valcroze by the time of Bazin's death in November 1958. By then, *Cahiers* had earned a reputation as the single most influential magazine on world cinema. Jim Hillier asserts that one reason *Cahiers* was so important was that it remained relatively apolitical, a stance that fit the prevailing trends in Western culture by the late 1950s.[62] Regardless, one should heed historian Pierre Billard's warning not to accept the clever but subjective conclusions forged by *Cahiers*'s young Turks as historical fact: "What we should object to is the untested reprise of their dated and polemical arguments thirty and forty years later, as if they represented valuable historical facts."[63] Their often subjective perspective should never be accepted on face value, and many of the movies condemned rather shamelessly by Truffaut are among the most interesting titles of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Yet the journal that began in order to fill the gap left by *Revue du cinéma* not only thrived, and far outlived *L'Ecran français*, but it continued to expand its influence when the young "Rohmer team" of Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rivette, and Rohmer moved from being critics to filmmakers. By 1959 images from *their* films began to adorn the journal's covers, and the popularity and critical success of many of those motion pictures fueled the perception that *Cahiers* not only provided an accurate perspective on past and present auteurs but demonstrated a firm grasp of the future as well.

Nonetheless, *Cahiers* was hardly the only journal calling passionately for a revitalization of French cinema. *Positif*, which began during 1952 in Lyons, went on to become *Cahiers du cinéma*'s most successful rival for the hearts and minds of French cinephiles. In the opening statement of its first issue, "*Pourquoi nous combattons*" ("Why We Fight"), *Positif*'s editors, proud to write from the critical distance of Lyons, acknowledged that launching a new journal might seem foolhardy: "Another film journal (and another preface!) when so many have come and gone?"[64] To justify *Positif*'s existence, they explained that, in contrast to *Cahiers du cinéma*, they did not want to define their journal as a review for youth only, though their writers were mostly young. Rather, *Positif* would look back to *Rules of the Game* and other classics, saluting their elders. The editors pointed out that rather than revel in audacity, they would write about films only after many viewings, so as to prove the unknown auteurist qualities of directors such as John Huston. Throughout their opening issue, *Positif*'s editors seemed bent on following *Cahiers*'s lead, while distancing themselves from some of

Cahiers's key arguments. They reviewed Claude Autant-Lara's *L'auberge rouge* (*The Red Inn*, 1951) and were obviously referring to Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" when they wrote that they would "avoid rash judgments and public executions."[65] *Positif* also promised to celebrate French cinema for the most part, and into the 1960s they continually sparred with *Cahiers du cinéma*, criticizing their competitor's choices of auteurs, the value of the New Wave, and eventually their political conservatism. Years later, former *Cahiers* critic André S. Labarthe would claim that there were two sorts of *cinéphilia* in the 1950s: "At *Positif* they liked films without taking sides, or for fetishistic reasons or political views; *Cahiers* came up with the notion of applying a moral perspective onto films."[66]

But *Positif*, which boasted successful future directors such as Lyons-born Bertrand Tavernier among its writers, had a tough time economically compared to *Cahiers du cinéma* in the late 1950s. During the pivotal years of 1958 and 1959, its output nearly ground to a halt (much like *Cahiers* fifteen years later in the early 1970s). Supposedly a monthly journal, *Positif* published issue number 28 in April 1958, but only one more issue appeared that year, labeled "rentrée 1958." Issue number 30 finally arrived in July 1959, while number 31 came out in November. Thus, at the very moment when François Truffaut and Claude Chabrol were getting attention for jump-starting the young French cinema, *Positif* was almost invisible, though always present in its absence, just off screen, to *Cahiers* critics. This difference in the fates of the two journals may be what motivated *Positif*'s blistering attacks on the New Wave figures and some of *Cahiers*' favorite directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock and his latest film, *Vertigo*. In particular, *Positif* struck out against Claude Chabrol, whose *Le beau Serge* and *Les cousins* were reviewed in the long overdue July 1959 issue. *Positif*'s Michèle Firk attacked Chabrol's low-budget filmmaking as insincere (what little money Chabrol did spend came from an inheritance) and his style as "nonexistent" and full of mismatches and incorrect syntax. But Firk especially criticized his themes, which she condemned as tender tributes to "Goebbels, the Gestapo, racism, and anti-Semitism." The review article closes with "Young nation, Nazism, doesn't that tell you something?"[67]

