

**FAMILY PATTERNS IN FRENCH FILMS OF  
THE 1930s AND OF THE OCCUPATION**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises a study of the inscription of father, son, and daughter figures in French films of the 1930s and of the Occupation.

Using the tool of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Part One looks at the inscription of patriarchy and the positions allotted within it to mature men, young men and young women in classic poetic-realist texts and run-of-the-mill productions of the 1930s, in order to identify the latent collective tensions in the society of that period.

Part Two compares the inscription of father, son and daughter figures, together with certain stylistic features and themes, in a variety of films of the Occupation with the paradigm derived from the foregoing analysis, in order to qualify the widely held view that French films changed little between 1929 and 1945.

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# PART ONE

## INTRODUCTION

In the past, work on French cinema of the 1930s and of the Occupation tended to focus on a relatively restricted corpus of 'art' films, especially those of Renoir and Carné. This tradition continues in the present with the rehabilitation of previously neglected *auteurs* such as Grémillon, who is the subject of a recently published book.

Since the 1960s, however, a number of historians, sociologists and critics have moved away from the *auteur* approach to look at the extensive range of films, genres such as the costume melodrama and the military comedy, which enjoyed widespread popularity at the time but were consigned to oblivion by critics of the cinematographic art. The main contributions in this field with regard to the cinema of the 1930s and the Occupation have come from Raymond Chirat, Jacques Siclier and Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, who have provided an overview of the films popular in their respective periods and sought to place them in their social context.

This concern with the society which produced a set of films also informs the work of other researchers who have carried out a more thorough thematic study of the entire cinematographic output of a given period in the belief that cinema — especially popular cinema — is an important testament to the 'dominant collective representations'<sup>1</sup> or the 'collective psyche'<sup>2</sup> of a particular society. The latter approach is exemplified in the book *Cinema and Society*, in which Paul Monaco applies Freudian dream analysis to popular French and German films of the 1920s, interpreting recurring themes as symptoms of national obsessions. He offers the following justification of his methodology:

The popular cinema ... offers a better reflection of the shared, collective, latent tensions in society than the works and artifacts of high culture. A film is almost always essentially a group production. And for that

reason alone a popular movie might be expected to have a closer relationship to the group processes in society than an individual artistic creation.<sup>3</sup>

The same belief that popular cinema is a unique socio-historical document underpins the work of the group of French scholars writing in *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*. This group, based around the *Cinémathèque de Toulouse*, view film as a form of collective memory, a two-way mirror which represents and restructures the past and present of the spectator, as well as revealing social values, attitudes and ideologies encoded on the screen. Both Monaco and *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque* use modern methods of discourse analysis - psychoanalytical theories and semiotics - which reveal new codes of meaning in filmic texts, thus giving new insights into the underlying attitudes of a society at a given period and indicating how these films may have functioned as narratives in their society at that period.

It is in this critical tradition that the most recent substantial work done on the French cinema of the 1930s, Ginette Vincendeau's doctoral thesis, 'French Cinema in the 1930s - Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium',<sup>4</sup> belongs. In the course of her investigation into why certain types of narrative were popular in the 1930s, Vincendeau uncovers a number of character configurations and themes fundamental to the cinema of the period. The character configurations can be termed 'family patterns' in that they concern the respective positions allotted to older men, young men and young women in French films of the 1930s and the power relationship between these parties.

Although Vincendeau gives an accurate overview of the nature of father/son/daughter configurations and offers convincing social and intertextual explanations for them, and although her analyses are thorough within the parameters of her agenda,

her treatment of this topic is only part of a wide-ranging study of various aspects of the cinema of the period and is not therefore exhaustive. The aim of the first part of the present work is to provide a more comprehensive picture of the inscription of father, son and daughter figures in films of the 1930s by examining issues suggested by but not considered in Vincendeau's work, issues which can be divided into the following areas:

### OLDER MALE FIGURES / FATHER-FIGURES

The French cinema of the 1930s was dominated by older male stars, a fact reflected in the number of narratives which privilege older men, highlighting the role of the father and/or portraying the older man as a virile figure, capable of winning young women away from younger rivals. A number of these films articulate the incest taboo in father/daughter relationships. Vincendeau interprets this type of narrative as a nostalgic recreation of a lost, mythical order of phallic supremacy, in which the role of woman is clearly defined, while the all-powerful yet sympathetic father-figures are seen as 'expressions of a desire for the long-lost mythical figure of the totemic father who controlled all the women.'<sup>5</sup> This pattern is exemplified in *LA FEMME DU BOULANGER* (Pagnol, 38) in which the older male star Raimu's young adulterous wife is restored to him by the community.<sup>6</sup>

The comparison which is then drawn between this "'ideal' (archaic/nostalgic) world of Pagnol"<sup>7</sup> and the poetic-realist world of a second Raimu film, *DERNIERE JEUNESSE* (Musso, 1939), in which there is no community to support the patriarch, who can then only control the young woman he desires by killing her, suggests that the pattern Vincendeau identified in other *genres*, in which the older man and/or the

order he represents is/are seen as desirable, is not universal. However, her analysis deals neither with the manner in which the father-figure is portrayed in the poetic-realist mode — whether his desire and act of violence are validated within the film — nor with the values attributed to the society he represents.

The slightest acquaintance with the emblematic poetic-realist films of the period would lead one to suspect that the inscription of patriarchal society in these texts is rather different from that detected by Vincendeau in comedies and Pagnol melodramas. This supposition raises a number of questions. The most obvious of these, namely, whether the inscription is indeed different, if so in what way and what this different inscription expresses, lead to the question of how representative these poetic-realist films, now commonly held to be a quintessential expression of the mood of the late 1930s, are. If they convey an image of society and attitudes to that society which differ from those conveyed in *genres* such as the military comedy, which were popular in their period but have since been largely ignored, are they less a reflection of *l'air du temps* than an expression of the world-view of the directors — Carné, Duvivier — who dominated the genre?

If, conversely, a 'poetic-realist' inscription of patriarchy is also to be found in other types of narrative, this would suggest that the representation detected by Vincendeau of complete patriarchal power as a desirable if imaginary/archaic ideal only gives a partial picture of social attitudes. Were this to be the case, to what extent then might this positive view of patriarchy and patriarchs located particularly in films by Pagnol and/or starring Raimu be a function of the director's world-view and/or the 'star text'?

## YOUNG MEN/'SON' FIGURES

Younger male leads were weak and lacked the charisma of the father-figures. The only exception to this rule was Jean Gabin. In her analysis of the working of the Gabin myth (the proletarian hero dogged by a malevolent fate), Vincendeau attributes the tragic end he meets in film after film partly to his internal contradictions, partly to his status as regressive hero, which is manifest in his belonging to all-male groups in a number of films. It is suggested that women are excluded from these groups because they represent the adult world of social relationships and responsibilities which the hero rejects, refusing to grow up and assume the role of father in patriarchal society. The all-male group is, however, inadequate and so the Gabin hero is doomed, having locked himself 'in the untenable position of an unresolved Oedipus complex.'<sup>8</sup>

Vincendeau then looks at the connection between this psychological configuration and the issue of class, suggesting that the Gabin hero embodies the contradictions of working class masculinity in that his powerlessness outwith his peer group (which he dominates through displays of machismo) reflects the reality of the individual worker's powerlessness within the capitalist system, while his refusal or inability to enter the symbolic order of the father can be interpreted on a sociological level as a refusal to confront the realities of the class struggle.<sup>9</sup>

While the uniqueness of Gabin the actor/star persona is beyond dispute, are the Gabin narratives — i.e. the films whose tragic ending Vincendeau attributes to aspects of the Gabin 'star-text' — fundamentally different from other 1930s melodramas focusing on the trajectory of 'son' figures? Are the 'son' figures incarnated by Gabin so imbued with his unique star qualities that they have little in

common with those played by other less memorable *jeunes premiers*, or conversely, do the latter also display some of the characteristics described by Vincendeau as an integral part of the Gabin 'star-text'?

I will attempt to answer these questions through textual analysis of a range of melodramas. Socio-political interpretations of the Oedipal conflict central to these narratives will also be investigated, in order to determine the extent to which the identification of 'son' figures with the proletariat and its converse, 'fathers' with the bourgeoisie, holds good.

#### YOUNG WOMEN/'DAUGHTER' FIGURES

Vincendeau's analysis of the role of young women in French cinema of the 1930s concentrates on their position within patriarchy, a system she defines in this context 'as meaning the regime which is characterised by the social and symbolic control of women by men.'<sup>10</sup> Within this system either the sexual desire or the social aspirations of women is denied, as women are placed on one side of the boundary between respectable society and sexual pleasure, and punished if they attempt to cross the line. This control of women is fundamental to the narrative project of those films which, in the face of a threatened change in woman's roles,<sup>11</sup> expressed a desire to return to a mythical order of phallic supremacy. Such films are part of the nostalgia which Vincendeau sees as the dominant tone of French cinema of the period which constantly referred to bygone days in, for example, its choice of material and its recycling of other, older forms of entertainment, thereby offering a retreat into a mythical past as an escape from an increasingly frightening present.

I intend to contribute to the discussion of the part played by female characters

in two ways: firstly, by means of close textual analysis of a number of female-centred narratives, I will examine in greater detail the control mechanisms used to keep women in their allotted place. Secondly, moving away from the notion of women as pillars of the patriarchal order, I will look at the part they play in relation to 'son' rather than father-figures. This analysis of the female function in the Oedipal dramas of regressive son figures is intended to add a further dimension to the concept of French cinema of the 1930s as inherently nostalgic and escapist.

In preparation for the individual treatment of each part of the daughter/son/father configuration in subsequent chapters, Chapter One will consist of an analysis of the interaction of these three elements in one filmic text, the aim being to provide a preliminary exposition of the main themes to be dealt with in the first part of the thesis, which is devoted to the French cinema of the thirties. Following Jeancolas' premise that 'les années trente ne se terminaient pas en 1940'<sup>12</sup>, the second part of the thesis will then trace the evolution in the cinema of the Occupation of the inscription of family patterns and related themes.

The corpus of films from which I am working constitutes a mere fraction of the overall production of the periods studied. I believe, however, that the texts analysed here are to a certain extent representative of the cinema of their period in as much as they span the traditional 'art'/'commercial' dichotomy, including examples of some of the most popular melodramas of the day as well as some of the classics popular on the Ciné-club circuit and several obscure pot-boilers — although the latter category is the least well-represented.

From this cross-section of films I hope to establish common links between



'art' films and popular successes which may gave some indication of the dominant concerns of the society which produced them. The conclusions drawn from this detailed work on a restricted number of films may then be confirmed or disproved when applied to a larger body of texts at some future date.

## INTRODUCTION : NOTES

1. François de la Brétèque, 'Mémoire d'une Nation', *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, 18-19 (Spring 1976), p. 7.
2. Paul Monaco, *Cinema and Society* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976) p. 11.
3. Monaco, p. 5.
4. Ginette Vincendeau, 'French Cinema in the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985).
5. Vincendeau, p. 233.
6. Vincendeau, p. 223.
7. Vincendeau, p. 225.
8. Vincendeau, p. 378.
9. Vincendeau, p. 382.
10. Vincendeau, p. 224.
11. Vincendeau, pp. 209—211.
12. Jean—Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente, le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) p.7.

## CHAPTER ONE

### QUAI DES BRUMES

QUAI DES BRUMES (Carné, 1938) was chosen as an expository text because it unites most of the areas which will be dealt with in subsequent chapters. Firstly, it straddles the 'art'/popular divide, having been a popular success in its day - the second most popular film of 1938 after SNOW WHITE, according to a list published by the *Cinématographe Française*<sup>1</sup> — and having since acquired the status of a classic film as part of the Carné/Prévert *oeuvre* and an example of the poetic-realist school of filmmaking generally held to express the spirit of pre-war France. Secondly, as the film is the story of a deserter who attempts to flee France for South America, it foregrounds the theme of escape which was central in works of this period.

Thirdly and most importantly, it conforms to the classical Oedipal structure defined by Vincendeau, in which a dominant father-figure clashes with a younger male rival over the possession of a daughter/sweetheart. As the younger male rival is played by Gabin, whose 'myth' determines the course of the narrative, the film offers the opportunity to examine those aspects of the Gabin persona which will later be compared to the depiction of 'son' figures in narratives featuring other young male leads. The paternal and female parts of the triangle will also be analysed in order to determine on the one hand, the psychoanalytical and sociological implications of the role of the father, as well as the values attributed to him, and on the other hand, the function of the female character in a male-dominated narrative.

QUAI DES BRUMES begins with the arrival of a deserter — Gabin/Jean — at night in Le Havre. A friendly drunk takes him to Panama's bar, a hangout for social outcasts, where he meets Nelly, a girl on the run from her jealous guardian, Zabel, who, it turns out has murdered her boyfriend. Jean and Nelly fall in love, but

as a deserter on the run, Jean must leave France. Assuming the identity of an artist who committed suicide, he arranges a passage on a ship bound for Venezuela. Once on board, he cannot forget Nelly and goes back on shore in time to save her from the unwanted attentions of Zabel, whom he kills, only to be killed himself by Lucien, a local hoodlum and admirer of Nelly.

The extent to which the Gabin myth influenced the screen version of *QUAI DES BRUMES* is indicated in the introduction to the published scenario<sup>2</sup> which highlights the role played by Gabin in bringing the Carné/Prévert adaptation of the Mac Orlan book to the screen. It was he who suggested the project to UFA, who commissioned a screenplay from Prévert (but later dropped the idea of making a film featuring a deserter and ceded the option to one Gregor Rabinovitch), and he who imposed the Carné/Prévert team after viewing their previous film, *DROLE DE DRAME*. Not only was *QUAI DES BRUMES* therefore written with Gabin, and all that the Gabin persona entailed,<sup>3</sup> very much in mind, but Gabin's control over the finished product was also guaranteed in his contract, which stipulated that 'aucune modification du scénario ou des dialogues ne pouvait être apportée sans son accord.'<sup>4</sup>

The Gabin role therefore dominates the narrative, to the extent that other characters in the film, like certain elements of the *mise-en-scène* can be viewed as projections of the Gabin character's psyche. Thus, the mists of the title, along with the darkness of the opening sequences and 'l'eau glauque des rues pluvieuses',<sup>5</sup> form an integral part of the 'poetic-realist' pessimistic atmosphere of the film which Bazin rightly judges to be 'inséparable ... de la forte personnalité de Gabin.'<sup>6</sup> They are not only inseparable, but are in fact a symbolic exteriorisation of the Gabin character's internal state of mind, as the following conversation with the lorry driver who gives

him a lift to Le Havre makes clear:

LE CHAUFFEUR : Tu parles d'un brouillard!...  
LE SOLDAT : Oh! le brouillard... ça me connaît... J'ai  
été au Tonkin... alors, tu comprends, le brouillard...  
LE CHAUFFEUR : Tu rigoles... Y a pas de brouillard  
au Tonkin...  
LE SOLDAT (se touchant le front du doigt) : Si...  
là-dedans...<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the mist is a metaphor for the institutionalised violence inherent in the implementation of the French government's colonial policy, a violence which the soldier Jean attempts to flee by deserting, but which he finds waiting for him at Le Havre, in the person of the murderer Zabel. That Zabel is to be viewed as the manifestation on a individual level of the violence perpetrated by the French army on a more global scale is indicated by Jean's explicit reference to Tonkin when he tells Zabel: 'Au Tonkin un jour j'ai vu une bête dégueulasse. Rien qu'à la voir remuer, ça donnait envie de vomir. C'est à ça que tu ressembles.'

As a bourgeois and guardian of the adolescent Nelly, Zabel is a father-figure in both a political and personal sense. His murder of his ward's boyfriend and attack on Jean are motivated by sexual jealousy, which places them in the context of father/son conflict. However, the fact that the other source of violence in the film, Lucien, is of the younger generation but, like Zabel, is a bourgeois, extends the conflict of generations to a conflict of class. The bourgeois are placed in opposition not only to Jean, a common soldier, but also to the other positive characters in the film, who are variously workers, artists or *déclassés*. This opposition is expressed in symbolic terms by contrasting the mist and darkness which represent patriarchal violence with light and fine weather, a contrast which functions at the level of both cinematography and dialogue.

The most striking example of this contrast occurs in the scene in which Jean is taken by the drunk, Quart-Vittel, to Panama's *baraque*. The two men are shot walking across a sort of *terrain vague* through the darkness and mist towards the light. The notion of escape from adverse elements is reinforced in the dialogue, when Panama tells Jean:

Je te préviens, c'est pas la peine d'essayer de m'attrister  
avec le brouillard, les malheurs et les ennuis. Ici, il n'y  
a pas de brouillard... le temps est au beau fixe...les  
aiguilles sont clouées...

Panama creates an artificial world which denies the problems of present reality, a world which is remote in both place and time as it is linked with a trip to Panama in 1906, a souvenir of which, in the shape of ship in a bottle, stands above the bar. It is a world of comparative silence in which no uncomfortable questions are asked and the exchange of confidences, like the mention of mist, is prohibited, an arrangement which suits Jean, who describes himself as 'pas bavard'. This is in contrast with the verbose Zabel, whose exaggerated mastery of language is underlined in the script by his use of past subjunctives ('si Dieu voulait que je mourusse de mort violente...'), a grammatical form unusual in spoken French.

Another contrast lies in the relation of the two groups to social laws. While Zabel is to all appearances a pillar of society, 'un commerçant honorable', Panama's *baraque* is a haven for outcasts who live on the edges of the law, such as Quart-Vittel who survives by stealing brandy from barrels and has no fixed abode, or Jean himself, a deserter and possible murderer.

This combination of elements associated with the group of characters who congregate at Panama's *baraque* — the imaginary past (imaginary in that the historical trip has been mythified in a hermetic atmosphere of eternal past/present),

the retreat from language and the law — suggests that the bar is analogous to what in Lacanian psychoanalytical theory is described as an imaginary unity with the mother enjoyed by the infant prior to the experience of lack, the *manque à être* into which all human subjects are born.<sup>8</sup> It is the desire to return this hypothetical state of unity — hypothetical because it is never actually experienced but only conceived of retrospectively as a necessary corollary to the experience of lack - that Lacan sees as the root of all human nostalgia:

Mirage métaphysique de l'harmonie universelle, abîme mystique de la fusion affective, utopie sociale d'une tutelle totalitaire, hantise du paradis perdu d'avant la naissance et de la plus obscure aspiration à la mort.<sup>9</sup>

If Panama's *baraque* can be taken as a representation of the imaginary state of plenitude and unconditional love — an interpretation backed up by Panama's free provision of food and shelter for and unquestioning acceptance of the penniless, hungry and tired Jean — then the patriarchal order represented on an individual level by the bourgeois Zabel and, on an institutional level, by the army from which Jean is fleeing can be compared with the psychoanalytical concept of the symbolic order, the order in which the child is destined to take her/his place after passing through the Oedipus complex. This order is associated with the acquisition of language and submission to law, primarily the Law of the Father (the interdiction of the child's desire to usurp the father's place as object of the mother's desire) but by extension all social rules. As indicated above, Zabel's 'possession' of language and law is emphasised in the text.

The symbolic order is by definition one of alienation, both in the linguistic sense that the signifier the child learns to use is not the signified, and in as much as the acceptance of the Law of the Father, the letting go of the imagined identification



with the phallus, (Lacan's term for that which the mother lacks/desires) constitutes the final relinquishment of the child's ideal of unity with the mother. Alienation in this psychoanalytical sense has a sociological parallel in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, where Jean's alienation in the patriarchal order is indicated by the fact that in the first part of the film he remains nameless (in the scenario he is referred to as 'un soldat'). It is only on meeting Nelly, one of the motley assortment of individuals gathered together at Panama's bar, that he identifies himself as Jean. This marks the beginning of a relationship which, through its association with notions of regression, is one expression of the desire to escape the patriarchal order that forms the basic narrative project of the film.

As her — somewhat improbable — presence *chez* Panama suggests, Nelly is a symptom of Jean's regressive desires. Through his love for her, Jean gradually divests himself of the persona of the aggressive, cynical soldier and regains the more tender, hopeful qualities of a younger self. His definition of himself as Jean, like the following exchange between the lovers:

J : Quel âge tu as?

N : Dix-sept ans...

J : Moi aussi, j'ai eu dix-sept ans...

suggests the possibility of reclaiming elements of a previous self predating alienation in the patriarchal order and marks the beginning of a movement away from adult cynicism towards the naïve innocence of childhood.

Jean's cynicism is evident in his opening remarks to Nelly when he scoffs at the idea of true love 'comme au cinéma' and, taking Nelly for a prostitute, tells her:

Fais pas l'innocente. T'es tout de même pas venue ici pour apporter une galette à ta vieille grand-mère. T'es pas le petit chaperon rouge, non?...

The juxtaposition of an imaginary world and harsh reality, childhood fantasy and the loss of innocence, implied in the contrast between the virginal Red Riding Hood of the fairy tale and the fallen woman Jean imagines Nelly to be, is reminiscent of a similar juxtaposition at the beginning of the film, when Jean likens his experience of killing a man to shooting at the fairground, telling the lorry driver, 'Quand on tire, c'est comme à la fête. Oui, comme sur une pipe...', which again contrasts childhood make-believe with adult reality. The implication is that Jean's cynicism is a direct result of his experience of killing, which is linked with the army, Tonkin and the values of the patriarchal society with which they are associated.

The film is structured around the opposition between various representations of a state of plenitude, associated with light, shelter, and romantic love, and manifestations of the patriarchal order, associated with darkness, mist and violence. It is a cyclical structure in which moments of plenitude are repeatedly interrupted by the eruption of violence, thus creating the impression of a malevolent fate dogging Jean.

The film starts with shots of a dark road, illuminated by the headlights of the lorry which will give Jean a lift to Le Havre. Jean emerges from the darkness into the lorry, which is a source of light, comfort — Jean falls asleep — and oral satisfaction — the driver gives him cigarettes. The idyll comes to an end when Jean 'avec la terrible agressivité des hommes habitués à se battre pour un oui et pour un non'<sup>10</sup> — i.e. as a result of the social norm of violence he has internalised - almost has a stand up fight with the driver.

This sequence of events is repeated in the scene *chez Panama* outlined above, with the difference that the violence disrupting the idyll this time has an external

source — Lucien and his band of would-be gangsters. Panama's comment at this point, 'On choisit un coin tranquille pour ne pas voir les sales gens et ils viennent justement dans ce coin-là pour s'entre-tuer', sums up the rest of the film, which repeatedly demonstrates the impossibility of not becoming implicated in the violence perpetrated by one's fellow citizens.

On leaving Panama's *baraque*, Jean's tête-à-tête with Nelly is interrupted by the unwelcome appearance of Lucien, a meeting which ends once more in violence, with Jean slapping one of Lucien's henchmen. Jean's next meeting with Nelly alone at a fairground is also punctuated with a fight, Lucien himself being this time on the receiving end.

The 'return to childhood' symbolism of the fairground is underlined in Nelly's instructions to Jean, when she arranges to meet him at 'un manège d'enfants avec des lapins blancs'. The reference back to Jean's earlier speech in which he likens killing a man to shooting clay pipes at the fair is underlined during the fairground sequence by the noise of shots on the sound track and Jean's comment 'Allez...viens...ils me cassent les oreilles avec leur fusillade...'. This reminder of social reality underlines the fragile nature of the imaginary world and adds to the fatalistic atmosphere pervading the film. It therefore comes as no surprise that the lovers idyll in the next scene is shortlived, the seclusion disrupted by the encounter with Lucien in the following scene.