In their November editorial, "*Quoi de neuf?*" ("What's New?"), *Positif*'s editors complained that "[t]he young cinema is certainly the chief topic of conversation these days. The young people who are suddenly deciding that technique means nothing are happily taking the place at *Arts* of

people who formerly thought style was everything."[68] In June 1962, when *Positif* was on much firmer economic ground and building a strong follow-ing, they issued their own assessment of the young French cinema with what they labeled a "*partiel et partial*" (incomplete and biased) dictionary of new filmmakers, which anticipated *Cahiers*'s own much more complete tally of new directors in December. *Positif*'s Raymond Borde summarized Godard as "a disgusting misogynist" who had salvaged the unwatchable *Breathless* by convincing the public that badly made movies were now in style: "Godard represents the most painful regression of French cinema." Chabrol was dismissed as "a *petit-bourgeois* director for a snobbish audi-ence looking for exoticism," and he, like Godard, was attacked as "mili-tantly misogynist."[69] *Positif*'s favorite New Wave directors were Philippe de Broca and Jacques Rozier, both of whom were unconnected with *Cahiers*. While much of *Positif*'s New Wave-era criticism was obviously overly determined by its reactions against whatever *Cahiers* was arguing, they did nonetheless build their own aesthetic tastes, championing surreal and Marxist tendencies in French cinema and defining their own list of im-portant auteurs (they preferred Orson Welles to Hitchcock, but also Jean Rouch to Godard). Even today one can see the vibrant antagonism live on; during 1998, for instance, *Cahiers du cinéma* put out special issues dedi-cated to *la nouvelle vague* and also Claude Chabrol, while *Positif* devoted an issue to Orson Welles.

Perhaps the new journal most connected with contemporary issues in French film, however, was *Cinéma 55* (whose title changed with each new year, a tactic that cleverly identified it as the most up-to-date chronicle of current trends). *Cinéma 55* was the house organ for the Fédération français des ciné-clubs and, as such, concerned itself with speaking to and for the sixty thousand audience members who regularly attended one or more of France's 180 clubs. The opening editorial proclaimed that the continual growth of *ciné-clubs* since the liberation was one of the most important events in French film history: "Up until now, this movement has lacked an outlet to help enrich, enhance, and bring to light even further its actions. That is the goal of *Cinéma 55*." The editorial also promised to serve the vast collective interests of this avid cinephile audience: "*Cinéma 55* will inform our readers of all the people, films, and events that make up the cin-ema of our times."[70] This journal also went to great pains to include all film industry talents, providing interviews with technicians as well as pro-ducers and distributors, and not just favorite auteur directors. It reported industry information, such as average production costs, problems with

box-office attendance or returns, and international competition. When it expressed concerns that production costs were climbing too high and shut-ting out average producers in the late 1950s, it was not afraid to print the photos of "overpaid" talent such as Fernandel and Marcel Carné, brand-ing them "the ones responsible!"[71]

Beginning with its first issue, in fall of 1954, *Cinéma 55* asserted its broad-based appeal immediately: the first issue featured Lotte Eisner writ-ing on German cinema, an excerpt from the late Jean Epstein's final book, *Esprit du cinéma*, but also reviews of films ranging from Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) to Otto Preminger's *River of No Return* (1954). The second is-sue included a tribute to Jean Renoir, but also praise for one of Truffaut's favorite targets, the scriptwriter Pierre Bost. Bost, who had just been sav-agely attacked in January in Truffaut's "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," used *Cinéma 55* as a forum to defend his adaptation tactics; he protested that, although some people believed it wrong for the cinema to retell stories from novels, good writers adopt and then adapt the literary material: "'When you adopt a child you make it yours. But no one expects adopted children to resemble their adoptive parents.'"[72] Yet while *Cinéma 55* worked conscientiously to deepen the historical understanding of films, filmmakers, and critics of the past who were pertinent to the revivals fea-tured in so many *ciné-clubs*, they also struggled to keep abreast of new trends enlivening French screens.