The final twist in the film's spiral occurs in the hotel room the morning after Jean and Nelly's first night together. This last idyll is broken by the hotel page, who brings news of the discovery of both Nelly's murdered boyfriend and Jean's uniform, which had been found washed up beside the body and has led to him being sought for

the murder. Thus, in spite of himself Jean has become entangled in the ambient violence, and must depart in haste for the ship upon which he plans to sail to Venezuela.

The trip to Venezuela represents the second possibility of escape in the film. It is obviously incompatible with Jean's continued relationship with Nelly, and much of the tension in the film derives from the knowledge that Jean must sacrifice either his love or the possibility of a new life *ailleurs*. The mutual exclusivity of the two paths of escape from the patriarchal order is underlined at various points in the text, notably in the unusual transition following the scene in which the ship's doctor invites Jean to come on the voyage. The doctor's question: 'Mais tout de même... enfin...vous n'êtes attaché à personne?...', is followed by a sudden pan as the camera swivels around to focus accusingly on Jean. Jean's response, 'Non... à personne...', is belied by the cut which follows his words, a lateral wipe moving out from the centre to reveal Nelly standing on a fake deck of a ship

And yet, despite their incompatibility, both the planned voyage and the relationship with Nelly are in fact projections of Jean's regressive desires. Just as Nelly was linked with a pre-symbolic imaginary state through her association with Panama's *baraque* and her stimulation of Jean's childhood memories ('Moi aussi...j'ai eu dix-sept ans') so the imaginary nature of the voyage is established in the film in the opening scene of the fairground sequence discussed above, in which Jean joins Nelly on the fake deck of a fake ship in a photographer's studio. Moreover, the voyage is also associated with Panama by virtue of its proximity to the Panama canal, an association underlined in a line in the scenario — 'Le Venezuela... On passe par le canal du Panama.'<sup>11</sup> — which was cut from the final version of the film.

The mutually exclusive nature of these projections, like the ultimate failure of either to provide a positive resolution to Jean's situation, can be explained by analogy with another concept from Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, that of the mirror phase, the first stage in the development of the ego pre-dating the acquisition of language and the submission to social laws. In this stage the infant, which had experienced itself as uncoordinated and fragmented because of its lack of motor control, acquires a sense of self through an imaginary identity with the wholeness of either its mirror image or another body, frequently but not necessarily that of the mother, with whom the child is locked in a dyadic relationship in this pre-Oedipal phase.

This identity is imaginary because the mirror/other body reflects to the infant a mastery of its own body which it has not yet achieved, and narcissistic, in that the infant falls in love with this ideal self-image. The ego is therefore formed in alienation, on the basis of an illusory, not real, identity with the other. It is only in the Symbolic, with the acquisition of language and especially the pronoun 'I', that the subject becomes fixed as a subject and the possibility of erroneous identifications with selves which are not the self is removed.

Panama's *baraque* is the site of false identifications for Jean, the first of which is the identification with Nelly. She is constructed in the text as a mirror image of Jean in that they are each portrayed as attempting to escape the same phenomenon in a similar way, a similarity which is made explicit in the following exchange between the two:

N : Je me suis sauvée. Si je rentre, c'est terrible et si  
je ne rentre pas, c'est pareil.  
J : Moi aussi, je devrais rentrer quelque part. Mais si  
je rentrais comme tu dis: ce serait terrible.

Like Jean, Nelly is caught in a vicious circle. Both seek to escape from a

society in which institutions and individuals representing the Law are themselves guilty of violence and murder. Just as Jean fled from an army responsible for the enforcement of French colonial policies in Tonkin,<sup>12</sup> so Nelly attempts to flee from a 'respectable' bourgeois who murders young men and threatens to sexually harass his ward. And, just as Jean find himself unable to escape the patriarchal violence which catches up with him in its various forms, so Nelly is initially unable to find an alternative to life with Zabel. Her exchange with her guardian upon her return:

Z : Voyons, pourquoi t'es-tu sauvée l'autre soir?  
 N : Parce que j'ai eu peur.  
 Z : Quelle enfant tu fais. Et pourquoi es-tu revenue alors?  
 N : Parce que les autres aussi me font peur. Où voulez-vous que j'aille?

reinforces the overall impression given in the film of a violent, alienating society from which there is no escape. The feeling of claustrophobia is made explicit in Nelly's comment to Jean 'C'était tellement sinistre chez Zabel...j'étouffais'.

The way out of this suffocating environment, for Nelly as for Jean, is in the romantic ideal of love - she tells Jean, 'Quand je suis avec vous je respire, je suis vivante' - which is synonymous with a regression to childhood, as is indicated in another of her lines to Jean: "Nelly" quand vous m'appellez comme ça, "Nelly", c'est comme si vous veniez me chercher très loin...là-bas... quand j'étais petite.' This notion of regression, with her as with Jean, contains an element of spiritual regeneration, a return to a period preceding the process of corruption which Nelly feels she has undergone. Her description of her adolescence, 'J'ai grandi trop vite. J'ai vu trop de choses. Je suis abîmée', echoes the corrupting influence of military life on Jean.

If Nelly is one of the false 'selves' with whom Jean identifies, then the other

is the painter Michel Krauss, who is also present on that first evening at Panama's and whose identity Jean assumes when Krauss commits suicide, leaving his clothes and papers for the soldier in need of a change of *état civil*. It is through the assumption of Krauss' identity that the trip to Venezuela on board a cargo boat becomes possible, as Jean/Krauss is befriended and offered a passage by the ship's doctor, an art lover, on the strength of his identity as an artist. The fragile nature of this identity, the gulf between the assumed and actual self is indicated in the only vaguely comic scene in the film, where Jean, bewildered by the doctor's attempt to discuss abstract art, can only echo Krauss' earlier definition of his artistic vision. The sincerity and personal nature of Krauss' expression of *Weltschmerz* ensure that the remarks sound hollow and absurd in the mouth of Jean.

The link between the fate of Krauss and that of Jean is underlined in the scene following Krauss' suicidal stroll into the sea, which is accompanied by Panama's comment: 'Quel brouillard...quel sale brouillard.' The scene opens with a shot of a large ship, the ship which from its first appearance in the credits sequence has represented Jean's desire to escape *ailleurs*. The camera then does a 180° pan along the mooring ropes, swinging round to reveal Jean and Nelly sitting by the edge of the quay. Looking into the water, Jean says: 'Il est bath, le fond de la mer.' This expression of pleasure upon contemplating the bottom of the sea evokes Krauss' death by drowning and therefore seems premonitory of Jean's failure to take the boat and of his own subsequent death, while Panama's reference to the mist in relation to Krauss' suicide links this instance of self-destruction with the mist symbolising the violence in both contemporary society and within Jean's head. The expression used by Krauss in reference to his suicide, 'Enfin, tout va s'arranger...j'ai fait le tour...la

boucle est bouclée', is again evocative of a circle, and so of the failure to escape a claustrophobic environment which is the main theme of the film.

Thus, the characters of Nelly and Krauss both reflect certain aspects of Jean's situation and so could be said to be representations of his fragmented self. The instability of this 'self' is indicated in the change of identities he undergoes in Panama's *baraque*, the anonymous soldier becoming Jean becoming Krauss. The pragmatic need for an *état civil* which provides the narrative justification for the latter change is thus a metaphor for the disintegration of his personality in the course of his regression. The two escape routes are mutually exclusive in that each represents a different aspect of Jean's fragmented personality, while the image of the closed circle associated with each indicates the lack of positive development on the part of Jean to which the tragic end of the film can be attributed.

There is thus a broad similarity to the mirror phase of development, a narcissistic stage in which the subject is in danger of remaining locked in a series of identifications with false selves and which therefore, as Juliet Mitchell points out 'has to be moved on from if the person is not to end up in the vicious circle in which Narcissus found himself.'<sup>13</sup> The cyclical structure of the film is an illustration of this very inability on the part of Jean to progress through the mirror phase, a failure which amounts to an involuntary suicide.

Jean cannot extricate himself from the vicious circle of successive identifications because the only exit leads into the realm of the father, the realm of language and the law. As mentioned above, it is Zabel who is in possession of these by virtue of his eloquence and his social status, while Jean, as a deserter from the army, is condemned to silence and the company of his fellow outcasts, living on the



edge of the law.

Throughout *QUAI DES BRUMES* Jean is repeatedly reminded of his lack of being in relationship to the law. In the lorry bound for Le Havre he is told by the driver: 'C'est tout de même pas parce que tu viens des pays chaud que tu vas faire la loi sur mon camion...', while in the scene at the docks one of Lucien's gang attempts to put him down with: 'Quoi... un simple soldat qui donne des ordres!'. Without authority, a position from which to speak, Jean can only assert himself with the use or threat of violence.

This outlaw status is accompanied by another symptom of exclusion from the realm of the fathers, namely a lack of being in financial terms, which, in a capitalist economy, is synonymous with impotence. Jean's impecunious state is established at Panama's *baraque*, when his inability to either buy food or admit that he is hungry results in another display of violent anger. Just as Panama feeds him so Nelly slips him money, which is in itself an indication of shameful unmanliness in Carné films.<sup>14</sup> When he tries to rid himself of the stigma of having been given money by a woman by buying her a present with it, Zabel refuses to accept his money, telling him: 'Je vous fais cadeau du cadeau que vous voulez offrir à Nelly.' Zabel thus effectively emasculates Jean and wins the first round in their Oedipal conflict over Nelly.

The Oedipal conflict comes to a head at the end of the film when Jean discovers Zabel trying to force himself on Nelly and kills him, thereby completing the process of his own criminalization. And yet, despite its criminal nature, the murder is presented as morally justifiable within the terms of the film, in that the characterization of Zabel is such as to persuade the spectator to agree with Jean's judgement when he tells his victim: 'Dégueulasse...tu devrais pas vivre...t'es trop

pourri...je devrais te crever.'

The spectator agrees with the moral imperative implied in the verb 'devoir' in that Zabel is an inherently unpleasant character, a murderer and a hypocrite, while his passion for Nelly is clearly marked as deviant. Lines such as the following comment to Nelly, 'C'est drôle... tu es encore petite fille et pourtant tu es déjà une petite femme', emphasise the unhealthy and almost paedophilic aspect of Zabel's passion and so label him unsuitable as a partner for Nelly.

In his incestuous desire for his ward, the character of Zabel evokes certain aspects of the pattern identified by Vincendeau as predominant in films of the 1930s, whereby older male leads 'incarnated mature but powerful male figures who repeatedly won young women over from younger (and often more attractive rivals)',<sup>15</sup> thereby forming relationships which frequently had incestuous overtones. Although Zabel doesn't win Nelly, by whom he is regarded with fear and disgust, his emasculating behaviour towards his younger rival conforms to the paradigm. In other respects, however, the portrayal of the patriarch in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, and that of the social order he represents, are at variance with the pattern described by Vincendeau in her examination of these older man/young woman relationships in films such as *LA FEMME DU BOULANGER*, where Pagnol offers the spectator the image of an "ideal" (archaic/nostalgic) world'<sup>16</sup> in which the older man and/or the order he represents is/are seen as desirable.

On an individual level, the characterisation of Zabel as undesirable and of his desire for Nelly as paedophilic constitutes a rejection of the older man/younger woman pairing which found unproblematic acceptance and indeed support in the community created by Pagnol. Similarly, the social order which Zabel embodies, far

from representing an ideal if mythical world with which the spectator is invited to identify, is clearly denoted as a repressive alienating environment which stifles the younger generation. As shown above, the aura of violence and depravity surrounding the father-figure summed up in Nelly's line: 'C'était tellement sinistre chez Zabel... j'étouffais', is but an individual manifestation of the violence and depravity inherent in the militaristic colonialist society depicted in the film, and from which Jean tries in vain to escape.

Thus, whereas in the Pagnol film, the patriarchal order is in itself an escapist fantasy, a 'nostalgic recreation of an order (or imagined order) that is "lost"' <sup>17</sup> i.e. a mythical past in which women were kept in a well-defined place, in *QUAI DES BRUMES* the situation is reversed as the patriarchal order is portrayed as an undesirable social structure to be fled rather than sought and it is the maternal realm which becomes the object of fantasies of escape. *QUAI DES BRUMES* contrasts therefore with military vaudevilles, another genre which, according to Vincendeau, reaffirms the existing patriarchal order. <sup>18</sup> and in which the trajectory of the hero is diametrically opposed to that of Jean, as the following account of a Fernandel film, in which the comique troupier hero progresses from hen-pecked husband to military hero, makes clear:

In psychological terms, Fernandel's trajectory is classically Oedipal, in that it takes him out of his regressive submission to the realm of 'the mother' to a position of authority vis-à-vis his comrades (the act of heroism) and his rightful place in society (represented by him being decorated). This is achieved through his sufficient integration of the law of his 'father' embodied here by the military commandment. <sup>19</sup>

This is the inverse of the situation in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, as, rather than integrating the law of the father, which is seen to be corrupt, Jean rejects it. He

cannot therefore take up his place in society as there is no place available to him, nor can his regressive desires to return to an imaginary maternal realm provide a solution to his predicament. His death is the only possible dénouement.

The tragic outcome of the Oedipal conflict in *QUAI DES BRUMES* conforms to the paradigm of the Gabin narrative defined by Vincendeau. In order to determine to what extent this paradigm holds good only for Gabin narratives, or conversely, also applies to a range of films focusing on 'son' figures, subsequent chapters will compare the inscription of the Oedipal conflict in a variety of narratives to the pattern which has emerged from the above analysis in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, the salient points of which can be summarised as follows:

The 'son', Jean, is excluded from the realm of the fathers in both a psychoanalytical and sociological sense, in that he is denied access to language and the law, which in Lacanian theory are acquired in the symbolic realm and in the filmic text are 'possessed' by the father-figure, Zabel, who also possesses the wealth which Jean lacks and which is equivalent to power in capitalist society. Although theoretically a criminal, as both a deserter from the army and subsequently the murderer of Zabel, Jean retains the spectators' sympathy in that his illegal acts are morally justified, as the patriarchal regime which is synonymous with the law is morally bankrupt, being linked with murder on an individual (Zabel) and collective (Tonkin) basis. Jean's recourse to violence is therefore the only means of resistance to a corrupt social order which has a monopoly on language and law.

The criminal/honest dichotomy embodied by Jean is one of the series of binary opposites which Vincendeau lists as being part of the structure of the Gabin character.<sup>20</sup> Whether this and other elements specific to the Gabin character in *QUAI*

DES BRUMES — the exclusion from the patriarchal order, the concomitant regression to the imaginary realm — are also a constituent part of characters played by other young male leads in a range of narratives will be investigated in Chapter Three.

The question of the sociological dimension of the Oedipal conflict, will also be considered in subsequent chapters, in order to determine whether the equation between ‘sons’ and the proletariat, ‘fathers’ and the bourgeoisie is as straightforward as the Jean/Zabel conflict would make it appear. The character of Lucien would suggest that it is not, in that the number of elements linking him with Zabel in *QUAI DES BRUMES* indicate that Zabel’s characterization as unsuitable for Nelly is a question not only of age but also of class.

Both men desire Nelly and both are rendered unsympathetic by their jealous outbursts of violence against their rivals. Zabel’s murder of Nelly’s boyfriend is mirrored by Lucien’s murder of Jean, which suggests a certain degree of interchangeability between the characters. The negative characterization of Lucien cannot be attributed to his age; Pierre Brasseur, who played the role, was in fact a year younger than Gabin, and Lucien’s depiction as *un fils à papa mal tourné* places him firmly in the ‘son’ category. The common factor is their bourgeois background, which opposes them both to the proletarian Gabin. The old/young dichotomy of the father/son conflict is thus overlaid by a bourgeois/proletarian split, permitting Lucien, a ‘son’ by virtue of age, to take on the negative characteristics of the ‘fathers’ by virtue of his class. In its consideration of the range of inscriptions of father-figures in 1930s cinema, Chapter Four will follow on from this and look at whether older males can on occasion display the positive aspects associated with son figures.

If Jean's Oedipal conflict ends badly, there is one character in *QUAI DES BRUMES* who matures from childhood to adulthood and progresses from a position of fear to one of rebellion. Nelly's development is made clear in the dialogue between her and Zabel, when she returns to face her guardian in an attempt to save her lover:

N : Vous ne me faites plus peur. C'est vrai, n'importe quoi peut m'arriver maintenant, plus jamais je n'aurai peur. C'est fini...

Z : Tu n'es plus la même, Nelly, tu n'as plus ta tête d'enfant.

This contrasts with their earlier confrontation, in which Nelly had confessed her fear of everything, and indicates that she has been strengthened by the relationship which will literally be the death of Jean and will emerge unscathed from the patriarchal violence surrounding the lovers, a notion confirmed in the fact that at the end of the film she is the one survivor of the father/son/daughter triangle

It was suggested above that Nelly could be regarded as a projection of certain aspects of Jean's character, those aspects associated with childhood innocence, the healthy life-affirming potential present in the infant which was contaminated in adult life by Jean's internalisation of the patriarchal norm of violence at Tonkin and then rediscovered through his love for Nelly. The narrative of *QUAI DES BRUMES*, with its cyclical recurrence of violence, demonstrates the impossibility of integrating the positive values associated with Nelly and the imaginary realm — the potential for love, the disinterested friendship and mutual aid among the outcasts at Panama's *baraque*, moral integrity — into a patriarchal society characterised as morally corrupt.

Unable to integrate the Law of the fathers, Jean is excluded from the patriarchal realm and must die. While the positive values he embodies live on in Nelly, she, as a woman, is by definition excluded from a position of power within

patriarchy and so the values she symbolises remain outwith the dominant regime. In the function she therefore ultimately fulfils as the incarnation of spiritual values above and beyond the social order, as well as in her rebellion against the patriarchal regime represented by Zabel, she foreshadows the role allotted to female characters in the cinema of the Occupation, which, as the second part of this thesis will show, featured a number of rebellious 'daughters'.

It is however in her primary role as a representation of the imaginary realm and hence an expression of Jean's desire for regression that she is more typical of the female characters of 1930s cinema and it is this use of women as manifestations of the male psyche that will be investigated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER ONE : NOTES

1. *Cinématographe Française* 31/3/39, quoted in Ginette Vincendeau, 'French Cinema in the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) p. 166.
2. Jacques Prévert, *Jenny, Le Quai des Brumes*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1988) pp. 147—151.
3. By the time *QUAI DES BRUMES* was made in 1938 the various elements constituting the Gabin myth (the outbursts of rage, the split personality) had already been established in 5 films shot over the preceding 3 years (*LA BANDERA*, *LA BELLE EQUIPE*, *LES BAS-FONDS*, *PEPE LE MOKO*, *GUEULE D'AMOUR*).
4. Prévert, p. 153.
5. André Bazin, *Le Cinema de l'Occupation et de la Resistance* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1975) p. 132.
6. Ibid.
7. Prévert, p. 161.
8. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake *Film Theory: an Introduction*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 67.
9. Gérard Miller (ed.), *Lacan* (Paris: Bordas, 1987) pp. 34—35.
10. Prévert, p. 170.
11. Prévert, p. 282.
12. The Tonkin campaign involved the brutal suppression of nationalist freedom fighters, a fact never stated in the film but which presumably lay behind Prévert's choice of Tonkin as a reference, although, given contemporary militaristic discourses, it was more likely to have positive associations — the valour of French troops carrying out their *mission civilisatrice* at great cost to themselves — for the majority of spectators.
13. Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974) p. 33.
14. cf *JENNY*, in which Lucien's moral regeneration is marked by his decision to stop being a gigolo and earn his own money, and *HOTEL DU NORD*, in which the pimp Edmond's decision to lead a new and respectable existence is heralded by his announcement to Raymonde, 'Je veux gagner mon bifteck



moi-même’.

15. Vincendeau, p. 180.
16. Vincendeau, pp. 223—225.
17. Vincendeau, p. 233.
18. Vincendeau, p. 201.
19. Vincendeau, p. 196.
20. Vincendeau, pp. 289—290.

## CHAPTER TWO

Function of the Feminine :

A Woman's Role in Films of the 1930s

In its examination of the role of female characters in melodramas of the 1930s, this chapter has a double focus. Firstly, following on from the analysis of Nelly in *QUAI DES BRUMES* proposed in the previous chapter, it will look at the function of female characters as a projection of the male psyche dominating four films of the period — *PARADIS PERDU* (Gance, 1939), *PEPE LE MOKO* (Duvivier, 1936), *LE JOUR SE LEVE* (Carné, 1939) and *LE GRAND JEU* (Feyder, 1933).

Secondly, it will examine the position allocated to women in patriarchy as demonstrated in three films which are an exception to the general rule, in that they centre upon a female character. These are *L'ENTRAINEUSE* (Valentin, 1938), which, as the name suggests, revolves around the eponymous heroine, played by Michèle Morgan, and *LE BONHEUR* (L'Herbier, 1935) and *PRIX DE BEAUTE* (Genina, 1931) both of which involve an interesting element of *mise-en-abyme* in that the central characters are, respectively, a female star of screen and stage and a beauty contest winner turned film star, played, respectively by a star of screen and stage, Gaby Morlay and the iconic beauty of the twenties, Louise Brooks.

This second section of the chapter will go beyond the concept of women as a repository for male fantasy to look at its corollary, the male need to control and punish women who resist the position allotted to them, as exemplified in these three films.

One common thread running through the two sections and which will be examined in each is the function of a popular song as a structuring element within the filmic text.

2.1. WOMAN AS SWEETHEART/MOTHER: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE IMAGINARY REALM IN PARADIS PERDU, LE JOUR SE LEVE, PEPE LE MOKO AND LE GRAND JEU

This section takes as its starting point the Abel Gance film of 1939, *PARADIS PERDU*. Although this film has not gained the international status and recognition enjoyed today by the pre-war work of Renoir and Carné, it is a work of arguably greater importance than either of the above in that, rather than reflecting the world-view of one (team of) creative artist(s), it groups together a number of the dominant themes recurring in the work of various directors of that period and so could be said to epitomise 1930s French cinema.

The three dominant and interlocking elements which will be discussed here and which frequently occur in the cinema of the 1930s are as follows: woman as representative of a mythical/historical/personal past and — a variation of that theme — woman as muse; nostalgia; a popular song which recalls the past and so serves to underline its loss. This section will show how these and other elements operate both within *PARADIS PERDU* and in the other films listed above to produce that pervasive atmosphere of gloom, doom and nostalgia so typical of pre-war cinema.

In *PARADIS PERDU*, this dual function of muse/ symbol of a desirable but unattainable past is fulfilled by Micheline Presle in her double role as Janine/Jeanette, the wife/daughter of Pierre, played by Fernand Gravey. It is the art student Pierre's meeting with Janine which sparks off his career as a *couturier*, in that his desire to have her accompany him to a ball leads him to remodel a particularly hideous example of *Belle Epoque haute couture* for her to wear. From this moment her role as sweetheart and muse are inextricably entwined; at the end of the evening Pierre tells her:

J'ai l'impression que nous commençons un beau rêve.  
Je voudrais créer pour vous des robes, toutes plus belles  
les unes que les autres. Imaginez celle-ci, en tulle rose,  
très légère. Je vous vois tournant dans une grande  
pièce, dansant toute seule...