Throughout the New Wave era, this journal championed new talent. When *Cinéma 58* listed "forty under forty" directors, editor Pierre Billard explained the serious need for new faces and tactics in French film: "It seems our cinema's current economic prosperity has been accompanied with a deep artistic crisis. It is hard to disagree that inspirations have run dry, subject matters are sterile, and film aesthetics ever more static. . . . It is thus with great interest that we look to young French directors of today for the chance that tomorrow's cinema will evolve and progress."[73] Billard and his journal would give due attention to films by the *Cahiers* directors while also complaining that the equally fascinating films by other young directors, such as Pierre Kast's *Le bel âge* (1958) or Michel Drach's *On n'enterre pas le dimanche* (*They Don't Bury on Sunday*, 1959), were re-ceiving too little attention. The articles in *Cinéma*, whether appeals to protest the censorship of Godard's *Le petit soldat* (*The Little Soldier*, 1961), reviews by the busy and passionate Bertrand Tavernier, or industry sum-maries by Billard, offered the New Wave era a consistently rich source of information. All four of these important voices—*L'Ecran*, *Cahiers*, *Positif*,

and *Cinéma 55*—were part of a burgeoning critical excitement that helped catapult film studies forward in France and internationally during the 1950s, simultaneously raising the level and rigor of discourse for serious film lovers.

New Modes of Film Production

If more established disciplines such as literature, theater, social science, and even film criticism were seen as undergoing revolutionary changes, with a revitalized culture overturning so many conventions, then it seemed plausible that film production, the newest art form, should be experiencing transformations as well. Many observers were actively scanning French film for signs of its own new wave, even before one had taken on coherent shape. Initially, signs of rebirth were noticed in the irreverent themes of young directors Roger Vadim and Louis Malle, while the truly radical contributions by Agnès Varda, Jean-Pierre Melville, and the 16 mm shorts and documentaries of Alain Resnais, Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, and François Truffaut were less visible to the critics of mass culture. But if the aesthetic and social conditions helped set the stage for a New Wave in cinema, France's economic context provided equally significant generating mechanisms. While it certainly was anticipated, the French New Wave hardly burst onto the scene fully grown.

Colin Crisp argues for a comprehensive view of the New Wave as rising rather logically from the long-standing diversity of French productions: "What is not adequately emphasized in most accounts of the origins of the New Wave is the debt owed by [these new, young] directors to the industrial and financial mechanisms put in place during the classic period to foster just such filmmaking practices. This process had been complemented by the commercialization of wartime technological breakthroughs which transformed work practices in the cinema during the period 1945-1960."[74] Crisp fears that most contemporary histories overemphasize the New Wave's "break from the past," when in fact French cinema had always retained a sizeable portion of nongenre, "personal" films from directors as diverse as Jean Vigo, Jean Renoir, Marcel Pagnol, and Jacques Tati.

How then should one summarize the New Wave's effects on the modes of production in French cinema? Is there a decisive break, or is this simply another stage in an ongoing series of variations in film production? The question has been variously answered. Some historians argue that the New Wave liberated the cinema from the weight of the established rules of studio production; others claim that the New Wave unfairly criticized and then crushed the standards and economic stability of the industry. Without a doubt, the actual production mode employed by most New Wave films was directly opposed to most industrial norms. While the New Wave certainly did not obliterate the commercial French cinema, its new production methods did create much more lasting effects on the rest of the industry than the individual innovations of directors such as Vigo or even Tati ever mustered. The New Wave did motivate decisive changes in film production, and, importantly, it came along at a decisive moment for the CNC, which needed a shot in the arm to prove that its economic and administrative policies were helping improve the quality and quantity of French movies.