At this point there is a cut to a dream sequence, an enactment of the scene evoked above, which emphasises the catalytic role of Janine in releasing Pierre's creativity while firmly situating her in the realm of fantasy. This movement from independent character in the film to figure of Pierre's imagination is the first step in a process completed by Janine's death in childbirth, at which point her function changes from that of sweetheart/muse to that of mother/symbol of lost past. Her physical elimination from the text is concomitant with her assumption of a symbolic position of prime importance in Pierre's mind and hence in the film itself, the remainder and indeed the main part of which is devoted to Pierre's refusal to relinquish the past and enjoy the present.

The narrative emphasis on nostalgia, expressed in the following exchange between Pierre and his daughter, Jeannette:

J : ...c'était avant ma naissance que tu as vécu tes plus  
belles années.

P : Les plus belles heures seulement, ma chérie.

J : C'est pour ça que tu t'obstines à vouloir les revivre,  
à vouloir les prolonger?

is inscribed in the structure of the film itself. The first sequences, which are set in 1914 and represent the plenitude of the lovers' paradise, are followed by sequences set in 1916, 1919 and the contemporary present, each of which represents or repeats the initial loss of Janine. Thus, over half the film is diegetically steeped in nostalgia, while the first sequences are themselves representative of the past for a 1930s audience. The 'past' is however a purely formal construct, in as much as the merest

scratching at the 1914 veneer reveals the *paradis perdu* to be of 1930s vintage.

The opening sequence of *PARADIS PERDU* groups together a number of elements which recur in the films of the 1930s. These are the setting — *a bal du 14 Juillet*, held in a *guinguette*, presumably situated in a working-class area of Paris and the profession of Janine — *midinette*. These references to the *fêtes populaires* and the *petits métiers* are evidence both of the influence of populism in the films of the 1930s and, more importantly, of a common tendency to idealise a mythical past as a locus of happiness and fulfilment.

The tendency to take poverty as the guarantor of virtue and authenticity extends to the character of Pierre, who is made to conform as far as possible to the populist stereotype of the romantic hero, the prerequisites of which are set out in Janine's description of her lover: 'Il est beau, il est intelligent, il est pauvre. En somme, il a tout pour lui.' Fernand Gravey was too refined to conform completely to the proletarian image of a Jean Gabin, but care is taken in the film to preserve as much as possible of his character's machismo. When he goes to work for a fashion designer, Pierre instructs the seamstresses: 'Ne m'appellez pas M. Pierre. Je ne suis pas couturier, je suis peintre. Appelez-moi M. Leblanc.' — an attempt, presumably, to dispel the ideas of effeminacy which attach to that profession.

Finally, the characters are rendered sympathetic to a 1930s audience in that they impose their 1930s tastes on the 1914 setting. After defurring and defrilling the *Belle Epoque* monstrosity given to Janine, Pierre transforms it into what is effectively a sleek 1930s evening dress. Thus, the pre-war past, far from being a historical recreation, is in fact a skilful reworking of the myths and modes of 1930s France.

And it is a past which only remains in the diegetic present long enough for it

to become the focus of nostalgia. The lovers' tête à tête at the *bal du quatorze juillet* is broken up by two representatives of law and order, and this is the sequence of events which is to form the pattern of the relationship between Pierre and Janine. After meeting again, they marry and spend a few weeks together in the country, in an *au bord de la Marne* type setting, before this second populist idyll is broken up once more by the forces of society — in this case, the declaration of war and Pierre's departure for the front.

This separation proves to be definitive for during Pierre's absence Janine dies giving birth to Jeannette. The news of her death reaches Pierre at the front at the same time as a recording of her voice singing 'Le Paradis Perdu'. There follows a scene of Pierre and his comrades arming themselves to go out on patrol while the gramophone plays the recording. This underlines the contrast between the present violence and danger of war, associated in the text with an exclusively male group, and the peaceful lovers' paradise which is now situated firmly and irretrievably in the past.

In its evocation of a rural idyll associated with a female representative of a personal and socio-mythical past, PARADIS PERDU can be compared with another film of 1939, Carné's classic LE JOUR SE LEVE, in which a *fleuriste*, Françoise, appears in the all-male environment of a factory clutching a bouquet of flowers. For François, whom we see at work there, she represents the hope of an escape from the industrial environment of the urban proletariat, as her flowers provide a link with the countryside and her profession a reminder of the *petits métiers* of the past. She could in fact almost be described as an embodiment of the promises of the Popular Front, as the dream she inspires in François of bicycle rides in the country — at one point

he tells her: 'Je te payerai un vélo et puis à Paques on ira cueiller des lilas' — are an obvious reflection of the Popular Front policies of *congés payés* and *sports et loisirs*.

In PARADIS PERDU, Janine is inscribed in both the historical past of the spectator - her scenes in the film all take place in 1914- and in the personal past of Pierre. Similarly, despite the contemporary references in LE JOUR SE LEVE, Françoise represents a return to the past for François, in that their relationship is founded in part on a common background - they are both *enfants de l'Assistance*. Moreover, both Françoise and Janine are presented in opposition to the specifically male domains of capitalist industry and war, and so they come to symbolise a female realm of peace, happiness and rural pleasures which is either situated in the past, as in PARADIS PERDU, or remains a hypothetical proposition, as in LE JOUR SE LEVE. This pattern has clear parallels with the Lacanian concepts of desire for (imaginary) unity with the mother and a rejection of the symbolic order of the fathers, linked with language and law, as summarised in the foregoing analysis of QUAI DES BRUMES.

Just as Jean in QUAI DES BRUMES had become entrapped in a series of identifications with false 'selves', so in both LE JOUR SE LEVE and PARADIS PERDU, a series of doubling imagery suggests a regression on the part of the central male protagonist to the site of false identifications, the mirror stage. When Janine finds Pierre again after their initial separation, her entry to his room is marked by a shot of Pierre reflected in the mirror, followed by a reverse shot of Janine standing in front of her own portrait. On two subsequent occasions, Pierre finishes a dress on Janine and instructs her 'Regardez-vous dans la glace', which produces two more shots of the couple reflected in a mirror.



The concept of the double not only features in the *mise-en-scène*, but is also part of the structure of the film itself, as the second part is set in the then contemporary present and follows the fortunes of Janine's adolescent daughter. The effect of this is two-fold. On the one hand, the fact that both mother and daughter are played by Micheline Presle suggests the doubling of the mirror image. On the other hand, Janine is thereby firmly inscribed in the text as the dead mother, and the *paradis perdu* of the title can be taken to refer to the mythical state of maternal plenitude.

In *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, François' regression to the mirror phase is signalled by a series of identifications he makes with false 'selves'. These range from a photomat strip of photographs of himself stuck behind Françoise's mirror, about which he comments 'Me voilà, en plusieurs exemplaires', to the teddy bear with which he compares himself in the mirror and which, like the milk he drinks in the factory while his colleague is swigging wine, indicates a regression to childhood and a rejection of the man's world in which he finds himself. The most obvious example of François' identification with a self which is not the self is however his relationship with Françoise, who shares his name and appears on his name day. She thus provides an affirmation of 'self' in the depersonalizing industrial environment and so can be interpreted as an expression of François' desire for identity in accordance with the traditions of the past, as an escape from the loss of self in the industrial present.

And so the female figures in both these films are no more than manifestations of the male psyche, representations of a regressive longing for a mythical, maternal past, a psychological construct which is translated into sociological terms in the text. In *PARADIS PERDU* it is transposed onto an idealised period of peace and

tranquillity before the outbreak of war, while in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, the *paradis perdu* is equated with the pre-industrial past of the *petits métiers* and traditional *fêtes*, which assures the sense of 'self' lost in patriarchal capitalism.

It is this regressive desire to recapture the plenitude of the lost maternal realm which determines the structure of *PARADIS PERDU*, in that the various sequences following the death of Janine suggest the possibility of happiness in the present only to reiterate this initial loss. As well as adding to the general atmosphere of nostalgia in which the film is bathed, the song 'Le Paradis Perdu' punctuates and comments upon the different stages of hope and loss and so has an expository function which was a common feature in the use of songs in the French cinema of the period.

Although the Busby Berkeley/Astaire/Rogers type Hollywood extravaganza had no direct equivalent at Joinville, songs were integrated into French films of the 1930s in a number of ways and for a variety of reasons. The first of these was to provide a showcase for the talents of the numerous actors and actresses who had come to cinema via the music-hall. Examples of this range from Gabin singing 'La Môme Caoutchouc' at the beginning of his cinematic career in Litvak's *COEUR DE LILAS*, Florelle's song in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, and Arletty and Michel Simon's rendition of 'Comme de bien entendu' in *CIRCONSTANCES ATTENUANTES*. The popularity of this device with cinema audiences can be judged by the fact that, in order to increase the market attraction of what they regarded as a commercial flop, the producers of Jean Vigo's surrealist classic, *L'ATALANTE*, stuck a popular song onto the soundtrack at the beginning of the film, the name of which they changed to *LE CHALAND QUI PASSE*, the title of the tune.

What concerns us here, however, is the second way in which songs were used,

namely, as a dramatic device forming an integral part of the film, as in Renoir's *LA CHIENNE*, in which Michel Simon murders his mistress in her bedroom. During the murder scene there is a cut away from the room onto the street singer on the street below, whose sentimental song provides a counterpoint to, and an ironic comment on, the brutal end being put to the love affair above.

In *PARADIS PERDU*, the various renditions of the eponymous song express the basic tension underlying the film; Pierre's obsessive desire to recapture his past happiness with Janine as opposed to the possibilities of a new happiness which present themselves at different stages of the 'present' — 1916, 1919, 1939 — in the diegesis. It is this conflict which is set out in the opening scene of the film, in the two verses of 'Le Paradis Perdu' sung by a street singer:

Rêve d'amour, bonheur trop court, au paradis perdu  
Tendres espoirs, bouquet d'un soir, dont le parfum n'est  
plus  
Le coeur cherche sans cesse l'écho de sa jeunesse  
Et chaque jour est un retour au paradis perdu.

Vous ne pouvez pas savoir comme mon pauvre coeur  
est loin.  
Pourtant, je l'ai dit, ce soir n'interdit pas demain.  
Le jour recommence, le printemps s'avance  
Tout chante, c'est encore mon tour

Rêve d'amour, bonheur trop court... etc

The cyclical structure of the song, the return to the point of departure ('rêve d'amour', 'bonheur trop court' etc) is a reflection of the cyclical structure of the film itself, which revolves around the song's basic theme, the theme of a lost moment which one attempts in vain to recapture. The following analysis will look at the cyclical development of the film, which is structured in part around the desire for regression expressed in the nostalgic lyrics of the song, in part around an opposition

between the maternal/imaginary and paternal/symbolic realms.

As indicated above, the lovers' first encounter is disrupted by two students posing as policemen who 'arrest' Pierre, a prefiguration of the later disruption of the newlyweds' honeymoon by the outbreak of war and mobilisation. Janine represents a retreat to the imaginary realm, as opposed to the patriarchal world of the symbolic. Janine is not however the only mother figure in the text; two other women make up a female atmosphere which protects and nurtures Pierre.

The apartment building in which Pierre lives is to all intents and purposes a maternal realm, inhabited by well-wishing older women who are responsible for the lovers' welfare before the war and Pierre's well-being after it. It is through one of them, the *concierge* who accepted Pierre's portrait of Janine in lieu of rent that the lovers are reunited and it is through the generosity of the other, the exiled Russian Princess Sonia Vorochine, the Janine can accompany Pierre to the ball. Sonia presents Janine with the hideous ball-gown which Pierre transforms into the winning entry in that evening's *concours d'élégance*, of which Sonia is the presiding judge. Thus, although Janine is clearly constructed in the text as a muse figure, who releases Pierre's creative genius, it is Sonia who provides both the raw material and the critical acclaim which launches his career.

The next stage of the film takes place in 1916. Janine has died giving birth to Jeannette, thus conforming to the ideal of self-sacrificing motherhood perpetuated in patriarchal culture.<sup>1</sup> (Tellingly, it is Pierre and not the unborn child who is the beneficiary of the sacrifice. Janine '[se] prive de tout pour lui envoyer des paquets', with such success that she is too weak to survive the birth.)

Pierre responds to the news of her death by going off on suicide patrols,

getting shot and ending up in a military hospital where Sonia nurses him back to health. At this point there are several signs in the film of a possible transferal of affection to this new 'mother' figure and hence an escape from the nostalgic obsession with Janine which dominates the film. At the level of plot, Pierre starts designing dresses again, taking Sonia as his model, and this indication of recovery and renewal is borne out by the *mise-en-scène*. Sonia is framed beside a spray of white flowerbuds, a token of spring which refers back to the song ('..le printemps s'avance/Tout chante, c'est encore mon tour').

These hopes of renewal are however nipped in the bud by a sudden transition to 1919. Pierre has disappeared. Sonia has married her pre-war suitor Bordenave and is using his money to build a 'Temple de la Mode' designed by Pierre before the war, which will house a new collection based on the 1916 designs left with Sonia. Pierre arrives in the fashion house, having recognised one of his designs on the street, and there follows another sequence which indicates the possibility of Sonia substituting for Janine. After Pierre has remodelled the coat she is wearing he repeats the phrase he used to Janine and which signifies a regression to the mirror stage: 'Regardez-vous dans la glace.' And once again white roses are a prominent part of the decor, placed in the foreground with Sonia and Pierre behind. But when Pierre goes to Sonia's address the following day he is informed that Madame has left on a long trip, and the strains of 'Le Paradis Perdu' that are played as he turns and goes down the stair tells the spectator that a second chance of happiness has been missed. The explanation for Sonia's behaviour is given later in the film when she tells Pierre's fiancé: 'Pierre est le seul homme que j'aie aimé dans ma vie. Je me suis effacée par respect pour le souvenir de Janine.' Thus, one pointless sacrifice is followed by another.

The third phase of the film takes place in the contemporary present. In its first scene 'Le Paradis Perdu' is sung by Jeannette, which emphasises the identification between Jeannette and Janine. This scene reinforces the ties with the past, while simultaneously reviving the idea of new beginnings contained in the song's verse and so provides a concise expression of the basic tension in the film and moves the plot on towards the final conflict. At the end of the scene Jeannette urges her father to start afresh. This is followed by a swift cut to the Côte d'Azur and Pierre's new fiancée, Laurence, played by an actress who bears a certain physical resemblance to Micheline Presle, which suggests that this is another possible Janine substitute. She is accompanied by a final incarnation of the patriarchal order in the form of her brother Gérard, a young naval officer who opposes Pierre's search for happiness in the arms of a woman younger than his daughter.

Again, the counterbalance to the male order is provided by Sonia, who is opening a new nightclub, the Marie Galante, the interior of which has been designed by Pierre. This new 'realm of the imaginary' is effectively a travesty of the naval order represented by Gérard, as it takes the romantic trappings of life at sea — boats, nets, figureheads — and turns them in to a backdrop for the Bluebell girls.

And it is here that the final sacrifice is made. Jeannette is in love with Gérard; Gérard is in love with Jeannette but refuses to marry her unless her father gives up his plans to marry his sister; Pierre refuses to give up Laurence. Sonia breaks the deadlock by persuading Pierre to go and speak to Jeannette. Jeannette insists that she is in favour of her father's marriage at which point Pierre tells her 'Tu viens de gagner, Jeannette...en mentant avec exactement le même courage qu'aurait montré ta mère'. And so once more the memory of Janine prevents Pierre's happiness, and

this final sacrifice is heralded by strains of 'Le Paradis Perdu' floating through from the nightclub.

The image of motherhood portrayed by its two bearers in the film is thus one of self-sacrifice. Janine's ultimate sacrifice is reflected in the many smaller acts of renunciation committed by Sonia. Established at the beginning of the film as an independent woman — she refuses to let Bordenave pay for her dress, telling him: 'il suffit que je supporte votre présence de temps à autre' — she then marries the same Bordenave, having given up Pierre 'par respect pour Janine', and proceeds to use the money she previously wouldn't touch to create a fashion house for Pierre's designs, thereby acting as maternal substitute in respect to both Pierre — promoting the career Janine initiated — and Jeannette, whom Pierre has temporarily rejected and to whom the profits from the fashion house are destined.

Sonia thus becomes the ideal, all-powerful mother, who effectively eliminates the father — Bordenave is completely under her thumb — but uses his resources to support the son. (The strange, unexplained ellipsis between 1916, when the possibility of a relationship between the two is hinted at, and 1919, where Pierre has disappeared and Sonia is married to Bordenave is perhaps an expression of the incest taboo operating at an unconscious level in the text. By virtue of the matronly stature and age of the actress portraying her — Elvire Popesco was 43 at the time of filming — Sonia is a more obvious mother figure than Janine, who remains a purely symbolic representation of the maternal realm.)

Alternation between a militaristic patriarchal order and a maternal realm represented by two women, the younger of whom plays a double role, also constitutes the structure of Jacques Feyder's 1933 film *LE GRAND JEU*. The film follows the

fortunes of Pierre Martell, a young man *de bonne famille*, who, having embezzled a client's funds in order to keep his adored mistress Florence in the luxury to which she is accustomed, is forced by his family to leave Paris and go off to the colonies in order to save the family name from disgrace.

In the opening sequences the regressive nature of the hero is suggested both by Pierre Richard-Willm's boyish good looks and by the immaturity of his behaviour in the scenes with his family and with Florence. While his grandfather and uncles are deciding his fate, he is rolling around on the floor with the family dog, behaviour which underlines the contrast between his youthful carelessness and the staid seriousness of the family patriarchs. These stereotypical patriarchs — an old man, a city gent and an army officer — represent both the existing social order — in particular, the army and the world of finance — and the Law, in that it is they who judge Pierre's crime and mete out his punishment, agreeing to replace the embezzled funds on condition he leaves the country.

The stern patriarchal order is contrasted with the opulent world of the indulgent, fun-loving Florence, who, like Janine in *PARADIS PERDU*, fulfils the dual function of sweetheart and mother. The mother/son nature of her relationship with Pierre is suggested in the scene in which he announces his departure for Africa. Putting his head on her breast and gazing up at her like a child, he describes his vision of their future life in the colonies to her as follows: 'Il pleut, tu es là, il fait chaud, tu es là, tout manque, mais tu es là, et la vie devient facile et gaie.'

This dream of maternal plenitude is shattered when Florence points out: 'Ce que tu aimes en moi, c'est mon luxe et ma façon de m'en servir....quand tu m'auras vu pendant des années avec des robes de quatre sous, faisant la cuisine, je suis sûre



que tu me détesteras très vite'. Thus, it is established that Florence is less of a woman than an atmosphere, a symbol not, in this case, of a populist paradis of peace and petits métiers but of a life of luxury that, like the idealised pasts in *PARADIS PERDU* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, must be left behind. For like Janine and Françoise, Florence represents a pre-Oedipal phase, in this instance the illusion of the phallic mother. This is suggested in an unusual and apparently gratuitous shot at the beginning of the film in which Pierre opens a garage door so that Florence, for no possible reason other than one of pure symbolism, may drive his sports car into the womb-like garage, an act given sexual connotations by the general ambience of the shot.

This illusion of an uncastrated mother is one which must be relinquished in the passage through the Oedipus. *LE GRAND JEU* is the story of Pierre's inability to make this transition and accept the loss of Florence. His attempt to recover this lost 'object' — in the Lacanian sense<sup>2</sup> — structures the film, which is devoted to a series of recreations of this lost realm of maternal plenitude in Africa, rather than to evocations of the all-male world of the foreign legion, as the generic demands of what is supposed to be a colonial film would imply.

There are indeed only half a dozen relatively short sequences devoted to life in the Foreign Legion in the entire film, one of which occur in the interval between Pierre leaving the maternal paradise represented by Florence, and the first evocation in the film of the replacement maternal realm represented by Blanche. This sequence takes place in a bar where future *légionnaires* group together before leaving for Africa. A group of Germans sing a melancholy song entitled 'Aus der Heimat', the theme of which - exile - and the general impression of 'foreignness' - the bar is a

melting pot of various nationalities - underline the alienating nature of the patriarchal order into which Pierre is cast. This impression is reinforced in the following sequence, a montage of shots showing the general unpleasantness of the *légionnaires* life in the desert, which contrasts sharply with the life of luxury Pierre led in Paris.

The following two scenes mark a return to representations of the maternal realm. The first takes place in a cabaret, the second in the hotel run by Mme Blanche and her husband Clément, to whom the proprietor of the cabaret has gone to complain of the non-arrival of new cabaret singers/*entraîneuses* which he had ordered from them. Both settings are linked with the lost maternal realm through references to mainland France/Florence and the theme of woman as atmosphere. An establishing shot reveals that the cabaret is called Les Folies Parisiennes and when the proprietor complains to Clément, 'J'ai fait repeindre ma boîte tout à neuf et les dames ne changent pas', he is effectively reducing the 'ladies' to an element of the decor.

Blanche is also introduced as an element of the setting, in that the spectator first sees her in a remarkable shot in which she raises her head from behind a diagonal partition as if she were literally crawling out of the woodwork. The cabaret owner's compliment — 'Ah, des belles mains. Comme les grandes dames de Florence. Et quelle peau' — and Blanche's response — 'Ici c'est la Normandie, pas les Folies Parisiennes' — have the effect of evoking Paris/Florence in relation to Blanche while simultaneously establishing their loss and her difference.

Blanche's maternal relationship to Pierre and his comrade, who lodge with her while in town, is hinted at in the motherly welcome she gives them ('Tournez-vous un peu qu'on vous voie. Qu'est-ce qu'ils sont bruns alors. Je suis contente de vous voir.') and made explicit in Pierre's remark, 'Je t'aime comme une mère', when later

in the film she agrees to take his girlfriend Irma on at the hotel.

Blanche therefore provides a maternal realm which contrasts with the patriarchal world of the Legion both in the comfort and affection it offers and in the fact that it is dominated by a woman. (Blanche is characterised as stronger than her sickly, drunken husband.) It is however Irma, one of the batch of new singers at *les Folies Parisiennes*, who is the second and most effective evocation of Florence, of whom she is literally the reincarnation as both characters are played by Marie Bell, who, in the part of Irma, dons a black wig and has her voice dubbed by another actress.

In *15 ans d'années trente*, Jeancolas recounts the genesis of this technical trick, which was a startling and innovative idea at the period and accounted in part for the great success of the film on its release.<sup>3</sup> Although primarily a means of exploring the dramatic possibilities offered by recently perfected dubbing techniques, the device also has an important semantic function in that, like the cabaret owner's remark to Blanche quoted above, it echoes the main theme of the film, Pierre's vain attempts to recapture the plenitude of the lost Maternal Realm represented by Florence by seeking out substitutes. The fact that Irma has the same body but a different voice both evokes Florence and establishes her loss and the other woman's difference.

In an effort to deny the difference, Pierre insists on Irma remaining silent while they make love. As was the case in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, this silence can be explained in terms of a regression to the pre-linguistic imaginary realm, which is the realm of the double in that the infant, lacking the 'I' acquired through language, cannot perceive himself as a subject distinct from other objects, just as in the mirror

phase he cannot distinguish himself from other images. Both these stages are suggested in the doubling of Florence/Irma, and in shots of Blanche reflected in the mirror in her first scene with the owner of the cabaret.

The obsessive nature of Pierre's desire is reiterated throughout *LE GRAND JEU*, but is expressed most eloquently in a scene outside the cabaret where he has just met Irma. In this scene he tells his comrade: 'Il ne faut plus que je la voie, tu entends, plus jamais. Seulement je veux la voir encore une seule fois. Arrange-toi avec elle.' The loss of control suggested in the contradictory nature of his words is given visual confirmation in the life-size poster of Irma which appears over his shoulder while he is speaking and so indicates both the overwhelming power of his obsession and the fact that he is attracted to Irma as a silent image rather than as a person.

Irma proves a particularly suitable vessel for the projection of Pierre's desire for Florence in that an accident has conveniently erased all memory of her past life. Their first sexual encounters are therefore marked by Pierre's repeated attempts to inscribe Florence's memories of Paris (et un quartier avec des jardin et des arbres...Neuilly...tu connais pas Neuilly?) on the blank pages of Irma's brain. Gradually however he appears to accept Irma for herself and when his grandfather dies, leaving him a substantial inheritance, he suggests that they begin a new life together in Marseilles. This possibility of a new beginning seems all the more real because the scene is shot in the open air and so contrasts with the preceding sequences of dark, claustrophobic shots in the interior of the hotel in which Pierre tormented Irma with the notion that she was Florence.

The couple leave for Casablanca, thus distancing themselves geographically

from the maternal realm represented by Blanche just as Pierre appears to have distanced himself psychologically from the memory of Florence. However, a chance meeting with the real Florence in Casablanca sets off Pierre's old obsession. Leaving Irma to sail alone, he re-enlists in the Foreign Legion. The last scene shows him with Blanche in the hotel about to go off on a patrol from which he knows he will not return.

Thus, *LE GRAND JEU* follows essentially the same schema as *PARADIS PERDU*, in that it depicts the failure of the male lead to progress beyond the mirror stage and free himself of his obsessive regressive desire for a lost state of maternal plenitude. This psychoanalytical conflict is given concrete expression in both films in similar ways: the association of a desirable past with a female figure, who is coupled with an older more obviously maternal representative of the maternal realm, and who herself is reduplicated in the text by virtue of her interpreter playing a double role, all of which duplication provides an oblique reference to the mirror stage. Moreover, just as *PARADIS PERDU* is structured around Pierre's desire to recapture his lost happiness with Janine, a desire both expressed in and punctuated by various renditions of the eponymous song throughout the film, so the narrative thrust of *LE GRAND JEU* is determined by Pierre's drive to recover the lost 'object' Florence.

Although the Feyder film lacks this additional element of a popular song to express the tension between the pull of a lost past and the possibility of recreating past happiness in the present, this tension does feature strongly at various points in the narrative. Until the end of the film the spectator shares Pierre's uncertainty as to the true identity of Irma, an uncertainty fostered by the tantalising moments when

Irma, in her desire to please Pierre, appears to have the memory of Florence.

It is however Duvivier's 1936 film *PEPE LE MOKO* which perhaps bears the strongest resemblance to *PARADIS PERDU* in its remarkably similar combination of the same three basic elements of woman/song/nostalgia. In both films the dominant theme is nostalgia and this nostalgia is channelled through both female figures and a popular song. As a detailed analysis of this film has already been provided by Ginette Vincendeau in her examination of the Gabin myth in two Duvivier films,<sup>4</sup> and the plot of this pre-war classic is in any case well-known, I shall confine my remarks to those elements which are of direct relevance here.

The motivating force in the plot of *PEPE LE MOKO* is Pépé's fatal longing for Paris, which finds its most coherent expression in the song 'Où est-il donc' sung in the film by a character named Tania, who is played by the former music-hall singer, Fréhel. The circumstances of the song's rendition include both the nostalgia central to the film — which is also the theme of the song — and also the doubling imagery discussed in relation to the three films analysed above. Tania tells the down-hearted Pépé:

Fais comme moi, Pépé. Quand j'ai trop de cafard je change d'époque. Oui, je pense à ma jeunesse, je regarde ma vieille photo et je me dis que je suis devant une glace. Je remets un de mes anciens disques du temps où j'avais tant de succès à la Scala, Boulevard de Strasbourg.

There are three sets of doubling images here. Firstly, on a visual level, the desired identity with a self which is not the self, the photo which, taken as a mirror, gives the illusion of lost youth. Secondly, on an audial level, the duet of the young and old Tanias, as the character in the film sings along with the voice on the record. Thirdly, on the level of *mise-en-abyme*, the identification a 1930s audience could not

fail to make between the fictional Tania and the real-life Fréhel, whose glorious music-hall career ended shortly after WWI, when drug and alcohol abuse turned her into the bloated, prematurely aged woman seen in the film. The false identification of the older woman with her younger beautiful image could be seen as analogous to the effect created by Marie Bell's double role in *LE GRAND JEU*, her changed appearance as Irma evoking the past (Paris/Florence) while simultaneously establishing its loss.

In the later film, Tania's relationship with her song is itself a reflection of Pépé's relationship with Gaby, the woman for whom he finally commits suicide. Just as Tania's song reminds her of her youth, so Gaby provides a link between Pépé and his past, and thus performs the same function for him as Françoise for François and Janine/Jeanette, Florence/Irma for the two Pierres. The following exchange links Gaby with Pépé's childhood in a working-class area of Paris and throws in a populist republican reference just for good measure:

G : Ah, ça me rappelle le quatorze juillet quand j'étais  
petite aux Gobelins.  
P : Vous êtes des Gobelins?  
G : Ça ne se voit pas?  
P : J'étais à l'école, rue de l'Arbalète!  
G : C'est à côté de chez moi.

It is stated explicitly in the film that both song and woman are a means of evasion, of changing time and place — Pépé tells Gaby 'Avec toi, c'est comme si j'étais à Paris. Avec toi, je m'évade, tu saisis? Tu me changes de paysage', and it is interesting to note the extent to which both evoke the same icons of populist Paris. The refrain of 'Où est-il donc' is as follows:

Où est-il mon moulin de la Place Blanche  
Mon tabac et mon bistrot du coin  
Tous les jours pour nous c'était dimanche

Où sont-ils, nos amis, nos copains?  
Où sont-ils tous nos vieux bals musettes  
Leur java au son de l'accordéon,  
Où sont-ils tous mes repas sans galettes  
Avec un cornet de frites à deux ronds  
Où sont-ils donc ?...

On their first meeting, P  p   and Gaby recite a list of *m  tro* stations to each other, ending in unison at the Place Blanche, a part of the mythical Montmartre immortalised in the works of Carco and Mac Orlan, but even then, in the pre-WWI period when Fr  h  l began her career, in the process of disappearing. (As noted in the verse of the song which begins: 'Mais Montmartre semble dispara  tre / Car d  j   de saison en saison / Des Abbesses    la Place du Tertre / On d  molit nos vieilles maisons', and so adds another layer of nostalgia to the film.) Later P  p   tells Gaby: 'Tu me fais penser au m  tro...   des cornets de frites et    des caf  -cr  mes    la terrasse.'

The women in P  p  's life are neither lovers nor even fully rounded characters; they are mere reflections of P  p  's past and present, projections of his frustrations and desires. Thus, Gaby as P  p  's Parisian past is counterbalanced by the native In  s, who represents the Casbah in which he is presently imprisoned, as P  p  's refusal to include her in his projects of escape — he tells her: 'Si tu venais avec moi, tu serais une esp  ce de Casbah portative' — indicates.

In her thesis Ginette Vincendeau comments upon the sequence of shots of native women at the beginning of *PEPE LE MOKO*, which provides an illustration of the police inspector's description of a Casbah containing: 'des filles...filles de tous les pays, de tous les formats. Des grandes, des grosses, des petites, des sans-  ge, des sans forme, ab  mes de graisse o   nul n'ose se risquer', suggesting that 'the strong identification of the Casbah with women designates this structure [P  p  's love-hate



relationship with the Casbah, which at once stifles and protects him] as the classic Oedipal dilemma of the (male) child's relation to the mother.'<sup>5</sup> This is linked into her general analysis of the Gabin role in his pre-war films, in which she views his association with all-male groups as indicative of a regressive desire to escape the world of adult responsibility and relationships with women, and thus of the inability to progress into patriarchy that determines the hero's tragic end.<sup>6</sup>

The above analysis of the regressive narratives of *PARADIS PERDU* and *LE GRAND JEU* has shown that they bear a number of resemblances to the pre-war Gabin films, *PEPE LE MOKO* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, the most notable of which is the signification of the sweetheart figure, who represents a maternal realm from which the hero is unable to progress. In both *PARADIS PERDU* and *PEPE LE MOKO* the nostalgic lyrics of a popular song play an important role in expressing the longing for an unattainable past which lies at the heart of the narrative, a past which in psychological terms can be equated with the imaginary state of unity with the mother, but which is translated into geographical/mythico-historical terms in all four films, the various projections of the mother image being associated with a variety of periods and places.

This equation of a female character with a specific location, a certain atmosphere is by no means restricted to the films under discussion here, but was a common feature in the French cinema of the 1930s and one which found its most succinct — and famous — expression in another classic film of the period, Carné's *HOTEL DU NORD* (1938), in which Juvet rejects Arletty's suggestion that they leave Paris together in almost the same terms as Pépé's rejection of Inez, telling her: 'J'ai besoin de changer d'atmosphère, et mon atmosphère c'est toi', and thereby

provoking one of the French cinema's most famous *répliques*: 'Atmosphère, atmosphère, est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère?'.

I would therefore suggest that Vincendeau's analysis of the dilemma facing the Gabin hero, far from being restricted to characters played by that actor alone, is in fact applicable to the situation of a number of doomed heroes of the cinema of the 1930s, their regressive nature denoted not by the factor identified by Vincendeau as peculiar to the Gabin situation in *PEPE LE MOKO* and *LA BELLE EQUIPE* — the all-male group — but rather by the investment in the female lead of the fantasy of maternal plenitude in an imaginary past. The fundamental similarity between the fate of Pierre in the 1933 film *LE GRAND JEU* and that of François, the Gabin character in the 1939 poetic-realist classic, *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, can be cited in support of this point.

In the Carné film, the unviable nature of a retreat into the imaginary realm is made evident when François proves unable to compete against Valentin, an ambivalent father-seducer figure who is his rival for Françoise's affections. Unable to determine the true nature of their relationship, an exasperated François allows himself to be goaded by the artist's taunts into shooting him, thereby sealing his own fate.

The ability of the older man to manipulate François through his superior command of language and François' ultimate inability, despite his derisive scorn for Valentin expressed in his own populist idiom, to respond other than by violence, is indicative of François' exclusion from the Symbolic Realm, the site of language. It is only through language, through the use of the pronoun 'I' that a sense of self as distinct from others is attained. The complete disintegration of François' personality

at the end of the film is indicated by his loss of this sense of self, a loss which is demonstrated both verbally and visually in the text. His use of the third person in referring to himself, as in his shouts of: 'François? Qu'est-ce que c'est ça, François? Connais pas. C'est fini. Il n'y a plus de François.', suggests the disintegration of a unified personality which is illustrated in a shot of his fragmented reflection in a mirror splintered by bullets, a reflection which he then destroys by throwing a chair at it, a gesture of self-annihilation foreshadowing his subsequent suicide.

In *LE GRAND JEU* there is a similar confrontation with a father-figure rival when Blanche's husband Clément attempts to seduce Irma and is killed by Pierre. It temporarily appears that this murder of the father represents a successful transition out of the Oedipal phase. Clément's death is a turning point for Pierre as it is closely followed by news of the death of his grandfather, who has left him a fortune. The proximity of the two deaths almost implies a causal link, as if Pierre, in eliminating one father-figure, eliminates all obstacles to his happiness erected by patriarchy. This is however possible only within the imaginary realm represented by Blanche, who covers up the murder and so saves Pierre from the judicial consequences of his act. When he leaves for Casablanca, his failure to pass through the Oedipal phase by submitting to patriarchal law becomes apparent, as the reappearance of Florence rekindles his regressive desires, leading him to abandon Irma and return to the Foreign Legion and his final suicide patrol.

Thus, the trajectories of François and Pierre are the same; unable to leave behind the imaginary realm and accede to the patriarchal order, the symbolic realm of language and law, their only escape is in suicide. Interestingly, the death of the hero is presented in *LE GRAND JEU* as a manifestation of an ineluctable destiny

similar to that which pursued Gabin from film to film.

While in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* the concept of an inescapable fate is conveyed in the flashback structure of the film, which has François helplessly reliving the events that led to his downfall, a similar notion of fate is introduced in *LE GRAND JEU* in terms of destiny being written on the cards. It is present from the title sequence, in which the credits roll over a shot of cards spread out on a table, a visual reference to the form of fortune telling practised by Blanche to which the title of the film refers. Blanche sees in the cards Pierre's period of happiness with Irma, their subsequent separation, his inheritance and the reappearance of Florence, and this proven infallibility assures the spectator of Pierre's death at the end of the film, as Blanche turns over the cards of death before he leaves for what will be his last patrol.

In the following assessment of *LE GRAND JEU*, Jeancolas maintains that it is this notion of an ineluctable fate, foreshadowing the poetic-realist films of the immediate pre-war, which constitutes the film's main interest today:

*LE GRAND JEU* reste un film exceptionnellement vivant, mais par un étrange déplacement d'intérêt. Le couple vedette et la grande passion de Richard-Willm passent au second plan, et c'est à travers des personnages secondaires que le film se charge d'une modernité qui annonce la désespérance existentielle du *QUAI DES BRUMES* ou du *JOUR SE LEVE*. Françoise Rosay en ténancière du bistrot, maquerelle et maternelle, alourdie du destin des autres qu'elle lit dans les cartes (le 'grand jeu'), Charles Vanel, Georges Pitoëff, anticipent sur un autre cinéma, sur une autre époque. Le décor où ils évoluent... se charge des signes d'une fatalité dont nous savons qu'elle est sans issue.<sup>7</sup>

While agreeing that there is indeed a fundamental similarity between the Feyder film and the later works of Carné — who was Feyder's chief assistant on *LE GRAND JEU* — I would argue that Jeancolas is mistaken in disassociating the main

narrative strand — Pierre's obsession with Florence — from the supporting roles and decor, and locating the sense of fatality which forms the link between the two sets of films uniquely in the latter. The above argument has sought to demonstrate that the similarity between *LE GRAND JEU* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE* lies not just in their dooms-laden atmosphere, but in the narrative itself, in the inability of their respective regressive heroes to progress beyond the maternal realm, a situation *sans issue* of which the fortune-telling Blanche and the décor to which Jeancolas refers are merely superficial manifestations.

It is interesting to note that when Blanche tells Pierre, 'C'est drôle ça. On dirait que tous les ennuis viennent de toi', she is merely expressing what Vincendeau's analysis of the Gabin myth and the above discussion of *PARADIS PERDU*, *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, *LE GRAND JEU* and *PEPE LE MOKO* shows: that the problems of these 1930s heroes are not the manifestation of the wrath of a capricious god, but rather a function of their characters.

Some of the issues raised in the above analysis will be discussed in the following chapter, which will focus on the inscription of 'son' figures in 1930s cinema in the context of a son/father conflict. First, however, the second section of this chapter will look at the treatment of female characters who do not conform to the pattern of faithful, self-sacrificing mother/sweetheart laid down in *PARADIS PERDU*.

## 2.2. WOMAN AS WHORE: THE PUNISHMENT OF PROMISCUITY AND DENIAL OF DESIRE IN *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, *LE BONHEUR* AND *PRIX DE BEAUTE*.

The mother/whore split referred to in the titles of the subsections of this chapter describes the traditional positions offered to women in patriarchy, that of the

asexual, saintly sweetheart/mother within the bourgeois family or the sexual, demonic whore outside it. Representations of these two positions traverse the various periods of classic Hollywood cinema, from Mary Pickford's American Sweetheart/Theda Bara's vamp of the silent screen to the dull girlfriend/fascinating *femme fatale* of 1940s and 1950s *film noir*. Some indication of the tenacious hold these representations have on Western culture is given by their continued presence in the soap operas of the present 'post-feminist' period, in the characters of Krystle and Alexis in *DYNASTY*.<sup>8</sup>

This basic split is overlaid by another dichotomy, that between the private and public spheres, a dichotomy which came into being with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of a leisured middle class. At that historical juncture industry was removed from cottages to factories and women who had been producers in the preindustrial economy and hence had played an active role as both mothers and breadwinners now found themselves confined to a passive, domestic role in the home. (Except in those sections of the working class where economic necessity forced the woman out to work.) This development was then enshrined in education and legal systems which effectively barred women from entering the professions, controlling their own property, money or children, in short, enjoying any measure of autonomy.

If the private/public dichotomy is determined by economic developments, the mother/whore split is a function of bourgeois family ethics, which, influenced by Christian ideology - and the lack of adequate contraceptives - located sexuality outwith the family. The wife was an object to be venerated, the whore a vehicle for the release of pent-up sexual desire, and never were the twain to meet. The patriarchal capitalist system and the bourgeois family were thus founded on a rigid

delimitation of a woman's sphere of activity and on a denial of both her autonomy and her sexual desire.

Since the 1970s, a number of works by feminist critics have analysed the way in which the positions allotted to women in patriarchal culture are reflected in film. The early sociological approach, which concentrated on the roles played by female characters, has gradually given way to a psychological approach, which tends to focus on the mechanisms of cinema itself, and look at women as the object of the male gaze.

The latter approach is exemplified in the work of Laura Mulvey, whose seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' examines the active/male and passive/female dichotomy in terms of the woman as image and man as bearer of the look. In Mulvey's analysis, the female form is one of fascination and dread for the male spectator, as, lacking a penis, it denotes castration. The male spectator deals with this dread through the mechanisms of voyeurism or fetishism, the latter building up the physical beauty of the woman/object, the former punishing the woman who is guilty for being castrated.

There are certain parallels that can be drawn between these sociological and psychological analyses of the position of women in patriarchal culture. At the beginning of her article Mulvey states that:

The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence...<sup>9</sup>

Just as a term in language can only be defined by reference to what it is not, so in the symbolic order man needs woman in order to exist as a separate concept.

Thus, the role of the castrated woman as the foundation of the symbolic order, the Realm of the Father in the Lacanian sense, is analogous to the dual role of the mother/whore in propping up the patriarchal bourgeois social order, allowing man his family ideal and his sexual desire.

A further parallel is suggested by Jane Gallop in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* when she distinguishes between Freud's Oedipal Father, who 'might be taken for a real biological father'<sup>10</sup> and Lacan's Name-of-the-Father, which 'operates explicitly in the register of language',<sup>11</sup> concluding that 'Any suspicion of the mother's infidelity betrays the Name-of-the-Father as the arbitrary imposition it is.'<sup>12</sup> This implies an analogy between the Name-of-the-Father in the psychoanalytical and the social sense, the Name-of-the-Father which establishes law and language in the symbolic being equated with the paternity which establishes the legitimacy of heirs in patriarchal capitalism.

According to Gallop, 'Infidelity then is a feminist practice of undermining the Name-of-the-Father',<sup>13</sup> a remark which could be applied to both the psychoanalytical and social context. Promiscuity, another way in which a woman may assert control over her own body and her own desire, is therefore a threat to the patriarchal order and must be controlled.

In both the sociological and psychoanalytical systems, women are in a no-win situation. The necessary corollary of their role in the patriarchal order, which is based on male domination and control of women, is punishment and loss of autonomy, in the diverse forms as voyeurism, fetishism, and the denial of female desire. These points will be demonstrated in the following discussion of *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, each of which illustrates a certain form of male



control of women as the narrative project of each film is the punishment of female promiscuity.

The theories on voyeurism, fetishism and the controlling power of the male gaze developed in Mulvey's article will be applied to *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, both of which deal explicitly with the relation between the male spectator and the female image on screen. These two films also demonstrate the punishment meted out to a woman who tries to cross the public/private border, which is the focal point of the first film I want to look at, *L'ENTRAINEUSE*.

*L'ENTRAINEUSE* begins in a nightclub in Montmartre, where M. Noblet, a rich banker, invites Suzy, the *entraîneuse* of the title, to spend the August on holiday with him. Suzy refuses and goes off on her own to a quiet hotel at Rocagne sur Mer, on the Côte d'Azur. There she meets a group of young people who, knowing nothing of her seedy background, adopt her as a friend. She falls in love with one of them, Robert. The idyll is spoiled when Robert's father joins the group and turns out to be none other than M. Noblet. Noblet goes to Suzy's room that night and attempts to take advantage of the situation. Realising she cannot escape her past, Suzy returns to the nightclub in Montmartre, where, some time later, she is told that a M. Noblet wishes to see her. Expecting the son, she finds the father, who presses his demands she become his mistress. She throws a glass of water at him, he has her fired, and she agrees to go off on a cruise with one of the guests.

The film is interesting in that it includes the elements analysed in the first section of this chapter — the opposition between paternal and maternal realms — but this time with a female subject at the centre of the film. Rocagne sur Mer clearly represents a regression to the maternal realm for Suzy in that it is associated with two

older female figures. The first of these is a cabaret singer played by Fréhel, who advises Suzy to visit Rocagne, a place to which she herself will not return, for '...quand il y a endroit où on a été heureux, et où on a eu un premier amour, il vaut mieux pas y retourner.' Rocagne is thus situated in a position similar to the Montmartre of Fréhel's song in *PEPE LE MOKO* — in a past which is desirable but cannot be regained.

The second female figure is the aunt looking after the group of cousins who befriend Suzy. Although nominally in charge of them, she permits all manner of childish behaviour and pranks at the table in the dining room scene in which the spectator is introduced to the group. The hotel at Rocagne, presided over by this benevolent matriarch, is therefore a place in which patriarchal Law is in abeyance.

Like *PARADIS PERDU* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, *L'ENTRAINEUSE* is in part structured around an opposition between the maternal realm — in this case Rocagne — and the paternal realm of Paris. A quick cut between a scene on a bridge at the Gare St Lazare and the scene of Suzy's arrival at the station at Rocagne, underlines the contrast between the mediterranean vegetation of the Côte and the urban architecture of Paris. The fact that Suzy is picked up at Rocagne by a horse and cart also suggests a step back into the past from the age of the steam train.

The contrast Paris/Côte d'Azur is further underlined in the cinematography. The Paris scenes are shot in the expressionistic style associated with poetic realism. Dark shots of rainy streets contrast with the luminosity of the outdoor shots in the Côte d'Azur scenes and also convey a feeling of confinement, in comparison with the open spaces of the Côte. This impression of claustrophobia, reminiscent of the atmosphere in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, is reinforced in the dialogue at the beginning

of the film when Fréhel says of Suzy: 'Elle a besoin de respirer un grand coup, cette petite', and goes on to recommend Rocagne.

As in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, the oppressive atmosphere of the paternal realm has moral overtones, symbolising the corrupt and exploitative nature of the patriarchs, personified by Noblet. The implication in Fréhel's remark is that Suzy is spiritually sick, contaminated like Nelly by her environment, and that Rocagne should provide a cure. In contrast to this paternal realm, which is linked with an urban environment and an ageing father-figure, the maternal realm of Rocagne has the associations with nature and a return to childhood located above in *PARADIS PERDU* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*.