There were certainly many warning signs throughout the 1950s that France's film industry needed to become more dynamic, both economically and aesthetically. *Cinéma 55* complained that the number of French films had dropped 45 percent in only three years, from 1952 to 1955, while the increase in international coproductions was not picking up the slack for French technicians, actors, or directors. When French studios were rented, it was often by American or other foreign television or film companies. During 1955, for instance, at Billancourt Studios, two soundstages were rented to American television, while two more were simultaneously rented for *Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*; Joinville rented three stages to an American movie company, while Epinay rented three stages to American television, and all of Neuilly's soundstages were being rented to American television studios.[75] The same *Cinéma 55* editorial went on to argue that France's problems were complex and included the need to find new administrative ideas, better import and export conditions, and revolutionary rethinking of storytelling and directing ideas. Coproductions were also prompting some people in the industry to warn that soon no true national cinema might be left to save. "We need to *counter* this denationalization by producing more ambitious films . . . projecting the real face of France to the world and reviving the prestige of our cinema."[76]

One of the more famous strategies of this era was precisely the revamping of the CNC's Film Aid program. During the mid-1950s, CNC Aid accounted for roughly 40 percent of a film's budget. Producers could receive subsidies, the money coming from taxes on movie tickets. Filmmakers would be paid a percentage based on their profits, but the money then had to be invested in a new film project, which in turn could apply for Film Aid. The plan was to provide incentive for producers to become stable

enough to continue making films, and to help guarantee profitability, which is not easy in a small national market. But about one-half of all Film Aid money also went to help remodel theaters, with some funds designated to upgrade studio space. By 1959, André Malraux, minister of culture, helped Antoine Pinay, minister of finance, revamp the Film Aid rules to bring cinema in line with government policies in other industries. But in the process, Malraux, who was calling openly for a "rejuvenation" of French cinema, wrestled more control for financing and administration of the cinema away from Pinay, thereby strengthening the CNC and eventually helping the New Wave.

Under the new plan, Film Aid money to exhibitors was to be reduced over the next two years, with special loans and subsidies still available to small exhibitors of *art et essai* films or in tiny rural markets. The biggest change was to drop the notion of guaranteed subsidies based on box-office returns of completed films in favor of low-interest loans, or "advances on receipts," to producers, which had to be paid back before the producers could earn profits. But the CNC also retained and strengthened Film Aid for riskier, low-budget films: there was a juried quality subsidy, based on a script or *découpage* of the proposed film. The jury for 1959 was composed of roughly thirty members, including older directors such as Abel Gance, Marcel Pagnol, and Marcel L'Herbier, the veteran actress Françoise Rosay, but also modern novelist Raymond Queneau and established critics Georges Sadoul and Henri Agel. Their quality prize was to encourage more productions "that enhance French film prestige both at home and in the foreign market."[77] These changes in the Film Aid rules, however, brought many complaints. Producer Robert Dorfmann, who made profitable films such as *Forbidden Games* (Clément, 1952) and *Les tricheurs* (Carné, 1958), feared a loss of subsidies for commercial cinema, arguing ironically that Malraux's encouragement of "quality" was bad for business and would hurt exports.[78] Louis Malle, however, was typical of directors wary of losing creativity: "It is going to make French film very conventional. Nobody can tell on the strength of a script what kind of a picture is going to emerge; it implies script control."[79] The new Film Aid law did produce many positive effects, however, encouraging a whole new breed of producers to become involved in French film production, in part because of these shifting rules for government funding. Moreover, in early 1960, Finance Minister Pinay, who often disagreed with Malraux about Film Aid, was replaced by De Gaulle, partly because of Pinay's objection to subsidies for quality films: "I do not subsidize groceries so why should I subsidize films?"[80] His removal safeguarded the Film Aid program into the middle 1960s and was a victory for Malraux and, some argued, for "Culture" over "Finance."