Befriended by the group, Suzy is taken on bicycle rides and swimming parties, activities which combine the elements of nature and play. Like the lilac gathering theme in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, these elements are a clear reference to the Popular Front's policy of *Sports et Loisirs*, which sought primarily 'to allow the youth of France to discover joy and health through the practice of sport'.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the setting of the film — the holiday period, the Côte d'Azur — may well be perceived as an allusion to those other famous Popular Front measures, the *congés payés* and the *billets Lagrange*, which were designed to allow the urban proletariat their first sight of the Côte d'Azur. Thus, one could interpret the Imaginary/maternal, Symbolical/paternal opposition as a valorisation of the morally sound, health promoting, youth-orientated policies of the Popular Front, in contrast to the corruption and incompetence associated with the ageing politicians of other Third Republic governments.

The youthful exuberance of the group is both emphasised and validated in the

dining scene room scene referred to above, when the only possible, if ineffective, representative of the patriarchal order, a sickly old man sitting next to them, condones their pranks with the remark: 'Toutes les gouttes du monde ne me feraient pas tant de bien que le voisinage de leur jeunesse.'

Rocagne, with its associations with sport and youth, is thus a place of rejuvenation, in which Suzy can wash off her sordid past and begin again. This occurs however not in the group, but in a one-to-one relationship with Robert. A studious young man, Robert exists on the edge of the group, preferring his books to their sporting activities. Indications that this is an unhealthy attitude are given in a conversation between Robert and his old teacher, who tells him of his regrets at having wasted his life with Plato and Goethe instead of chasing the girls, and advises him not to do the same.

When Robert takes Suzy to meet the teacher they find him asleep in a hammock. This image of patriarchal authority lying dormant, together with Robert's comparison of him with 'La Belle au Bois Dormant', indicates a further regression into the Imaginary, an expectation which is fulfilled in the rest of the sequence. Leaving the teacher asleep, Robert shows Suzy his favourite classroom, and their dialogue at this point indicates a desire for regression, for a fresh start on the part of Suzy:

S : C'est trop jolie, trop net. Mon école à moi sentait des enfants sales, tout était noir, les salles, l'escalier, la cour...

R : Votre enfance n'a pas été très facile?

S : Pas très. Tandis qu'ici, ça doit être facile de s'appliquer, d'être une petite fille bien sage, dans son tablier propre, qui écoute et tire la langue en écrivant.

R : Nous ne sommes pas encore bien vieux.

S : Non, mais d'être encore au moment où rien n'est commencé, où tout peut s'arranger avec un peu de

chance.

R : Comment pouvez-vous dire que nous ne l'avons pas?

At this point the camera tracks back to take up the point of view of a schoolboy looking at the couple through the glass at the top of the schoolroom door. In the rest of the sequence the couple are filmed from the child's point of view and in silence, as the door prevents the child/spectator hearing their dialogue. Thus, Suzy is shown crying, Robert takes her in his arms and kisses her. The teacher then appears and orders the boy to come down, the boy refuses and replies to the teacher's: 'Vous m'entendez ?' with: 'Je vous entends mais je m'en fous.' The child then gives a running commentary: 'Ils sont partis...ils traversent la cour', and the film cuts to a particularly beautiful long shot of the couple walking arm in arm along an alley of trees, emerging from sun spots into the clear sunlight.

This climactic sequence reunites various elements already familiar from *QUAI DES BRUMES*. The dialogue in the classroom evokes the return to childhood which was also an intrinsic part of the relationship between Jean and Nelly. In particular, Suzy's lines express the sentiment evoked by Nelly in the following dialogue with Jean:

N : C'est comme si vous veniez me chercher très loin...là-bas...quand j'étais petite

J : T'es pas tellement grande, tu sais

N : Si, j'ai grandi trop vite...je suis abîmée...

Thus, these two films from 1938 - both of which, coincidentally, had as female lead Michèle Morgan - express a similar regret for a lost innocence, a similar desire to return to a moment preceding the corrupting influences of society. Moreover, both films contain the notion of romantic love as a liberating force for both the parties involved. Just as Nelly represents one avenue of escape for Jean, who

in turn gives her the courage to stand up to her guardian, so Suzy and Robert prove to be each other's salvation. Through their relationship Robert is freed from his obsession with dry, arid patriarchal culture, while Suzy finds in romantic love a new identity uncorrupted by her previous life as a piece of merchandise in patriarchal society.

The unusual fashion in which the second part of the sequence is filmed — in silence and from a child's perspective — highlights the fact that the union takes place in the imaginary pre-linguistic realm. The mediation of the scene through the child suggests that this form of romantic love is beyond representation in the symbolic, while the boy's defiance of his teacher underlines the revolutionary nature of this love and especially of Suzy's assertion of her desire. The final long shot, which is reminiscent in its composition and lighting of an impressionist painting, contrasts sharply with the dark, claustrophobic expressionist shots in the Paris scenes and so represents the moment in the film when Suzy is at her most free.

It is however only in the imaginary realm that Suzy can be free of her past and assert her sexuality as the subject rather than the object of desire. In this pre-symbolic realm, where the self has not yet been defined by the Name of the Father, Suzy can cast aside her past self by altering her name, and it is as Suzanne that she becomes known to the group of young people and their aunt. Her success in integrating herself into this alternative maternal order is indicated in the party her friends give for her to celebrate her name day, the *Sainte Suzanne*.

It is at this highpoint that Noblet appears to reassert the paternal order and restore the prostitute Suzy in the place of Sainte Suzanne. Alone with her in her room he remind her of their shared knowledge of her past with the comment: 'Alors, Suzy,

on se quitte à Montmartre, on se retrouve en pleine fête de famille.’, a remark with underlines her trajectory from fille publique to jeune fille. By talking to her as a prostitute he effectively banishes her from the private into the public sphere. That night she leaves Rocagne to return to Montmartre.

While this would have sufficed as an ending to the film, the narrative pursues Suzy back to her nightclub in Montmartre and provides her with a third encounter with Noblet, who renews his insistent request that she become his mistress. This has firstly the effect of reinforcing her position in the patriarchal order as the object rather than the subject of desire, as a piece of merchandise rather than an autonomous being, a position which, according to Luce Irigaray, is the lot of women in patriarchy — ‘Car la femme est traditionnellement valeur d’usage pour l’homme, valeur d’échange entre les hommes. Marchandise, donc...’,<sup>15</sup> a reformulation of Lévi-Strauss’ anthropological analysis of women as objects of exchange in kinship patterns.

The second effect, and one in which the father-daughter conflict illustrated here is analogous to the father-son conflicts in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *QUAI DES BRUMES*, is to demonstrate the father’s monopoly on language. Throughout Noblet’s long speech to her, Suzy remains silent. Indeed, she utters not another word in the film. Like the Gabin characters taunted by the father-figures of Berry and Simon, Suzy can only respond with a gesture of violence, in this case emptying a glass of water over her tormentor.

But whereas the Gabin characters had the limited satisfaction of scoring a Pyrrhic victory, removing the individual representatives of the patriarchal order in exchange for their own deaths, Suzy can only consent in silence to her own

effacement. Fired from her job, she nods her assent to a cruise which she had previously declined and which will remove her from the Montmartre/Rocagne spaces she occupied in the film.

Given the semi-gratuitous nature of this second phase of the ending, which seems to function as an epilogue to, if not a repetition of, the Noblet/Suzy encounter at Rocagne, one could suggest that the film's project is to punish the central female character for her audacity in attempting to transgress the boundaries fixed by patriarchy and assert her own subjectivity and sexual desire. Her crime is such that it is not enough to replace her in her initial position, nor can she, like the Gabin heroes, remain fixed in the spectators' memory in a pose of death. She must rather be consigned to oblivion, cast out into a space beyond the parameters of the film and the imagination of the spectator.

The same desire to punish women who seek to transgress patriarchal boundaries is given more explicit expression in *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, films which demonstrate the twin drives of voyeurism and fetishism which enable men to keep women in their place.

The two films have a certain similarity in that both deal with representations of woman as a glamorous object on stage and on the screen. In *LE BONHEUR*, Philippe, a cartoonist on a left-wing anarchist newspaper, is employed by a mainstream paper to make a drawing of a French film star, Clara Stuart, arriving at the Gare St Lazare from a tour of America. The following day Philippe takes a girl to the music - hall where Clara is making a personal appearance. He then shoots and slightly injures the star as she leaves the movie theatre. Attracted to her would-be assassin, Clara pleads for Philippe at his trial and then takes him home with her when



he leaves prison. The two become lovers, but the relationship breaks up when Philippe discovers that Clara is starring in a film based upon the story of the shooting. Realising that Clara can never have a private life separate from her career, Philippe bids her farewell, assuring her that their relationship will continue every time he sees her on the cinema screen.

In *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, a young typist, Lucienne, wins a beauty contest by submitting her photo to a newspaper, and, to the disgust of her jealous fiancé, becomes Miss France. On the train taking her to the hotel where the finals of Miss Europe will be held, she makes the acquaintance of a middle-european prince who is going to the same hotel. After the contest, which she wins, the jealous fiancé appears and demands she return immediately to Paris. That evening the prince attempts to seduce her. Realising she loves her fiancé, Lucienne leaves the life of luxury to which she has become accustomed to marry him. Subsequent scenes show the boredom, narrowness and poverty of the life she leads in a Paris tenement. When the prince reappears with the offer of a film contract she leaves her husband to re-enter the world of luxury and glamour. The husband then steals into a private preview of her first film and shoots her dead.

Although the two films appear to be dominated by their female star in terms of both the screen presence of Gaby Morlay/Louise Brooks and the importance allocated to their roles — both are constantly performing, on and off screen and images of them proliferate throughout the film — a closer analysis reveals that it is the male leads who are in fact the subject of the narrative. The female characters are not subjects but objects, functioning in Irigaray's terms as '*valeur[s] d'échange entre les hommes*', and the glamorous images are simply evidence of their objectification.

One basic structure underlies both films; a poverty-stricken young man desires a woman who epitomises or gains entry to a world of wealth and luxury from which he is excluded. Going back to the equation set out in *QUAI DES BRUMES* which draws a parallel between the power of the father in psychological terms and the wealth possessed by the capitalist in social terms, one can interpret the two films as the expression of an Oedipal conflict between the poor and dispossessed — the anarchist in *LE BONHEUR*, the worker in *PRIX DE BEAUTE* — and the affluent class which Clara and Lucienne (come to) represent. The female characters are the stake in the conflict, their possession or loss denoting power or impotence in the social structure.

Their function is thus identical to that of the female leads in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and in the films analysed in the first section of this chapter, in that they represent an object of desire for the male lead. The only difference lies in the nature of the desire, as expressed in the values attributed to the female characters. In *QUAI DES BRUMES*, *PARADIS PERDU*, *PEPE LE MOKO*, *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *LE GRAND JEU*, the female characters are variously associated with Paris, the *petits métiers* or at any rate the proletariat, and a love relationship which represents a regression to the maternal realm, which is associated in the Carné films with a silent intimacy and authenticity as opposed to alienation in the symbolic, the realm of language, which is linked with the bourgeoisie, artifice and lies.

In *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE* this is reversed, as the populist values are attributed uniquely to the male characters and Clara and Lucienne represent a world of luxury and artifice more commonly associated with father-figures. They merely represent this world rather than possessing it; as this analysis will show, both

are in their own way as captive as *l'entraîneuse* and, lacking the patriarchal right to move between the public and private spheres, cannot be equated with father-figures. However, in their apparent possession of the wealth the younger men lack, they symbolise the latter's impotence and so become the focus of their resentment and frustration, ultimately suffering at their hands the fate reserved for the father-figures in the Carné films.

In *LE BONHEUR*, Philippe, though not a son of the working class himself, is at least in sympathy with the people, as is indicated in the first shot in the film, which opens on a political cartoon of which he is the author. The cartoon shows two WWI veterans standing in front of a shop window, looking at the extortionate prices of the fur coats on display. The caption reads: 'Nos peaux ne valent pas ce prix.' This is the most direct political reference in the film and it serves to establish one of its basic themes — the contrast between the exploited underclass and the conspicuous consumption and frivolity of the wealthy.

The second and final political allusion also occurs near the beginning of the film, when Philippe is accosted by a young woman when returning to his home in Arcueil, a working class suburb of Paris. A tracking shot moves forward to a wooden fence on which is plastered a poster with the name 'Clara Stuart' and above that the name of the street 'Rue de L'Avenir'. The ironic name underlines the lack of hope in the dead-end surroundings of this depressed district, which contrasts with the escapist glamour offered by filmstars such as Clara Stuart, whom the two make a date to go and see. The contrast is underlined by the fact that this sequence is sandwiched between two shots showing Clara Stuart's name in lights flashing across the screen.

If Philippe is associated with working-class Paris and with a certain political

commitment to the truth in that he works for a newspaper dedicated to presenting reality from the point of view of the underdog, Clara represents a world of luxury and illusion divorced from everyday reality. She is herself an artificial construct, a product of media hype, as indicated in the proliferation of posters and flashing lights and newspaper reports announcing 'Clara Stuart' which appear on the screen, the latter having been planted by Clara's agent in exchange for vast sums of money.

The profusion of images of Clara in the newspaper reports which flash across screen, representing her desire for publicity, contrasts with the one photo of Philippe which appears after the assassination attempt and shows him hiding his face from the camera. His desire to retain his privacy is also evident in his refusal to explain his motives for the shooting. This silence contrasts with Clara's effusive and frequently insincere speeches, and is, as demonstrated by comparison with the Gabin character in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, a mark of 'authenticity.'

Clara's artifice is also compared to Philippe's 'authenticity' through their different acting styles as, in contrast to Boyer's 'naturalistic' characterisation of Philippe, Morlay hams her way through the first half of the film, producing a Clara who is constantly playing the role of filmstar to her adoring fans, her fawning entourage and to whatever self is distinguishable from the filmstar persona.

Finally, her artificiality is indicated by her 'Otherness', firstly in relation to the 'Frenchness' — particularly the *titi parisien* Frenchness — which guarantees authenticity in French films of the 1930's. This is denoted by her links with the anglo-saxon world — her tour in America, her stage name, and her tendency to use English phrases.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, 'Otherness' is suggested in the person of her agent, a gay bachelor camped by Michel Simon, who receives visits from his boyfriend in

Clara's dressing room. While Gay Paris in the twenties was second only to Berlin as a haven for homosexuals, and transvestite balls were a regular event at Montmartre,<sup>17</sup> these were not included along with the *bals du quatorze juillet* in the populist iconography, nor did homosexuality enter into the populist canon of virtues. The Simon character therefore denotes deviance from the norm established in the cinema of the period,<sup>18</sup> and his camp mannerisms reinforce the notion of artifice surrounding Clara.

In a reversal of the pattern established so far, in which the male leads escape from the lies and deceit associated with the symbolic realm through a female character, here it is Clara who finds a new 'authenticity' through Philippe. The process begins at Philippe's trial, in which he condemns her melodramatic pleas on his behalf, accusing her of publicity seeking and asking to be spared the dishonour of being shown mercy because of 'un numéro de music-hall, de film parlant'. Shocked, she admits she had learned the speech off by heart, and begins a more honest testimony in less theatrical tones, ending in a hysteria which signifies a loss of the control and poise which marked her performances, and which becomes a private manifestation of emotion, as the judge orders the court to be cleared.

The change within Clara is subsequently conveyed in the editing and *mise-en-scène* of the scene in which she picks Philippe up from prison. At first she is excluded from the screen, and only her voice is heard over shots of Philippe. When the film cuts to her, she remains seated in shadows, pulls down the blind at the back of the car, and actively avoids the light from the headlamps of oncoming cars. This movement in to the wings and out of the limelight is indicative of a desire to move from the public to the private sphere, a desire which is also expressed in the new

domestic arrangements she makes, which are discussed by her agent and a movie producer in a preceding scene. The agent replies to the producer's expression of admiration for the Clara's new home with the remark, 'Ce n'est pas fini.' Clara veut que personne n'entre ici.' At this point there is a cut to a strange, unidentifiable space, an almost empty room between two columns, which would appear to symbolise a private, intimate space that Clara is trying to create.

True to the tradition of the cinema of the period, this private space is going to be attained through romantic love. After they have become lovers, Clara tells Philippe: 'Je t'aime comme je n'ai jamais aimé personne. Je n'ai pas eu le temps; depuis l'âge de 17 ans je travaille. Je n'ai jamais connu de liberté, de vrai bonheur.' This 'vrai bonheur', which is achieved in the intimacy of a relationship with a lover, contrasts with the song 'Le Bonheur' which she is shown singing to an adoring public on the afternoon of the shooting, and the film 'Le Bonheur', which she has just finished shooting.

This second *bonheur*, by implication a *faux bonheur*, refers therefore to her relationship with her public, a relationship which is doubly false in its betrayal of both parties. On the political level, songs like 'Le Bonheur' function as an opiate for the masses, the glamour of the films and personal appearances in which they are performed by Clara providing a momentary distraction from the misery of their lives hinted at in the scene at Arcueil and so fulfilling the promise of a transitory moment of happiness contained in the lyrics of the song:

Le bonheur n'est plus un rêve  
Le bonheur est là tout près,  
Dans mon coeur le jour se lève  
Et la nuit vient après...

On a personal level, the relationship is false in that Clara Stuart the singer/star is no

more than a persona, an image created by her agent and the media, a process which represents alienation in the symbolic Realm.

Clara is however unable to find a private space in which to sustain her 'real' happiness with Philippe, as this relationship too becomes public property, the assassination attempt forming the basis of the film 'Le Bonheur' in which Clara is starring. The moment of authenticity is thus caught up and lost in the artificial world of representation. Suggestions of alienation are contained in both the multiple levels of *mise-en-abyme* — the song within the film within the film — and in the reaction of Philippe when he discovers that his story is being turned into a film. Commenting on the incompetence of the actor playing 'his' role, he says:

Il ne sait même pas tenir un revolver. Tu aurais dû me demander des conseils...Je connais le personnage. Il est même assez bête pour avoir du chagrin à l'idée qu'on lui a volé son souvenir.

This reference to himself in the third person indicates the danger of a loss of 'self' which is ultimately the fate of Clara, who is denied a private existence and confined to the public sphere as in the end Philippe leaves her, telling her: 'Tu es l'esclave de ta renommée. Tu ne peux pas vivre pour toi.'

And so, like Suzy, Clara is condemned to continue a meaningless, promiscuous relationship with the public and denied the private relationship which would have given her life meaning. If in *L'ENTRAINEUSE* it was a father-figure who punished Suzy for her transgression by casting her from the (imaginary) private realm, in which she was a desiring subject, to the (symbolic) public realm, in which she is an object of desire, in *LE BONHEUR* it is a 'son' who punishes Clara twice over by attempting to kill the public image, then by effectively destroying the private self.

As both of these acts concern the male control of a representation of woman on stage or screen, they can be explained by reference to Laura Mulvey's theories on the role played by voyeurism and fetishism in the spectator's relationship with the images of women on screen. Mulvey points out that, in psychoanalytical terms, the female figure poses a problem in that it connotes the lack of a penis and hence the threat of castration, and describes the two avenues of escape for the male unconscious as follows:

preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object... or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence the over-valuation, the cult of the female star). This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself. The first avenue, voyeurism, on the contrary, has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt...asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness.<sup>19</sup>

Both these mechanisms, fetishism, which builds up the physical beauty of the object, and voyeurism, which punishes the guilty object are present on the two occasions Philippe asserts control over Clara.

On the first occasion, that of the music-hall performance followed by the shooting, Clara is presented on stage as a fetishized object in a sequined sheath dress, a cult object, whose adoring fans chant 'Le Bonheur, Le Bonheur' Following Mulvey, this fetishization should suffice to allay castration anxiety and render unnecessary the subsequent shooting, which fulfils the punishment function of voyeurism (the gun, like the controlling male gaze, being a frequent phallic substitute).



That this shooting must take place seems to provide confirmation of the view expressed by Ann Kaplan that the process of fetishization can backfire. In relation to *BLONDE VENUS* she writes:

...the masculinized female image can become a resisting image for the female spectator; the male attire 'permits' female-female bonding because it pays lip service to a sexual difference we have all come to believe is necessary. It allows, then, a form of sexual relating that excludes men and that thus subverts patriarchal domination while acceding to its symbolic form.<sup>20</sup>

While Morlay, unlike Dietrich, does not appear in masculine attire, her image is nevertheless fetishized and there are suggestions in the way in which the performance sequence is shot that this form of female-female bonding is (perceived to be) taking place.

The sequence begins with long shots of Clara on stage, gradually progressing to close-ups of Clara's face then to a shot/reverse shot structure establishing a rapport between Clara and Philippe. What is surprising, however, is that the reverse shots contain both Philippe and the girl accompanying him, Louise. This third presence disrupts the one-to-one Philippe/Clara relationship one would have expected, particularly as one reverse shot reveals Philippe staring not at Clara, but at Louise, who is singing along with Clara and clapping wildly.

It is therefore Philippe who is the outsider, the intruder in the Louise/Clara relationship, and Clara is thus placed in the position of rival for Louise's affections, the position occupied in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, and in most of the other films analysed so far, by the father-figure. A number of factors other than her fetishization suggest that Clara is a phallic figure. These are her 'Otherness' with regard to those elements generally associated with the Maternal Realm — Frenchness, silence, authenticity —

as analysed above, and her wealth, which denotes power in capitalist society. (The latter is emphasised at the trial, when her husband is forced to admit that she paid off his debts and now supports him. She thus plays what was considered at that period to be the 'masculine' role in a marriage.)

The shooting is necessary because Clara arouses castration anxiety in spite and because of her fetishization. Philippe's fear is not that aroused by the sight of the unfetishized female figure, the fear of a similar loss of the penis; it is rather a fear of inadequacy, a fear that he will be unable to satisfy Louise's desire in the same way as Clara, Clara who delivers *Le Bonheur* on command.

This interpretation is backed up in the question posed by Louise when she visits Philippe in prison to ask: 'Pourquoi vous avez fait ça justement le soir où on devait rentrer ensemble ?', a question which suggests that the shooting was in part motivated by a desire to escape the sexual act and hence the danger of impotence. Moreover, the fact that the performance sequence is sandwiched between scenes of the homosexual couple in Clara's dressing room is perhaps an indication that the theme of homosexual bonding can be extended to the performance sequence itself.

While *le bonheur* offered by Clara is clearly as illusory as the tales of the Côte d'Azur with which Valentin — who also belongs to the world of the spectacle — charms Françoise in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, the performance evokes a desirable world of glamour and luxury with which the poverty-stricken Philippe, like the steel worker François, cannot compete. This explains why the violence directed towards the father-figures in the Gabin films is here transferred to Clara, the representative of the symbolic order within the terms of the film.

By shooting Clara, Philippe seeks to damage the physical beauty of the object

and so destroy the phallic image which evokes a rival 'father'. That this, rather than the actual murder of Clara, is what is at stake is made clear in the dialogue apropos of the shooting, which refers to the destruction of the image rather than the death of the person. Thus, the agent hastens to assure the husband not that his wife is alive, but that her face is not scarred, Clara asks Philippe: 'Vous seriez content si vous m'aviez défigurée?' (not '...si vous m'aviez tuée') and finally, Philippe tells Clara 'Je me suis dit, j'effacerai du monde cette image.'

Having failed the first time, this double deployment of both fetishization (building up the physical beauty of the object) and voyeurism (demystification and punishment) is repeated at the end of the film, in the scene in which Philippe leaves Clara. By this time however Clara has been replaced in the role of submissive female through the power of the male gaze, a process which begins in the office of the *juge d'instruction*.