The increased access to funds motivated increased optimism and experimentation, often bringing producers and directors active in producing short films over into feature production, but the amounts of Film Aid were insufficient to cover more than a fraction of the cost of an average motion picture. Thus, it was the combination of new, less expensive filming techniques, stories set in the streets that could appeal to young audiences, and new portable production equipment that allowed the New Wave to take off. As Francis Courtade notes, "The first contribution of the nouvelle vague was to create a new financial atmosphere and exceptional conditions of production."[81] He cites the use of small production budgets, location shooting, and short shooting schedules as the initial keys to New Wave production norms; add to these factors the lack of expensive stars, and one has the recipe for quick, cheap, youthful films. As François Truffaut explained to *Variety*, the New Wave was not necessarily against using stars, but big names made movies too expensive and many of the offbeat scripts that New Wave filmmakers favored did not need stars.[82] Typically, the budget of New Wave films ranged from fifty thousand to one hundred thousand dollars, while average French films cost two hundred thousand dollars and prestige productions were over a million dollars. The effect of forty thousand or seventy thousand dollars in Film Aid money on smaller productions was thus immense. By 1960, the heart of the New Wave era, one in three French productions was filmed entirely on location, and the number of productions costing less than two hundred thousand dollars increased dramatically. Films such as *Breathless*, shot in just four weeks, provided the new blueprints for quick, cheap, exciting modes of production. As René Prédal points out, "Before the New Wave directors could modify the profound *nature* of the cinema, they had to attack its *structures* so as to shake up the system."[83]

New Wave filming techniques depended on more than shooting quickly on location, however. They altered the conventions of their shoots, looking back to neorealist techniques, but combining what they learned from Rossellini with what they could learn from new documentary filmmakers such as Jean Rouch. Jean-Pierre Mocky, whose first feature, *Les dragueurs* (*The Chasers* in the United States, *The Young Have No Morals* in the United Kingdom, 1959), was one young director who urged everyone to "eliminate all the dead weight the cinema drags behind it," which

meant not just heavy, overly clichéd stories, but also "tradition of quality" production norms. Mocky urged new directors to follow his model and shoot silent, like the neorealists, and put the sound together later in the sound studio to save time and money.[84] New Wave directors did shoot silent when appropriate, but some also followed documentary practice, using new lightweight portable magnetic-tape recorders for sync-sound on location. In 1959, the Swiss Nagra III, a new fourteen-pound version of earlier models, became available; it caused an immediate sensation within the cinéma vérité community and was adapted right away by some New Wave directors. Recorders such as the Nagra simply used standard quarter-inch magnetic tape, unlike studio machines, which used 16 mm- or 35 mm-wide tapes. Ironically, it was the rise of 16 mm production for the huge new markets of television news and location work that helped fuel the increased invention and diffusion of lightweight equipment for filmmaking, providing new options just when the New Wave filmmakers were looking for cheaper techniques.

These young French directors also used newer, more portable 35 mm and 16 mm cameras, such as the Auricon, and Eclair's Cameflex and NPR, which allowed them more hand-held options and the freedom of avoiding standard, heavy camera mounts such as dollies and tracks. Truffaut regularly perched his camera on a light tripod on balconies or rooftops, while Chabrol set the camera and operator in the trunk of his car or on motorcycles for traveling shots. Shooting a movie was suddenly casual and fun, resembling the mobile news crews covering the Tour de France bike race. Moreover, the escape from heavy cameras mounted on heavy tracks or tripods liberated production crews from depending on established camera operators and their crews. Instead, a new cadre of operators appeared on the scenes, and New Wave productions returned to the early cinema norm of a two-person crew of cinematographer and camera operator. The hand-held camera became a distinctive marker of New Wave images, adding a casual, contemporary look that found a bit of shake and jitter in the image not just acceptable, but lively and desirable. As Jean Douchet writes, "Aesthetically, a new and unexpected style exploded across the screen and added a sense of buoyancy to otherwise serious issues. It was as if the law of gravity had been temporarily suspended. . . . An intentional technique of making the camera shake to convey veracity was introduced."[85] It is difficult to imagine today, in the age of the Steadicam, how amazed critics were that Godard and cinematographer Raoul Coutard used a mail cart and a wheelchair for dollies in *Breathless*; review after review marveled at

such revolutionary simplicity. Of course, by the mid-1960s almost every film school in the world adopted the practice.