Confronted by her would-be assassin, Clara is reduced to silence under the force of his stare, which is shot in a long close-up and marks the beginning of their relationship. (A certain equivalence between Philippe's gun and his gaze is suggested in a subsequent dialogue, in which, recounting the moment of the shooting, Philippe says: '...ton visage s'est contracté', to which Clara replies: 'Oui, j'ai vu tes yeux.'

The process of establishing domination and control is completed in the final scenes of the film. During her discussion with Philippe, Clara is semi-hysterical, her hair is in a mess and when he leaves her, she is shown slumped over an armchair in posture of despair. This destruction of the glamorous image and of the controlled performance earlier associated with Clara in her private and public life represents the demystification/punishment aspect of the control mechanism.

The shot of Clara's body in the armchair is the last image of the 'real' Clara in the film. It is followed by a shot of the empty room referred to earlier in the film by her agent as the place Clara wished no-one to enter. Clara's voice is played over this shot, saying: 'Philippe...chéri...'. This emphasises her inability to accede to the private sphere, while simultaneously establishing her absence on screen. And so, as was the case with Suzy, Clara's exclusion from the private sphere is closely followed by banishment to an off-screen space.

This shot of the empty room, signifying Clara's defeat and effective extinction, is however immediately followed by a fade to a cinema screen, in which the image of the filmstar Clara Stuart reappears in its full glory. This final sequence is an illustration of Philippe's parting words to Clara: 'Je te donnerai rendez-vous dans les cinémas', and it represents the other control mechanism, the restoration of the beautiful object. A shot and reverse shot of close-ups of the two restore what is considered by feminist critics to be the 'natural' order of things in classic cinema, a female image dominated by the male gaze (with no third party intervening.)

As indicated above, *LE BONHEUR* differs from *L'ENTRAINEUSE* in that in the earlier film control is exerted by a 'son' rather than by a dominant father-figure, a variation on a theme which can be attributed to the noticeable lack of powerful patriarchs in *LE BONHEUR*, in which Clara's agent is *une vieille folle*, her husband a poverty-stricken aristocrat and both these examples of decadence are financially dependent on Clara. *LE BONHEUR* thus represents a departure from the norm in which, as Vincendeau has pointed out, virility is predominantly embodied in French cinema of the period by older men.<sup>21</sup>

The absence of the father-figure in *LE BONHEUR* leads to an interesting

redistribution of the elements in the tripartite classic schema, in which certain aspects of the patriarchal role are displaced onto the two remaining parts. Thus, through her association with wealth and the fetishization of her image Clara represents for Philippe a phallic rival, and in this respect his attempt to shoot her can be seen as analogous to the murder of the father by the Gabin character in the films referred to above. Clara can however only be a passive representative of the patriarchal order, of which, as a woman, she can never enjoy the privileges — notably the freedom to behave as a desiring subject — and which is the site of her alienation. It is therefore Philippe who embodies the active aspect of the paternal role, namely the exertion of control over women on which the patriarchal order depends. Despite the economic and — as suggested above — sexual impotence in the film which exclude him from the order of the fathers, his masculinity designates him as the obvious channel through which to exercise the control of the transgressive female which is the narrative project of the film.

The elements located above in *LE BONHEUR* — an image of woman representing the patriarchal order, the simultaneous deployment of both voyeurism and fetishism in the male drive for control, exercised by a poverty-stricken ‘son’ figure — are also present in the earlier film, *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, and indeed are more readily apparent in the latter, because of its less complex structure.

As in *LE BONHEUR*, the atmosphere of proletarian Paris is represented in this 1930 film by the male lead, in this case Lucienne’s boyfriend, who offers her a life of simple domesticity in comparison to the world of luxury and glamour to which she gains access through winning a beauty contest. Whereas in later films the proletarian lifestyle would be mythologised and valorised, in *PRIX DE BEAUTE* it

is characterised as one of poverty, boredom and confinement. A caged bird in the living room appears as a visual metaphor for Lucienne's imprisonment in her domestic role. The meanness and narrowness of her surroundings is matched only by the meanness and narrowness of her jailor husband, who jealousy prevents her having any contact with her past as 'Miss Europe.'

In contrast to this narrow existence, Lucienne's career as the object of the male gaze is presented in positive terms. This is established at the beginning of the film, which opens with scenes of Lucienne and her boyfriend spending Sunday among crowds of holidaymakers at the waterside. The sequence begins by establishing Lucienne as the object of the male gaze within the diegesis. A shot of her legs kicking off her shoes is followed by a shot of a man staring at her. She then emerges from the car in which she had been changing into a swimsuit and does some gymnastics on the grass, to which her boyfriend responds: 'On te regarde. Tu n'as pas honte?'.

Through this association with sport, the open air and a holiday atmosphere Lucienne's unwitting exhibitionism is denoted as natural and healthy. These positive values are then transposed onto the Miss Europe contest itself by virtue of the similarity in setting and costume. The contest takes place on an open air stage, in a holiday atmosphere, and Lucienne is once again wearing a bathing costume. While the concept of woman as willing object of the look is obviously problematic in terms of feminist criticism, within the terms of the film, Lucienne's career as a beauty queen and then film star is presented as offering a life of luxury and liberty not available to her within the confines of marriage.

This life in the public eye does not however prove to be an option which is

open to her, as her husband is quick to punish her for escaping from the private sphere. In a natural continuation of the violence expressed in tearing up her photographic image, he sneaks into a private preview of Lucienne's film and shoots her while the film is running. As in *LE BONHEUR*, this final sequence contains elements of both voyeurism and fetishism, this time not in consecutive scenes but both within one striking shot, which frames the dead Lucienne in the foreground against her cinematographic image singing on the screen in the background. Thus, the flesh and blood Lucienne is punished for her transgression, while the beautiful image on the screen is preserved, and the double meaning of the phrase 'le prix de (la) beauté' becomes evident.

Thus, the narrative project of *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, like that of *L'ENTRAINEUSE* and *LE BONHEUR*, is the punishment of a woman who could be termed promiscuous, in that (representations of) her sexuality and the affirmation of her desire is a threat to the male order. She must therefore be controlled and confined within patriarchal boundaries (in this instance in the private sphere, in the two later films in the public sphere) and punished for transgressing them. Another element linking *PRIX DE BEAUTE* to *LE BONHEUR* and *L'ENTRAINEUSE* is the inclusion in each film of a popular song, which recurs at crucial points in the narrative.

*L'ENTRAINEUSE* begins and ends in the nightclub in Montmartre, with Fréhel's rendition of 'Sans Lendemain', the refrain of which is as follows:

Sans lendemain, sans rien qui dure  
Un homme passe et puis s'en va  
Sans lendemain, mes aventures  
Depuis toujours s'arrêtent là  
Jamais l'espoir d'un autre soir  
Bonjour bonsoir, adieu l'amour

Sans lendemain, sans rien qui dure  
Voilà ma vie et pour toujours.

Obviously, the song is intended to express the fate of the heroine, condemned to a loveless existence. However, a more detailed examination of its function in the film reveals certain similarities with songs and structures analysed in the first part of this chapter. Firstly, the positioning of the song in the first and final sequences gives the film a circular structure, similar to the recurring cycles in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, and the flashback structure of *LE JOUR SE LEVE*. This adds to the notion of ineluctable fate contained in the lyrics of the song, as well as adding to the claustrophobic atmosphere typical of films of that period.

The notion of a recurring fate is of course also contained in the Fréhel character herself. Her remark to Suzy: ‘...quand il y a un endroit où on a été heureux, et où on a eu un premier amour, il vaut mieux pas y retourner’, implies that Suzy’s experience is a repetition of what the singer suffered in the past at the same place. This Suzy/Fréhel doubling adds another loop to the circle, and is in this sense to a certain extent reminiscent of the Fréhel past /Fréhel present overlap in *PEPE LE MOKO* and the Janine/Jeanette doubling in *PARADIS PERDU*. (The former, depending on an extra-textual knowledge on the part of the spectator, rather than existing in the perceptible text, is a layer of meaning no longer widely accessible to a modern audience.)

Secondly, the lyrics of ‘Sans Lendemain’, with their notion of transience, of the impossibility of finding a happiness that lasts, echo the sentiments expressed in the theme song of *PARADIS PERDU*:

Rêve d’amour, bonheur trop court, au paradis perdu  
Tendres espoirs, bouquet d’un soir, dont le parfum n’est  
plus...



The basic pessimism of these two films of 1938 and 1939 respectively, the latter looking back to happiness in the past, the former showing a distinct lack of faith in the future, is of course explicable in terms of world events. It is however interesting to find the same notion of transience in the lyrics of the eponymous song of the 1935 film *LE BONHEUR*, which begin as follows:

Le bonheur n'est plus un rêve  
Le bonheur est là tout près  
Dans mon coeur le jour se lève  
Et la nuit vient après

Loin de toi j'ai peur que s'achève déjà  
La minute chère et trop brève  
Le bonheur n'est plus un rêve  
Quand je suis entre tes bras

Le bonheur n'est qu'un beau rêve  
Il s'en va quand tu t'enfuis  
Mais tes yeux sur moi se lèvent  
Le bonheur alors revit

Despite the affirmative note of the first three lines the notion of transience creeps in by the fourth and establishes itself as the dominant theme of the song. As this first rendition of the song occurs in the context of the music-hall performance, this is perhaps a reflection of the transient nature of the happiness offered by Clara to her public, and by extension, that offered by escapist cinema to the public in the midst of a Depression.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the semantic similarities, 'Le Bonheur' bears a certain resemblance to 'Le Paradis Perdu' in that it too recurs at significant moments throughout the film, first in the music-hall sequence, then in a rehearsal scene for the film within the film and finally in the last sequence, where the scene previously shown in rehearsal is now brought to the screen. In the first instance, the first two stanzas are sung, in the second and third rendition the third.

The third verse as a whole is a comment on the situation at the end of the film, Clara having being deserted by Philippe who is now staring at her image on a cinema screen. The first two lines recall the pessimism of *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, while the second two, at a semantic level, evoke the 'recapturing the past' theme of *PARADIS PERDU*. Taken in the context of the final sequence, however, they simply reinforce the initial pessimism, in that they highlight the one-sidedness and sterility of what remains of the Clara/Philippe relationship, in which the first party has now been reduced to a celluloid image on a cinema screen. Whereas the lyrics imply a two-way relationship between the object and the subject of the look, the spectator/film relationship is not one of reciprocity, but one of domination and control.

Thus, the various contexts of the three renditions of the song — music-hall performance, film rehearsal, film scene — chart the progressive alienation/control of Clara through the male gaze, from live performance to dead image. The fact that the third rendition is a repetition of the second (transferred from live rehearsal to image fixed on the screen) situates it firmly in the past while adding a level of *mise-en-abyme*. (The spectator watching the film *LE BONHEUR*, starring Gaby Morlay, sees Philippe in a cinema watching a film *Le Bonheur*, starring Morlay/Stuart, who is singing a song 'Le Bonheur' which comments on diegetic events in *LE BONHEUR*.)

Like the film's structure, the function of the song in *PRIX DE BEAUTE* is less complex than in *LE BONHEUR*. Indeed, the decision to include a song at all can possibly be explained quite simply in extra-cinematic terms by reference to the fundamental change the French cinema industry was going at the period *PRIX DE BEAUTE* was made. A silent version of the film was begun in 1929. In the course

of shooting it was decided to add sound sequences in four different languages.<sup>23</sup> Given the fascination of the cinema-going public for sound effects, the decision to add a song was presumably taken in order to capitalise on the new medium, attract the largest possible public and so maximise profits, rather than for any artist reasons.

The song is first performed in the opening sequence in which the couple spend Sunday by the water. Lucienne responds to her boyfriend's remark: 'On te regarde. Tu n'as pas honte?', by singing:

Ne sois pas jaloux, tais-toi  
Je n'ai qu'un amour, c'est toi.

The full version of the song, which ends with these lines, is then sung in full in the final sequence of the film by the celluloid image of Lucienne, while the 'real' Lucienne lies dead in the cinema.

Despite the presumably commercial reasons for its inclusion, the song functions in a similar way to 'Le Bonheur'. Firstly, it provides an exposition of the basic tension in the film — in this case, that between male possessive jealousy and the female desire/drive to be 'free', which, in the song and in the film, is construed as 'free to give herself to other men' — the limits of female freedom in patriarchy, in which women function as objects of exchange between men.

Secondly, it charts the same movement from live 'performance' — in this case, in the private rather than public sphere — to dead cinematic image. The inanimate nature of the image is underlined in this final sequence by a cut from the moving image on screen to the individual frames of nitrate film running through the projector gate in the projection booth. This emphasis on the mechanics of cinema destroys the illusion of life created by the screen image, and prefigures the final shot in the film, which closes on the image of Lucienne's dead face.

Thus, despite the remarkable similarities in the final sequences of *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, there is an important difference in emphasis which alters the tone of each film. In *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, the final two shots — a close-up of Lucienne's husband, accompanied on the soundtrack by Lucienne's voice singing: 'Je n'ai qu'un amour, c'est toi', then a close-up of her dead face — convey a sense of irretrievable loss, implicitly accusing the husband of having committed an unnecessary crime, and undermining the cinematic illusion of life by ending on the diegetic 'reality' of death.

In *LE BONHEUR*, on the other hand, the cinematic illusion is retained as the defeated/punished Clara is simply excluded from the screen. Throughout the final sequence the spectator is repeatedly placed in the position of Philippe, as s/he shares his view of the spectacle of Clara on screen, without any cuts to the cinematic apparatus or the 'real' Clara. The film ends on a close-up of Philippe's face staring at the screen, which recalls the last lines of 'Le Bonheur':

Mais tes yeux sur moi se lèvent  
Le bonheur alors revit

thus emphasising the power of the male gaze — and, by extension, the power of the spectator's gaze/ the cinematic apparatus — to recapture an ideal through its control of representations of women.

This different emphasis is perhaps a reflection of changes in the French consciousness over the five years separating the two films. *LE BONHEUR* ends with Philippe in a position similar to that of the male leads of the films analysed in Chapters 1 and 2.1; in face of a lost ideal situated firmly in the past, represented by a female figure and reconstructed in the present in an Imaginary world, the cinema screen, through the unbroken dyad of spectator/cinematic image. Perhaps the

Depression and the movement towards war — both symptoms of breakdowns in the patriarchal capitalist order — were responsible for this increase in nostalgia, in the need to relive past idylls, which is evident in the films from 1935 onward.

What emerges from this analysis of the place of women in the French cinema of the 1930s is the ultimate similarity in the roles allotted to female characters. Whether they fall into the sweetheart or whore category, they function as projections of the male psyche and are denied any form of subjectivity.

Although *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE* appear to be about female characters i.e. have female characters as their subject, the three films actually demonstrate the impossibility of female subjectivity in patriarchal culture. Thus, in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, it is only in a brief retreat to the imaginary realm that Suzy can function in the private sphere as a desiring subject, before being repositioned as an object of desire in the symbolic. Similarly, *LE BONHEUR* demonstrates the denial of Clara's desire to enter the private sphere and her progressive alienation through representation in the symbolic. In *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, Lucienne can only be free outwith the private sphere, but this 'freedom' is the freedom to enter the market place, become a public rather than private object of desire.

In the latter two films, the initial vivacity of the two women - the live performance of the one, the gymnastics of the other — is gradually eroded until the two become fixed as images, an end result which is a combination of the objectification they accept, exchanging their talent/body for wealth, luxury and the comparative freedom these bring within the patriarchal system, and the objectification imposed upon them — their destruction/punishment by jealous, impecunious

husbands/lovers.

By revealing the objectification of women in the realm of representation this analysis supports Laura Mulvey's assertion that:

Woman...stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.<sup>24</sup>

This is demonstrated across the mother/whore divide in both *LE GRAND JEU*, in which Pierre imposes his desire on the silent Irma, forcing her to become a representation of his past idyll, and in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, in which Noblet seeks to impose his desire on the silent Suzy, whose own desire (for Noblet's son and respectability) he denies.

The notion of silence is one which recurs implicitly throughout the range of films under discussion through the technical separation of woman and voice. Thus, in *LE GRAND JEU* Marie Bell is dubbed for dramatic effect, while in the final sequence of *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, intercutting between the dead Lucienne, the singing screen image and the mechanical means by which the latter is produced, foregrounds a process similar to that disguised in *LE BONHEUR* five years later. The same mechanical reproduction of a disembodied voice occurs in *PARADIS PERDU*, through the grammophone cylinder which churns out the dead Janine's voice.

The important role played by popular songs in these films would seem to contradict Mulvey's theory about men imposing their fantasies on silent images. One needs only to refer, however, to Vincendeau's comment on the *chanson réaliste*, to the effect that

these songs, written by men, were almost invariably

sung by women, and they proclaimed a world in which the paradigm of the man/woman relationship is that of the pimp and the prostitute, in which woman was the victim of man and 'fate'<sup>25</sup>

to realise that these songs simply represent one more means of reducing women to silence, by having them lend their voices to male words.

The songs have an additional function in the field of mythification, in that by enshrining female victimization in an aesthetically pleasing, harmoniously perfect work of art they elevate it above the realm of political analysis and, as Vincendeau suggests, succeed in passing it off as a question of 'fate'. They function therefore in a way that is analogous to the workings of the Gabin myth, becoming an explanation in themselves for the pessimistic endings of these films and obviating the need for further analysis.

Like the Gabin heroes, the female characters in the films analysed above cannot function as subjects in patriarchy, and it is this exclusion which determines the tragic ending of the narratives. This is not however to suggest an equivalence between the position of 'sons' and that of women in patriarchal society, for, as these films demonstrate, women have no voice, the female characters simply function as objects of exchange between men, symbolising the power to possess which the 'sons' lack.

It is this issue of the 'sons' lack of power within patriarchy, a lack of power illustrated in the portrayal of the immature and financially dependent son and nephews in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, as well as in that of the poverty-stricken male leads in *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO : NOTES

1. cf. E. Ann Kaplan's essay 'Mothering, Feminism and Representation', in which she writes:

The new [i.e. post-industrial] ideology of Motherhood is reflected in the mother paradigms that are inscribed in dominant literary representations in Europe and America, as Industrialism gets under way. In the novel and short story — the genres that emerged with industrialism — the Mother — when not absent is confined to the polarised paradigms of the saintly, all-nurturing, self-sacrificing 'Angel in the House' or the cruel mother type who is sadistic and jealous.

in *Home is Where the Heart is* ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1987) p. 116.

2. In Lacanian terms, the lost object is the *objet petit a*, a sliding signifier which stands for desire. It comes into being in the Oedipal phase, when the imaginary unity with the mother is broken by the introduction of a third term, the phallus. The child realises that the mother's desire is for the father, the phallus, and s/he wishes to be the phallus; her/his desire is to be the object of desire of the mother. *Objet a* stands initially for this unfulfillable desire, then for all the other desires which replace this original desire, and so stands for desire itself.

By drawing an analogy between the psychological and sociological concepts of the father and the patriarch, the above can be used to describe the opening sequence of events in *LE GRAND JEU*. Initially, the subject, Pierre, was at one with the mother, Florence, believing himself to be the object of her desire. The patriarchal fathers intervene, breaking up the unity by showing that the phallus — wealth which equals power in capitalist society — is in their hands. It never belonged to Pierre, who supported Florence by embezzling a wealthy client's money. Pierre is then forced to the realization that it is wealth (= phallus) which is the object of Florence's desire and that he neither possesses nor is it.

Lacan relates this concept of the *objet petit a* to the *fort da* game observed by Freud, in which a child compensates for the disappearance of his/her mother by representing her absence/presence through the repeated hiding or showing of a cotton reel, as follows:

The reel is not the mother reduced to a small ball by some magical game worthy of the Jivaros — it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained ... To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra — the *petit a*.

The activity as a whole symbolizes repetition ... It is the



repetition of the mother's departure as cause of a *Spaltung* in the subject - overcome by the alternating game, *fort-da* ...

Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Peregrine Books, 1986) pp. 62-63

The repetitive structure of LE GRAND JEU — and, indeed, of QUAI DES BRUMES and PARADIS PERDU could be seen as emanating from the same basic drive as that behind the *fort-da* game, namely the desire to overcome the separation from the mother. Moreover, the repeated re-presentation of Florence in characters which recall her but are not her, and so simultaneously evoke her presence and her absence, would seem to be a variation on the *fort-da* theme. This could also be applied to the songs in PEPE LE MOKO and PARADIS PERDU, which evoke the past while underlining its loss.

3. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente; le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) pp. 173-176.
4. Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French Cinema of the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) pp. 320-383.
5. Vincendeau, p. 352.
6. Vincendeau, pp. 376-383.
7. Jeancolas, p. 175.
8. In her analysis of the Joan Collins character in DYNASTY, Belinda Budge points out that:

As in *film noir*, Alexis' 'spider woman' image is reinforced by another female character who, in representing an ideologically 'positive' female archetype, defines her transgression. In DYNASTY this role is occupied by Krystle, Blake's wife — the virgin mother (fair where Alexis is dark), innocent nurturer of husband and children (including Alexis' own... )

from 'Joan Collins and the Wilder Side of Women' in *The Female Gaze*, ed. by Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (London: The Women's Press, 1988) p. 107.

9. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in *Screen*, 16 (3) (Autumn 1975) p. 6.
10. Jane Gallop, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London: Macmillan, 1982) p. 47.

11. Ibid.
12. Gallop, p. 48.
13. Ibid.
14. Julian Jackson, in a paper entitled ‘“Le Temps des Loisirs”: Popular Tourism and Mass Leisure in the Front Populaire’s Cultural-Political Vision’, given at a conference on the French and Spanish Popular Fronts at Southampton University, 1986, p. 6.
15. Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1987) p.30.
16. It is interesting to note the use made of English Christian names in the French cinema of the 1930s and 1940s to denote women who are not respectable. This is evident in *L’ENTRAINEUSE* where the prostitute Suzy has to adopt what was presumably her original French name, Suzanne, in order to hide her shady past. A similar doubling occurs in *JENNY*, where Françoise Rosay is known to her daughter as Jeanne, but to her customers in the brothel she runs as Jenny. Thus, the mothers/sweethearts have French names, the madams/whores English ones. The tradition of English names — and their connotations of lack of respectability — seems to extend to actresses and music hall artistes, as in the present case with Clara, and also in Clouzot’s *QUAI D’ORFEVRES*, in which the Suzy Delair character, a singer, is called Jenny.  

This may be an indication that, in the popular consciousness, actresses were still only one remove from prostitutes. Indeed, this analysis will equate the physical promiscuity of the one with the psychological promiscuity — the relationship with a multitude of spectators — of the other. It may however simply be a reflection of the fashion for English names — anything ending in ‘y’ — among stage artists in the twenties and thirties, of which Arletty is a famous example.
17. For an account of the homosexual milieu in Paris between the wars see Gilles Barbadette and Michel Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1981).
18. Very few French films of the 1930s, with the notable exception of *HOTEL DU NORD* (Carné, 1938), feature homosexual characters, let alone show them in a positive light. *LA GARÇONNE* (de Limur, 1935), an adaptation of Marguerite’s *roman à scandale*, gives a purely negative portrayal of lesbianism, associating it with drug addiction and general decadence. (Later, sympathetic representations of female homosexuality are given in *QUAI DES ORFEVRES* (Clouzot, 1947) and *OLIVIA* (Audry, 1951)).
19. Mulvey, pp. 13-14.
20. E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film, Both Sides of the Camera* (London:

Routledge, 1983) p. 5.