New, faster film stocks, including Kodak's 250 ASA black-and-white Tri-X, allowed different lighting requirements as well. Since most of the young directors were reacting against the status quo, they also did not worry about having to use the commercial norm of quality images created with multiple lighting units that required time, labor, and studio facilities. Films that were about modern youth, set in modern Paris, did not want to look like Balzac adaptations or Hollywood melodramas, and this disdain helped them further cut corners. Chabrol's *Le beau Serge* has an exterior night scene lit exclusively by a lamp in actor Jean-Claude Brialy's hand. And Louis Malle's *L'ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (*Elevator to the Gallows*, 1958), like Truffaut's *Tirez sur le pianiste* (*Shoot the Piano Player*, 1960), lights whole night scenes with the available light from streetlights and store windows. Suddenly, the very definition of a film crew was challenged, which, of course, angered and threatened the technician unions in France. More importantly, however, the new smaller production crews and simpler equipment broke down many barriers determining when and where one could make movies. Once some of the financial and technical hurdles had been knocked lower, there was an influx of eager new talent that could rethink just what sort of subject matter would be most appropriate for this new mode of production. As Claude Bernard-Aubert, director of *Shock Patrol* (1957), explained, "We were all forced to begin with tiny budgets because most of us had no money. So we filmed subjects we were interested in and that fit with our budgets."[86] The generating mechanisms of finances and technology dramatically affected the stories and styles of this new generation.

One aspect of French exhibition that also helped provide a welcoming marketplace for offbeat new movies was the circuit of designated *art et essai* theaters, which showed both avant-garde films and documentaries. In the 1950s, several critics, including Joseph-Marie Lo Duca, convinced the owners of one Paris cinema chain to turn their Les Reflets theater into a specialized house modeled on dramatist Jean Tardieu's Théâtre d'essai. Gradually a number of other theaters followed suit and a small circuit, including famous movie houses such as Studio des Ursulines, Studio Parnasse, and Studio 28, formed the Association française des cinémas d'art et d'essai in 1955, with the goal of expanding the diffusion of both old and new films. By 1961, the CNC regulated the Art et essai theaters by giving them special Film Aid for renovations and tax breaks since they served the

"national interest" by projecting quality prints of shorts and features that might otherwise receive no commercial distribution. CNC and the association drew up specific rules for member theaters, including the prohibition against showing more than 50 percent classics and more than 10 percent "amateur," or nonunion, films. Eventually, there were thirty-seven Art et essai houses in Paris and forty in the rest of the country, which helped many first time directors find early audiences. But these houses, like the earlier ciné-clubs, also relied heavily on established auteurs; of the twenty most frequently screened directors in 1963, Resnais, Truffaut, and Godard were the only French directors on the list, with Ingmar Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, and Luis Buñuel dominating the Art et Essai circuit.[87]

All these new cultural, economic, and technological changes underway in France motivated a new generation not only of writers, actors, and directors but of producers as well. As this study will demonstrate later, the autoproductions of Jean-Pierre Melville, Louis Malle, Claude Chabrol, and François Truffaut would prove incredibly important, but for a real "wave" of productions to appear, more outside financing had to be found.

Three bold entrepreneurs in particular helped launch many of the New Wave features with their clever strategies developed specifically for the new cinema culture of 1960. Pierre Braunberger (b. 1905), Anatole Dauman (b. 1925), and especially Georges de Beauregard (b. 1920) helped remake the face of French cinema. "These producers did their job brilliantly, investing part of their own money, negotiating for advances from distributors, playing their credit to the maximum with labs and banks, and betting on a CNC *prime à la qualité*."[88] Braunberger, fittingly, began his career producing early Jean Renoir films, including *Charleston* (1927) and *Une partie de campagne* (*A Day in the Country*, 1936), but he made his reputation as a patron of young directors in the late 1940s and early 1950s when he produced short films by Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, Jacques Rivette, and Jean-Luc Godard. He helped Jean Rouch with *Moi, un noir* (1958), among others, before producing Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player*, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze's *L'eau à la bouche* (*A Game for Six Lovers*, 1959), and Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962).

Anatole Dauman founded Argos Films in 1951 to specialize in art films and documentaries, and he, too, helped produce short films by Resnais (*Nuit et brouillard* [*Night and Fog*, 1955]) as well as by Chris Marker (*Letter from Siberia*, 1957, and *La jetée*, 1962) and the big Resnais features of *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959), *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1960), and *Muriel* (1963), in addition to the exemplary *vérité* documentary *Chronicle of a Summer* (Morin and Rouch, 1961). Dauman, who also produced several films by Godard as well as by Robert Bresson in the late 1960s, "made some of the major films of the modern cinema," providing funding and marketing for some of the greatest talents in France, who would otherwise have had great difficulty making the films they wanted to make.[89] But it was Georges de Beauregard who caught the attention of young directors and the popular press alike, thus becoming a nearly mythical figure as the stereotypical New Wave producer.

Georges de Beauregard had been trying to establish himself as a commercial director during the 1950s when Jean-Luc Godard convinced him to abandon risky, expensive, and adventurous big productions and to produce instead *Breathless*. Beauregard and his new partner, Carlo Ponti, formed Rome-Paris-Films and produced not only Godard's first feature but also Jacques Demy's *Lola* (1961) and Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1962). According to Agnès Varda, Beauregard earned so much from *Breathless* that he asked Godard if he had any friends interested in making movies, so Godard sent him to Demy.[90] But the courageous Beauregard lost money as well: Rozier went way over budget and *Adieu Philippine* was delayed several years, Godard's *Le petit soldat* (1960) was banned completely for three years because of its reference to the Algerian War, and Chabrol's *L'oeil du malin* (*The Third Lover*, 1962) sold only eight thousand tickets in Paris. Nonetheless, Beauregard's contribution was so vast—he produced Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1961) and a total of seven films by Godard and several post-New Wave Rohmer and Rivette films—it makes him the exemplary New Wave producer. Godard agreed; when Beauregard died in 1984 he wrote, "For a producer, he was a real worker . . . he fought against the ogres at the bank and the dragons of the CNC. . . . He also produced Belmondo's first smile and Bardot's last."[91] All of which reiterates that the New Wave included, in addition to a new journalistic catchphrase, a group of new filmmakers, a cohort of new actors, a set of new narrative and cinematic techniques, also a new way of producing and marketing motion pictures in France.

The term "New Wave" thus incorporates many dimensions and meanings involving generational, cultural, economic, and technological components and mechanisms. That French film, of all the other national cinemas, saw the most dramatic revitalization during the late 1950s is an amazing phenomenon. There was just the right combination of critical, industrial, artistic, and political forces at work to make France the most fertile battleground of film aesthetics. A complex convergence of factors helped

ensure those skirmishes would spill over into the larger production realm. Not least among these generating mechanisms was the young cadre of individual agents who, shaped by their milieu, knew how to exploit the many changes in demographics, finances, and attitudes. This was an era of daring auteurs and new government policies, and the results were stunning, if confusing, to many observers at the time.

Variety, the most internationally read trade paper of the post-World War II period, proved representative in the way it struggled to chronicle and comprehend the rapid changes underway in French filmmaking in the late 1950s. One of its recurring motifs during the New Wave years is that, at least from the perspective of its American correspondents in Paris, France's industry upheaval was just plain puzzling. *Variety* argued in 1959, for instance, that for all the talk of a New Wave, the box-office take in France that year was down 5 percent from the previous year and off 17 percent from 1957. How could there be anything to celebrate, it pondered. Yet, it also reported that French films were suddenly earning more of those decreasing ticket sales, with eight of the top ten box-office hits that year coming from French productions: "So as usual, French film biz shows its paradoxical nature with a crisis being opposed by the renaissance, and optimism mixing with pessimism."[92] It is precisely the paradoxical and surprising sides of the French film industry and its New Wave in particular that make this era in French filmmaking so exciting and worthy of historical and aesthetic investigation.