21. In her analysis of the phenomenon, Vincendeau attributes it to a number of factors, including the 'theatrical intertext' — a substantial percentage of 1930s films were based on earlier plays, which tended to privilege the roles of older male actors, and the social context of 1930s France, which was very much a patriarchal society.
22. As the following makes clear, France was still in the midst of the depression in 1935:

France did not feel the worst effects of the world Depression until 1932...she was less heavily dependent on industrial exports than Germany, Britain and America, whose very success as manufacturing countries made them the first to suffer when the bottom fell out of the world market in 1929—30. On the other hand, their latent strength enabled them to recover more quickly... France, by contrast, suffered less acutely; but the effects of the Depression on her economy were to last well into the late 1930s, whereas in most other countries recovery was well under way by the middle of the decade. In 1935, French industrial production was a quarter less than it had been in 1928, while industrial exports were down by nearly half, reducing the French share of total world exports from 6 per cent to well under 4 per cent.

Maurice Larkin, *France since the Popular Front; Government and People 1936—1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 10.

23. See the entry for PRIX DE BEAUTE in Raymond Borde, *Catalogue des Films Français de Long Métrage; Films Sonores de Fiction 1929—1939* (Brussels: Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, 1981).
24. Mulvey, p. 7.
25. Vincendeau, p. 149.

## CHAPTER THREE

Exclusion of Sons from the Patriarchal Order in

LE CRIME DE MONSIEUR LANGE,

LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, MAYERLING,

MARIUS, FANNY and CESAR

While the last chapter focused specifically on the place of women within the patriarchal order, it also contained an important sub-theme, namely, the relation of young males figures to that order. A brief survey of the position of these young men in relation to patriarchy reveals a schema not dissimilar to that which emerged from the analysis of the relationship between Jean and Zabel in Chapter One.

In *QUAI DES BRUMES*, the Gabin character is locked in an Oedipal conflict with a father-figure vis-à-vis whom he is in a position of 'lack'. His inscription in the text as a penniless deserter and eventual murderer is indicative of his exclusion from the patriarchal order in both a sociological and psychoanalytical sense. On the one hand, his lack of wealth allows his emasculation in economic terms by the comfortably-off, bourgeois Zabel, which, combined with Jean's proletarian/*marginal* status, gives the 'father/son' conflict a political, class-based dimension. On the other hand, his 'criminal' status, together with his relative taciturnity and restricted — if effective — vocabulary and grammar in comparison to the verbosity and grandiloquence of Zabel, suggest his exclusion from the symbolic realm, the site of language and law. This inability to accede to the realm of the father has as its corollary a regression to the imaginary realm, which is associated with the love relationship in the film.

With the possible exception of Pierre in *LE PARADIS PERDU* (an exception which can be explained in terms of Pierre's dual father/son status, a function of the film's nostalgic structure) each of the young male leads in the films analysed in Chapter Two display one or more of the characteristics outlined above. Firstly, they are either involved in an Oedipal conflict with an older man over a girl, or else they

lose the girl to a capitalist order offering trappings of wealth and luxury with which they cannot compete. Thus, Valentin competes with François for Françoise's affections in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, Clément attempts to sleep with Pierre's girlfriend in *LE GRAND JEU*, and Noblet *père* and *fils* are rivals for Suzy in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, while in *PEPE LE MOKO*, Pépé's older rival, the rich Maxime, is a personification of the world of wealth in the capitalist order to which the male leads in *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE* lose their women.

Secondly, each of these young male leads is either in a position of impotence within the economic structure or else outwith it entirely, being variously impecunious grands bourgeois financially dependent on older male relatives (*LE GRAND JEU* and *L'ENTRAINEUSE*), workers (*LE JOUR SE LEVE*, *PRIX DE BEAUTE*) or anarchist/thief with proletarian sympathies/antecedents (*LE BONHEUR*, *PEPE LE MOKO*).

Thirdly, the majority of these 'son' figures are denoted as criminal. Pépé's status as thief is a 'given' part of his characterization from the beginning of *PEPE LE MOKO*, while his counterparts in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, *LE BONHEUR* and *LE PRIX DE BEAUTE* are shown murdering or attempting to murder representatives/representations of the patriarchal order from which they are excluded. Pierre in *LE GRAND JEU* is both a thief and a murderer, first embezzling his client's funds and then going on to kill Clément.

Finally, a number of these 'sons' are in some way excluded from the realm of the father and/or locked in a regressive imaginary realm. In *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *PARADIS PERDU* the imaginary realm takes the form of a bucolic idyll (in the former instance, not shown, only evoked in allusions to gathering lilac in the country)

which contrasts with the realities of war and industrialisation, and, as in *LE GRAND JEU*, is associated with a woman. In the latter film, Pierre's banishment from the realm of the father is concomitant with his being forced to relinquish the Name of the Father, for which, as his uncles point out, he has had no respect, and enter the foreign legion under an assumed name. In *L'ENTRAINEUSE* Robert is restricted to the maternal realm of Rocagne, just as Pepe le Moko is confined to the Casbah; neither make it to the patriarchal world of Paris.

This chapter will compare the pattern of son/father relations described above with that which emerges from six more films of the 1930s: *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* (Renoir, 1936), *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS* (Chenal, 1938) *MAYERLING* (Litvak, 1936), *MARIUS* (Korda, 1931), *FANNY* (Allegret, 1932), and *CESAR* (Pagnol, 1936). Although these six films can all be termed melodramas, there is for our present purposes a significant difference between them in that the last three films (which, despite their different directors, are effectively one cohesive work, each being written by Pagnol, either as an adaptation from the pre-existing stage play or directly for the screen)<sup>1</sup> effectively recreate the "'ideal' (archaic/nostalgic) world of Pagnol"<sup>2</sup> referred to in the Introduction, while the first three problematize the patriarchal order, which in each case is portrayed as undesirable.

As regards these first three films, a distinction can be made in terms of popular/art cinema between on the one hand, *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS* and *MAYERLING* and on the other, *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*. The Chenal and Litvak films, colonial and historical melodramas respectively, are both (superior examples of) run-of-the-mill productions of the period. *MAYERLING* launched the Hollywood career of Anatole Litvak and is chiefly remembered for making a star of Danielle

Darrieux. *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* enjoys greater critical esteem, both because of its status as a Renoir film and because of its place at the interface of political and cinematic history. It is generally considered the film of the Popular Front, a collective effort by Renoir, Prévert and the Groupe Octobre to portray the formation of a workers co-operative in Paris. The three films have however in common their central character, a 'son' figure who in each case is portrayed as a dreamer who tries in vain to transform reality in accordance with his dreams.

The eponymous hero of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* is a writer of Wild West stories who lives in a sprawling, typically Parisian building, which also houses the printworks of the publisher Batala, to whom Lange sells his stories, and a laundry run by an ex-mistress of Batala's, Valentine. The corrupt capitalist Batala plays the role of *trouble-fête* in the otherwise harmonious courtyard community composed of the *petit peuple* dear to Prévert, exploiting Lange's literary talents and seducing the young *blanchisseuse* Estelle, thereby impeding the growing love between her and Charles, the son of the *concierge*. When bankruptcy threatens, Batala is forced to flee. The train he is travelling on crashes and he allows himself to be reported dead. In his absence, the courtyard community flourishes. The young lovers are reunited and the printshop workers form a co-operative. Business booms thanks to Lange's creativity. This new-found peace and prosperity is threatened when Batala suddenly returns incognito. In order to safeguard the new order Lange kills Batala and is forced to flee Paris with Valentine, with whom he has formed a relationship. The pair arrive at the frontier where Lange is recognised by a group of workers. Valentine relates the story behind the crime to this people's court — an account which constitutes the body of the film, which is one long flashback — and the pair are allowed to cross the



border to freedom.

Despite his association with the *petit peuple* of the courtyard, Lange, as played by the slim somewhat ethereal René Lefevre, comes across as an unworldly intellectual who has little in common with the down-to-earth proletarian heroes incarnated by Gabin. However, the 'otherworldliness' of Lange can be equated with the regressive tendencies of the Gabin heroes in that it too is symptomatic of a desire to escape prevailing social reality.

Lange lives in an imaginary world in both a literal and psychoanalytical sense, as is indicated in the first scene of the long flashback sequence in which Valentine describes him as 'un homme pas du tout pratique. Il était toujours ailleurs. La nuit quand tout le monde dormait, il écrivait des histoires, des histoires impossibles, avec un vieux stylo', and at this point the film fades to a shot of Lange writing an episode of his cowboy comic-strip, *Arizona Jim*. The camera then pans around his room to reveal the cowboy artefacts covering the walls; the hat, the rifle and the map of Arizona which compose his imaginary America, his *ailleurs*.

Lange has thus achieved in fantasy what Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES* fails to achieve in reality; he has escaped from the confines of an unjust society ruled by a corrupt bourgeoisie to a new world where the oppressed are rescued from their oppressors by a lone hero. This is indeed the theme of the storyline which he is acting out loud and in which a negro is being hung by a group of *beaux messieurs*, a term which is more appropriate as a reference to the villains of the Troisième République rather than the bandits of Arizona.

It is emphasised that Lange's stories emanate from his childhood. When Valentine asks him where he learned to throw a lasso, he replies: 'A la campagne.

Quand j'étais enfant, je vivais avec les chevaux, moi. A la campagne, où il y a du soleil, et de la pluie aussi, bien sûr.' Thus, the countryside and an earlier period in life have positive connotations here just as they do in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *PARADIS PERDU*.

That Lange's imaginary world is also a maternal one is suggested by the presence of Valentine in this expository sequence, in which, by virtue of both appearance and deeds she comes across as a maternal figure. Although Florelle, who plays Valentine, was actually slightly younger than René Lefèvre she appears older because of her heavy make-up and her mature figure, which contrasts with Lefèvre's slim, boyish build. Similarly, the respective actions of the two characters — Valentine is putting away Lange's clean linen while Lange is acting out the part of a cowboy on a horse — position them as mother and child.

The impression of an unequal, cross-generational relationship between them is reinforced through Lange's respectful attitude to Valentine, whom he insists on addressing as Mme Cardet despite her repeated request: 'Appellez-moi Valentine.' This is also indicative of Valentine's superior social and financial status as owner of a laundry and possessor of business acumen foreign to the naïve penniless Lange.

And so Lange's position at the beginning of the film could be described as analogous to that of the infant in the maternal imaginary realm of Lacanian theory. The inadequacy of this position is hinted at in the following exchange between Lange and Valentine:

V : Et la vie ici, comment est-elle? Le pauvre monde,  
qui est-ce qui les détrousse?  
L : Je ne sais pas. Je ne sors jamais.  
V : Vous êtes un rêve debout.

Lange is an innocent in sexual as well as socio-political terms: Valentine points out

to him: 'Il n'y a jamais de femmes dans vos histoires d'Indiens'. This expository sequence thus sets up the project of the film, which, it suggests, is to chart the development of Lange from this childlike asexual being who, despite the fundamentally moralistic nature of his fantasy world, is ignorant of the functioning of the forces of good and evil in the real world, into a sexually active, politically aware adult.

Lange's first attempt to become sexually active involves the young *blanchisseuse* Estelle, whom he accompanies to the Bois de Boulogne, intending to prove his manhood to the colleagues who mock his timidity with women by seducing her. However, after Estelle has told him the story of her childhood, which is a story of abuse, neglect and irresponsibility on the part of male figures of authority — the father who deserts her mother before her birth, the '... monsieur bien. Un négociant. Quelqu'un, quoi' who tries to rape her — Lange cannot prove his manhood as he had intended, by the standards of patriarchal society, by becoming one more abuser. To do so would compromise the moral integrity which is part of his character, as shown in the clearly delineated nature of good and evil in his fantasy world.

Realising Estelle loves Charles, he lets her go and is promptly picked up by a middle-aged, plump, maternal looking prostitute. Just before the prostitute appears there is a shot of Lange looking at Estelle departing on a bus, filmed from behind the park railings, which has the effect of putting Lange behind bars. This seems to imply that Lange is imprisoned in a morally upright but impotent filial position and can never become a an active lover of women his own age, a role reserved for corrupt but powerful father-figures. This interpretation is borne out by the subsequent events in the film.

After his failure with Estelle, Lange forms a relationship not with a young woman of his own age and modest means but rather with the maternal and financially more secure Valentine. Estelle meanwhile is seduced not by young Charles, a second 'son' figure who is denoted in the film as the ideal partner for Estelle, but by the middle-aged, silver-tongued publisher Batala who makes the girl pregnant, thereby spoiling her chances of a relationship with Charles, whose scandalised family prevents her seeing him. This provides a graphic example of a potent father-figure asserting his domination, refusing to allow a son to join the ranks of the fathers. It is interesting to note that at this point in the film Charles is in bed with a broken leg, a classic metaphor of impotence.

Batala's sexual exploitation of Estelle is matched by his commercial exploitation of Lange, who is tricked into signing away the rights to *Arizona Jim* and is then unable to assert himself against the loquacious Batala, who brushes aside his protests at the insertion of advertisements in his work. Indeed, a certain equivalence between the position of Estelle and that of Lange as feckless victims of Batala is suggested in the juxtaposition of the scene in which Estelle's pregnancy is discussed by the courtyard and the identity of the father speculated upon, and the scene in which Lange discovers he has been tricked out of the rights to *Arizona Jim*.

Just as it appears that Lange is doomed to remain locked in a position of impotence vis-à-vis Batala in both sexual and commercial terms the fortunes of both characters abruptly change. Lange begins a sexual relationship with Valentine, while Batala, hounded by his creditors, is forced to disappear from the courtyard. When the train he escapes upon crashes, he swaps his clothes with those of a dead priest in order to fake his death.

The scene which conveys the news of Batala's death begins with a close-up of a radio, from which a voice describes the train crash in which he is supposed to have perished. The camera then pans away from the radio, around various windows in the courtyard, then into Lange's room where it settles on Lange and Valentine in bed. The coincidence of Batala's presumed death with Lange's entry into manhood suggests that Lange has in some way ousted the father-figure (Valentine is a former mistress of Batala's). The suggestion of a causal link is reinforced by the panning shot, which not only links Lange with Batala's demise, but also indicates that these events will affect the courtyard. Lange does not however simply replace Batala within the existing system; he introduces a new order which will reverse the values of the old. The fact that Lange's lover is the maternal Valentine, gives some indication of the nature of this new order, which can be likened, in a number of ways, to Lacan's imaginary realm.

In the realm of the father, the male child renounces his desire to be the object of the mother's desire and the position of the child within the family is fixed. This is in contrast to the imaginary realm where everything is in flux. From the moment of the consummation of Lange's relationship with Valentine to that of the return of Batala towards the end of the film, there is a breakdown in the established code of values and in family relationships within the courtyard.

This is evident in the film's refusal to attach to Valentine (who, it is hinted, was once a prostitute) or Estelle the labels reserved in a patriarchal society for women who sell their favours or accord them to more than one man. Thus, Lange doesn't press Valentine when she hesitates to answer his question on what she did before, and Charles tells Estelle that her pregnancy is not as serious as his own

broken leg. Both women are allowed to shed their sordid pasts and find 'true love' and in doing so they cross the artificial divide between whore and sweetheart established in patriarchy and which feature in numerous films of this period (cf. *L'ENTRAINEUSE*).

When the *concierge*, the film's second negative father-figure, protests about his son's relationship and attempts to reposition Estelle into the category of female non-desirables with the remark: 'C'est malheureux, tout de même, une fille mère', he is told by Valentine 'Bouclez-la, mon général.' She then reminds him that it is the cooperative who paid Charles's medical expenses when he broke his leg, concluding, 'Charles et Estelle sont les enfants de la coopérative maintenant. Laissez-les tranquilles.' The authoritarianism represented by the *concierge* is thus turned to ridicule and the patriarchal order overthrown.

Feminist writings sometimes evoke a matriarchal state in which all children are equally loved by the mother, a state preceding patriarchy, which instituted hierarchies.<sup>3</sup> The courtyard cooperative functions as just such a matriarchy, in which all members participate equally in the production of *Arizona Jim* and decisions are made collectively. The democratic aspect of the collective is highlighted through shooting the scene in which the collective is formed in long-shots, rather than singling out individuals in close-ups.

The maternal realm in Lacanian theory is however imaginary and the illusory nature of this ideal of a co-operative supplanting Bataila's capitalist practices is made clear in the film. The formation of the cooperative is followed by a sequence in which Charles and Estelle are united, a short scene in which the news is given that Estelle's baby has died, then a quick sequence of shots showing Charles cycling down the

Champs-Élysées, delivering the *Arizona Jim* comics, and being mobbed by children. There is then a montage of *Arizona Jim* covers spiralling through the air, which dissolves onto a shot of Charles and Estelle in cowboy and indian costumes sitting on a horse against a cactus backdrop posing for the latest cover.

This introduces a fairly lengthy sequence in which the courtyard doubles for Arizona, the majority of its inhabitants are in costume, the altercation between the *concierge* and Valentine takes place, and the possibility of turning *Arizona Jim* into a film is discussed. A brief scene showing Batala disguised as a priest swindling a newspaper lady is then followed by a lengthy sequence of the party held to discuss the film on the night Batala returns, the focal point of which is the *concierge's* rendition of a popular song 'C'est la nuit de Noël', which is then taken up by the assembled company, despite the fact that it is summer.

Thus, the presentation of the cooperative in the film is concentrated into two main sequences — the cover photo and the party — both of which are blatantly unreal, the first recreating Arizona in a Parisian courtyard, the second evoking Christmas in July. The first of these sequences shows that Lange has temporarily succeeded in transforming reality into fiction; for a brief moment the real and the ideal world are synchronised. The caption Lange invents for the fictional cover — 'Estelle, dont le sordide cagoulard avait odieusement abusé, eut tout de même de la chance: l'enfant ne vécut pas.' — has in fact been preceded by the death of Batala's baby. The reference to the right-wing terrorist organisation active in France at that period is perhaps a reminder of the reality Lange will have to face up to, but for the moment patriarchal reality, even in the guise of a dead father, has been banished from the courtyard.

Yet in the same sequence the insufficiency of this artificial world is hinted at. Lange is unhappy about the idea of a film because 'Ils vont encore tourner ça avec des toiles peintes. C'est moche. *Arizona Jim* se passe en Amérique.' This indication of the limitations of the idyll is followed by its loss when Batala returns in the following sequence and threatens to dissolve the cooperative and restore the old order. Faced with this abrupt return of reality, Lange acts out in everyday life the role of the comic-strip hero by shooting the contemporary bandit, condemning himself to exile in the process. In order to escape the Law he is forced to flee the cosy world of the courtyard, accompanied by Valentine, who continues to perform a maternal function, in this case mediating between the 'child' and external reality by explaining the facts behind the crime to workers assembled in a hotel bar while Lange sleeps.

The function of this framing story is to give Valentine the last word. If in the imaginary realm there are no fixed moral values and a prostitute can become someone's sweetheart, then a murderer can be exonerated of his crime. In his analysis of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*,<sup>4</sup> Raymond Durnat points out the play on words on *l'ange/linge*. Just as a laundress can clean dirty linen, and a prostitute can be spiritually cleansed, so a murderer can be whitewashed — or at least the affair can be clarified so that Lange emerges unsullied. By telling her story in such a way as to convince the *ad hoc* people's court of the relativity of moral values, Valentine saves Lange from the strictures of patriarchal law and they are free to cross the border together into another land.

*LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* is thus the story of a 'son's' inability to accede to the realm of the father and as such it conforms closely to the pattern detected in the films analysed so far. Lange's trajectory as a regressive hero differs only from



that of the Gabin characters in that he is permitted to live out his ideal fantasy world, which is inscribed within the film, to a greater extent than Jean or François, for whom *ailleurs* is an abstract concept given no visual expression in *LE QUAI DES BRUMES* or *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, which concentrate on a portrayal of a corrupt patriarchal society.

Despite the different emphasis of the Renoir film, Lange is ultimately no more successful than Jean or François in integrating the positive values he embodies, the moral integrity and desire for good to triumph over evil expressed in his fantasy world, into the prevailing social order which is controlled by Batala. The temporary transformation of the courtyard community is possible only because Batala, of his own volition, leaves, thereby creating a power vacuum which Lange fills. The formulaic, farcical nature of the plot strand involving Batala's death and resurrection underlines the artifice surrounding the creation of the cooperative, the existence of which is immediately placed in jeopardy when Batala reappears. Even when Lange shoots Batala in a move which could be construed as a final attempt to impose the *Arizona Jim* ethic on a corrupt patriarchal society, a closer consideration of this sequence and its consequences reveals that this act simply reaffirms patriarchal power.

Firstly, in a scene which prefigures a similar episode in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, a film also co-written by Prévert, the shooting is in fact instigated by Batala and not by Lange. Just as in the later film it is Valentin who brings a revolver with him and then seems to deliberately provoke François into shooting him, so in *LANGE* it is Batala who produces a revolver from his desk and then tells Lange: 'C'est bien dommage que je ne sois pas mort. Vous devriez me tuer.' In both cases the 'sons' are

unable to resolve the dispute verbally, and let themselves be provoked into violence by the 'father', who appears to have a death-wish. A psychoanalytical explanation of this pattern would suggest that language is the prerogative of the father and that the son, locked on a psychological if not a functional level in the prelinguistic imaginary realm, can only respond on a more primitive level. There is however another explanation for the death-wish of the father, and this will be discussed later.

Secondly, the shooting of Batala, far from heralding the beginning of a new order based on justice, simply demonstrates the extent to which such ideals hold no sway in the real world. For Lange it is the end of the dream as the threat of the forces of the Law he has unleashed by his act drive him into exile. Even if the people's court reaffirms the morality of his act, it does not make the Law, and the closing sequences of the film show the pair not returning in triumph to a hero's welcome and a changed social order, but walking across a no-man's land towards an undefined future.

The approbation of the *ad hoc* jury underlines the paradoxical situation of honest criminal in which Lange, in common with the Gabin heroes, finds himself. The representative of moral values in the film, he becomes a patricide and is banished, along with the values he embodies, — in this instance by exile not by death — from the diegetic society, thereby following the schema of criminalization then exclusion outlined above.

If the 'father'/'son' relationship portrayed in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* is thus structurally similar to that featured in a variety of films of the period, the form in which it is expressed is specific in certain respects to the period of the film's production. As the following analysis of the socio-political dimension of the text will

show, the opposition between the imaginary realm and the patriarchal order articulates contemporary conflicts about the nature of work, while the 'mythic' defeat can be interpreted as a projection of a sense of social defeat anticipating subsequent socio-political developments.

LE CRIME DE M. LANGE was shot in October and November 1935, roughly six months before the union of communist and socialist parties known as the *Front Populaire* would gain power in the spring of 1936, but at a time when the process of reconciliation among the various left-wing movements and organisations which brought about their victory had already begun. Renoir's film, which was released in January 1936, was, as Jeancolas puts it 'unanimement considéré comme le premier film du Front populaire'<sup>5</sup> for reasons that a brief consideration of the plot makes clear.

Lange's formation of a cooperative with the printers is obviously both a reflection of contemporary reality, of the solidarity between intellectuals — including Renoir and Prévert — and workers which was being expressed in political meetings throughout France, and a form of wish fulfilment, the expression of a desire for radical change in working practices and the end of exploitation by the capitalist class, represented in the film by Batala.

By borrowing money from all and sundry throughout the film, Batala gives concrete expression on a personal level to the abstract political notion of the capitalist bourgeoisie as a parasitical class living off the proletariat. Moreover, his financial swindles and eventual ruin are an obvious allusion both to the financial scandals of the Third Republic, and to the number of small, unstable businesses that went bankrupt in the shaky economic climate of the period. This coincidence of the

exploitative bourgeois and the abusive father-figure in the person of Batala is an illustration of one of the interfaces between the psychoanalytical and sociological discourses operating not just in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, but also, as we have seen, in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*.

It is however primarily in the second father-son relationship in the *LANGE*, that between the *concierge* and Charles, that a perhaps less obvious but equally interesting inscription of ambient discourses is located, in that this relationship articulates a conflict between the old and new orders in a manner which foreshadows the reforms for which the Popular Front is chiefly remembered, namely its policies on leisure.

Blum's government was the first to create a post of *Sous-secrétaire d'état à l'organisation des sports et des loisirs*, a post filled by Léo Lagrange. It was under this government that the ordinary Frenchwo/man had their first experience of the weekend (thanks to the institution of the 40 (5 x 8) hour week) and frequently of the sea- or countryside (thanks to the concepts of *congés payés* and of the *billets Lagrange* which made cheap rail travel available to the masses.) Lagrange emphasised the importance of exercise and fresh air for the health of the urban proletariat, in particular, the younger generation. One of the themes which stood out in his *politique de loisirs* was the need 'to allow the youth of France to discover joy and health through the practice of sport'.<sup>5</sup>

Charles, the second son figure in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, epitomises the ideal of Popular Front youth, being endowed with both the iconic bicycle, the vehicle which, along with the suburban trains, allowed the young of the cities to escape into the countryside at weekends, (cf François' promise to Françoise in *LE JOUR SE*

LEVE, 'Je t'achèterai un vélo et puis... on ira cueillir des lilas', and a surplus of restless energy which leads his father to dismiss him as 'un acrobate', whereupon Lange defends him in contemporary terms by calling him 'un sportif'.

The *concierge*'s iconic marker is, on the other hand, a *beret basque*, indicating his allegiance to the French right, in particular the supporters of colonial militarism which Prévert would attack once again in *QUAI DES BRUMES* two years later. He is associated in the course of the film with the 'campagne de Tonkin' and with repressive military discipline, the values of which he has internalised to such a degree that he in turn represses his own family. This is illustrated through the dramatic device of a publicity board, which has been put up over Charles' bedroom window and blocks out the view. Confined to his bed by a broken leg, Charles complains of sleeping in a cage, but his father refuses to remove the board, protesting that he can do nothing, he is merely following orders.

In the general context of the 1930s, especially 1930s Germany, the *concierge* is clearly representative of that class of *petit-bourgeoisie* who mistook where their interests lay and blindly followed a strong leader, as well as of the type of soldier who abnegated all personal responsibility in the execution of orders. In the more specific context of 1935 France, he gives, by enclosing his son in a confined space, physical expression to the abstract notion of the repressive nature of the political right, particularly towards the working class. This contrasts with the liberating policies of the Popular Front, especially the sports and leisure policies of Lagrange, whose key ideas of health and fresh air are evoked by Lange when he tears the billboard down, telling the *concierge*: 'Je m'en fous des consignes. L'hygiène d'abord, le soleil, la santé.'

The advertising board is the focal point of the struggle between the old and the new order in Lange, in that it involves both father/son pairs. Batala's joint responsibility with the *concierge* for the poster, and by extension the regime of repression which it represents, is indicated by the word IMPRIMERIE printed in bold letters, which suggests that the poster is an advertisement for Batala's printing and publishing business. The removal of the poster is the first act performed by Lange on behalf of the collective and signals, in sociological terms, the triumph of workers over the capitalist regime, in psychoanalytical terms, the suspension of the realm of the father and the transformation of the courtyard, as demonstrated above, into a maternal imaginary realm.

That the imaginary realm has as a social referent the Popular Front discourses on sport and leisure is suggested in the sequence showing Charles delivering the *Arizona Jim* comics, which opens with a shot of a clear blue sky, a pan down to the Arc de Triomphe and a tracking shot of Charles cycling along the Champs-Élysées. With its combination of space, fresh air and movement (that of Charles and of the camera), this sequence contrasts with earlier scenes showing Charles in his sickbed, which are characterised by the notions of enclosure and immobility, while Charles' exuberant, no-hands cycling style, together with the accompanying triumphant music on the sound track, suggests Lagrange's ideal of the youth of France finding joy and health through exercise.

The short-lived nature of the cooperative utopia in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* was of course to prove premonitory of the truncated term of office served by the Popular Front government. The resurgence of patriarchal capitalist reality in the form of Batala and the resulting disintegration of the courtyard community could

be seen as indicative of an uncertainty of vision on the part of those who hoped for a less alienating organisation of work than that offered by the factory system but feared it would not be accommodated within the market economy. An examination of the organisation of work and leisure in the cooperative reveals indications of certain attitudes which, according to some Popular Front historians, were endemic among French workers of the period and were to play a part in the downfall of Blum's administration.

In an article called 'The Birth of the Weekend and the Revolt against Work: The Workers of the Paris Region during the Popular Front (1936—38)',<sup>7</sup> Michael Seidman explains that the advantages gained by the workers in the wake of the strikes which followed the Popular Front victory — paid holidays, the 40 hour week, pay rises — were to be paid for by an economic upswing caused by increased production and increased purchasing power which would augment consumption.

Seidman then goes on to recount how in fact production dropped considerably after 1936 in the automobile, aviation and construction industries as a result of lateness, absenteeism, go-slows, theft, machine breaking and violence against other workers, all of which employers and the C.G.T alike were unable to control. These activities he terms a 'revolt against work', that is, a rejection of the inhuman, alienating conditions pertaining in modern industrial factories, in which workers are 'subordinated to the operations and the pace of their machines'.<sup>8</sup>

Jackson, in a paper entitled 'Le Temps des Loisirs' concurs that 'even after the strikes of June 1936 the level of industrial unrest in factories remained high in spite of the efforts of the C.G.T. and Popular Front leaders to return to a situation of "normality"'.<sup>9</sup> But he sees this as 'less a "revolt against work" than a revolt

against the modern concept of a strict distinction between work and recreation, against indeed the whole idea of “leisure”, which, far from being a revolt against factory time, is dependent on it, is indeed its negative.<sup>10</sup>

Both Jackson and Seidman are fundamentally describing ‘the worker’s lack of adaptation to the factory system’,<sup>11</sup> a theme which recurs in films ranging from the 1931 film, *A NOUS LA LIBERTE*, in which René Clair expressly wished to ‘combattre la machine quand elle devient pour l’homme une servitude au lieu de contribuer, comme elle le devrait à son bonheur’<sup>12</sup> to Carné’s 1939 film, *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, in which a clear division is drawn between the modern industrial workplace, which is characterised as alienating — Gabin wears cumbersome overalls and a mask which render him unrecognisable — and unhealthy — Gabin has a chronic cough from the sand in his lungs, flowers shrivel up and die in the factory — and the rural, artisanal past, represented by the fleuriste, Françoise.

It is however Jackson’s suggestion that workers of the 1930s rebelled against strict divisions between work and leisure which throws the most interesting light on the inscription of these two spheres of activity in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, which, unlike *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, where work and leisure are shown as incompatible, presents an ideal scenario in which the two are combined. Once the collective has been formed there are no more visual references to manual labour - typesetting, printing etc - on the screen. What is shown by way of the distribution, production and development of *Arizona Jim* is Charles cycling down the Champs-Élysées delivering the latest batch of comics, other members of the collective dressed up as cowboys and indians having their photograph taken and finally a party at which the project of filming *Arizona Jim* is supposed to be discussed. Thus, the division between work and



play has been lifted and sport, socializing and playacting have become synonymous with labour.

Moreover, the courtyard cooperative presented in *LANGE* is a simple extension of the existing community, just as the cultural artefact it produces is a fictional reworking of its members' real lives. Leisure and work, fact and fiction, far from being separate entities, have become indistinguishable. This is in marked contrast to the modern workplace, as inscribed in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, which isolates the worker from the community, a fact underlined by the over-determined sequence of shots detailing François' journey from home to work. A medium long shot of François pushing his bicycle out of his tenement door is followed by a long shot of him cycling away from the building, an extreme long shot of a factory set in a desolate, dehumanised industrial landscape, and finally a long shot of the same factory. The redundancy of at least two of these shots together with the sinister music which accompanies the latter two suggests that the sequence's primary function is semantic rather than narrative. The sense of foreboding evoked by the music, along with the vision of nature transformed/eradicated by man offered in the shot of pylons and railway tracks surrounding the smoke-belching factory, prepares the spectator for the subsequent dissolve to a shot of Gabin at work in his dehumanising, vaguely monstrous sandblasting outfit and adds to the general sense of alienation.

In her thesis, Ginette Vincendeau has described the phenomenon of a 'community bound together, not by work, but through the pursuit of pleasure and leisure'<sup>13</sup> — a phrase which sums up the inscription of the cooperative in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* — with reference to the 1936 Duvivier film *LA BELLE EQUIPE*. *LA BELLE EQUIPE* tells the story of a group of men who win a lottery and leave

the urban environment of Paris to run a *guinguette* out in the countryside on a collective basis. They restore the building themselves and invite their friends from Paris to the opening, at which the Gabin character's rendering of 'Quand on se promène au bord de l'eau', turns into a community singsong. Thus, factory working conditions are exchanged for artisanal carpentry work, and what should be work — running the *guinguette*, serving customers — becomes leisure — meeting friends, singing songs.

In its evocation of the less impersonal work structures of the rural past, LA BELLE EQUIPE like LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, provides an excellent illustration of what Jackson calls 'the pre-modern attitudes of many workers.'<sup>14</sup> In other — less judgemental — words, these films represent an attempt to imagine a more egalitarian, less alienating alternative to the capitalist model of work. Unfortunately, the cooperative model remains a utopic ideal as both films demonstrate the impossibility of it existing within the prevailing social order.

The unrealistic nature of the cooperative is underlined by the unlikely ways in which it comes about in the two films. In both cases the normal laws of the capitalist order are suspended; in the one instance the capitalist patriarch pretends to be dead, and in the other, the 'sons' gain by chance the capital which is the prerogative of the capitalist. Equally, the fragility of the dream is evident in the ease with which it is destroyed. The collective is dissolved in the first instance by the return of the father, who threatens to restore the capitalist order, and in the second by a series of misfortunes and sexual rivalry.

One can therefore argue that the retreat into a mythical past inscribed in the films analysed above, be it a socio-cultural past as in LA BELLE EQUIPE, with its

evocations of Renoir paintings and *guinguettes aux bords de la Marne* or a Lacanian imaginary realm, as in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, expresses a mood of confused revolt on the part of French workers against the alienating working conditions of the modern factory environment, a revolt which ultimately could not be properly envisioned.

Placed in this context, 'exotic' colonial films like *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, in which structures similar to those in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* are readily identifiable, suddenly appear to have far more bearing on the climate in contemporary France than one might have imagined on a superficial viewing.

*La maison du Maltais* of the title refers to the dwelling in French colonial Africa of a native *pêcheur d'éponges*, a shadowy figure whose son, Mattéo, is the main character in the film. Mattéo, like Lange, is a dreamer and a story teller, who spends his days in the souk, enriching the merchants' existence with his tales. This results in his symbolic exclusion from the patriarchal order, as represented by his father who, at the beginning of the film, reproaches him with not getting a job and refuses to let him into his home. Mattéo responds to his father's reproachful 'Tu ne veux pas travailler' in the following terms:

Est-ce que l'oiseau sur la branche travaille? Est-ce que le poisson dans l'eau travaille? Est-ce que le lézard au soleil travaille? Ils sont heureux et libres.

He thus lapses into the 'back-to-nature' discourse popular in a wide variety of films of the period and exemplified by characters like Boudu in *BOUDU SAUVE DES EAUX* (Renoir, 1932), who flees the responsibility of marriage and a bourgeois existence to become a tramp, and the factory owner in *A NOUS LA LIBERTE*, who also takes to the road. Such a discourse could be taken as another expression of the

‘revolt against work’ outlined above, a more radical version of the ideal of a ‘pre-modern’ working environment demonstrated in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* and in *LA BELLE EQUIPE*.

In both cases, there is a refusal on the part of the ‘son’ to grow up and assume the role of ‘father’, a position which is portrayed as incompatible with the moral values the ‘son’ embodies. When Mattéo’s father criticises him for not following in his footsteps and going to fish for sponges, Mattéo replies: ‘Chacun pêche à sa manière. Je leur donne des images qui font rêver, rire, oublier.’ His relationship to his father therefore mirrors the relationship between Lange and Batala, in that he too opposes commercial goals with more spiritual values.

Just as in *LANGE* the patriarchal order represented by Batala is contrasted with the maternal world of the ex-prostitute Valentine, so in *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS* the alternative to the patriarchal order is the Casbah, whose brothels form a sort of maternal world, as they are inhabited by women and dominated by madams. It is here that Mattéo, cast out of his father’s house, encounters his Valentine, who in this case is a prostitute called Safia, played by Viviane Romance. That his meeting with Safia represents a return to the pre-linguistic maternal realm is signalled in the text by both his sudden loss of speech and by the object of his look. He can only stand and silently stare at Romance’s breasts, which evokes from her the response of ‘C’est un muet? Ca, mon bébé, ce sont des grenades du jardin d’Allah.’

The mute adoration lasts some time as he follows her around the bars where she picks up customers, and waits silently at the door of the establishment without addressing a word to her. Questioned about him by a girlfriend, Safia replies: ‘C’est mon ange gardien’, a phrase which suggests that he fulfils a function similar to that

of 'L'ange' in *LE CRIME DU M. LANGE*, in that he embodies certain spiritual values.

In *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, these are associated with the East and Eastern religions (as imagined by Westerners), which are placed in opposition to the West and in particular the Western work ethic. This is visible in the various changes of clothing adopted by Mattéo in the course of the film. Normally dressed in Eastern attire, Mattéo puts on Western clothes when he works as a stevedore in an attempt to support Safia, and then again when he becomes a gang leader in Paris. In his stories Mattéo frequently refers to Allah, whose moral laws seem infinitely more flexible than those of Western Christianity. When Mattéo finally re-establishes contact with Safia by helping her steal a wallet, he comments: 'Allah est grand. Il voit au fond des coeurs. Il voit pourquoi j'ai pris le pêché sur moi.'

Through Safia's reference to her breasts as 'des grenades du jardin d'Allah' this Eastern world is linked with the maternal realm, which precedes the rigid morality of the realm of the father, the realm not only of language but also of law. The division between 'good' and 'bad' women is therefore not enforced, and Mattéo, like Lange, is indifferent to the moral character of his loved one, as the following exchange with Safia makes clear:

M : Je l'ai attendue si longtemps, la princesse belle à voir. Elle est venue. Elle est là.

S : Tu vas un peu fort. En faire une princesse d'une grue.

M : Ce que tu parais pour les autres, je l'ignore. Pour moi, tu es ce que j'ai toujours rêvé de toi.

However, whereas in the fundamentally more optimistic Renoir film, *Lange's* story telling talents can be converted into hard currency, even if their exploitation within a cooperative framework is short-lived, and Lange and Valentine's relationship

survives outwith the maternal world of the cooperative, albeit in a unspecified *ailleurs*, in LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, the two manifestations of the imaginary realm - the brothels of the Casbah and, as we shall see, *la maison du maltais* itself, far from offering alternative work structures (for men), are merely an escape from the patriarchal reality which is synonymous with the world of work, and from which Mattéo is consistently excluded. And so Mattéo can only dream of making Safia his princess. While he can enrich her on a spiritual level by awakening her to the possibility of true love he is incapable of effecting the same change on a practical level and, as a result, he loses her to a 'father'-figure.

In an attempt to support Safia and prevent her return to prostitution, Mattéo takes a job as a stevedore. His inability to do such 'man's work' is evident when he comes home to Safia with a bloody hand, which leads to the following dialogue:

S : Tu es blessé?

M : Non, j'ai déchargé des bateaux. Mes mains n'en ont pas l'habitude.

S : Il faut laver ça tout de suite, mon petit.

Unable to be a man who works, Mattéo thus reverts to being a child who is mothered. (As well as washing his wounds, Safia gets a bowl of soup for him while he sleeps.) His position as a child is underlined in the text by Safia's repeated references to him as 'mon bébé', 'mon petit', 'un enfant'.

Unknown to Mattéo, Safia had been planning to return to prostitution that evening, but on going out she learns that Greta, a friend and fellow prostitute, is dying of tuberculosis. Watching the ambulance drive off, she says to a colleague, 'Voilà ce qui nous attend.' As both Mattéo and Safia are in an untenable position, Mattéo unable to work but unwilling to sacrifice Safia, Safia sickened by her profession and afraid of the future it brings, they seek a temporary respite in la

*maison du Maltais*.

This eponymous *maison du Maltais* fulfils a function similar to that of the courtyard in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* (which was originally entitled *SUR LA COUR*). After the convenient departure of Batala, the courtyard, which was previously a symbolic realm of the father, ruled over by Batala and the *concierge*, becomes an imaginary maternal realm, in which the relationship between Lange and Valentine is consummated and Lange's stories become reality. The taboo against incest (sleeping with the 'mother'), like the division between imagination and reality, is temporarily lifted.

During the short-lived idyll which the lovers spend in Mattéo's father's house, the father is conspicuous by his absence. The scene opens with a close-up of an incense burner, which denotes Eastern religion and hence, in the context of the film, the maternal realm. The camera then pans across to reveal Mattéo and Safia lying on a couch dressed in Eastern costume, rather than the Western clothes of the last sequence. This shot is accompanied by Mattéo's voice on the soundtrack telling the story of 'la perle rose et la perle blanche réunies par la mer'.

The homophonic link between 'mer' and 'mère' is in itself an indication of the coincidence between fiction and reality in this section of the film. Just as the pearls are reunited by the sea in Mattéo's story, so Mattéo and Safia are joined together in the maternal realm. Safia confesses to Mattéo that what had been a relationship of convenience has become one of love — 'Peu à peu, j'ai senti que je t'aimais pour de vrai' — and it is at this point that Mattéo makes her pregnant with his child.

Indications of the fragility of this idyll are however already inscribed in the scene. A gust of wind blows through the window and a cut to a shot of the storm

raging outside is followed by a cut back to Safia saying: 'La maison est entourée de bêtes méchantes qui veulent entrer. Heureusement que je ne suis pas seule ou j'aurais peur.' And even before Mattéo embarks on physical fatherhood, Safia replaces him in the position of child and intimates that for him fatherhood is an illusion. When he talks of having children, she replies: 'Tu rêves encore. Avec quoi tu veux les nourrir, nos enfants?'. His response — 'Je gagnerai de l'argent, beaucoup d'argent. Je peux devenir contre-maître' — is dismissed with a tender 'C'est toi l'enfant.'

Safia is proved right in a subsequent scene when she goes to announce his imminent fatherhood to Mattéo at the docks and both revert to their mother/child behaviour patterns. Safia the nurturing mother brings him lunch and he sits at her feet to eat it, while she strokes his hair. This scene gives a visual preindication of the next development in the film. On learning of her pregnancy, Mattéo announces that he will be able to earn extra money by accepting a job proposed to him, which he describes to her as 'la pêche d'éponges.' This pretence of taking up his father's trade simply underlines his inability to take over the paternal role, as rather than conforming to patriarchal law, he will in fact transgress it and become involved in arms smuggling.

Mattéo is caught by the police and prevented from returning to Safia and *la maison du Maltais*. This intervention by the forces of law and order signals the return of the father and the reassertion of the Law. The Maltais suddenly reappears in the film and chases Safia from his house into the desert storm from which Mattéo can no longer protect her. On the verge of collapse, she is rescued by the wealthy and considerably older Parisian scientist and collector Chervin.

Chervin is the second father-figure in the film and he offers her the secure future which Mattéo has failed to provide. Still hesitating, Safia goes to see her dying



friend in hospital who advises her: 'Regarde-moi, regarde ta fille en 25 ans. Pars avec cet homme. Laisse-le croire que l'enfant est de lui. Il faut mentir pour sauver l'enfant.' Mattéo is thus displaced as father and his paternity rights are transferred to an older man who is more capable of filling that role by virtue of his position in patriarchal capitalist society. Joining in her friend's vision of the child's future with Chervin as father, Safia fantasises: 'Oui, elle aura une robe de dentelles, elle jouera dans un beau jardin vert, comme dans les rêves de Mattéo. C'est bien un rêve impossible.'

What is an impossible dream with Mattéo becomes reality with Chervin. This passage from the imaginary realm to the realm of the father is marked in the text by the movement from East to West, from Africa to Paris where the latter part of the film takes place.

In psychoanalytical terms, the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic realm necessarily involves alienation and division. In the Oedipal phase the father intervenes in the dyadic relationship between child and mother, forcing the child to renounce his desire to be the object of the mother's desire and relegating it to its position in the nuclear family.

In *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, the Western realm of the father, dominated by the patriarch Chervin, is the site of alienation for both Safia and Mattéo. Through a carefully constructed series of comparisons with her tubercular friend Greta, Safia is defined as 'belonging' in Sfax. Greta is a blonde Germanic type whose sickness is linked with her nostalgia for her village in Westphalia and her inability to stand the African heat. She is presented in contrast to Safia, whose dark hair and sultry complexion, as well as her Arab name, imply that she is a native of the area. In a

scene where Greta is hiding in the shade, Safia is shown in medium shot on the balcony stretching like a contented cat in the warmth of the sun, and telling Greta: 'C'est bon, le soleil sur la peau.' She is therefore 'bien dans sa peau' in Africa and the advice which Greta gives her to leave may not be as valid for her as for the Nordic girl.

Safia is also alienated in the realm of the father because she, like Mattéo, is separated, linguistically and spatially, from her daughter, Jacqueline. In the three scenes in which the child appears, she is always accompanied by her English nurse, who speaks to her in English and at one point interrupts Safia playing with the child to take her away for her walk. The absence of a dyadic relationship is thus made clear in the film and the intervention of the third element, the father, is underlined in the child's loss of her 'mother' tongue.

And yet Jacqueline remains Safia's child, and as such she occupies the position in her mother's affection's once reserved for Mattéo. It is this ousting from the dyadic relationship with Safia which constitutes the source of Mattéo's alienation in the realm of the father. On his release from prison he follows Safia from Sfax to Paris, where he becomes the dogsbody of a band of gangsters, who mock his love for Safia, of whom he continues to dream. Learning of his presence in Paris, Safia arranges a meeting in a shady hotel room through the intermediary of a private detective. In order to safeguard Jacqueline's future with Chervin, she pretends that the child was never born and that she has reverted to being a prostitute. Mattéo comes away believing, as she tells him, that 'la vie n'est pas un roman.'

For Mattéo this represents both a second refusal to allow him to assume his role as father, and simultaneously an expulsion from the imaginary maternal realm,

the world of stories and dreams he had shared with the maternal Safia and in which he has been displaced by his own child, whose welfare is now Safia's prime concern. Excluded from the imaginary realm, Mattéo tries to take up his place in the symbolic realm by accepting the Name of the Father. Previously referred to by the gang as 'Grouillot', he now announces: 'Je ne veux plus qu'on m'appelle Grouillot. Mon nom est Mattéo.' and this change of name marks the beginning of his transition from a subordinate position in the gang to that of gang leader, achieving wealth, and prestige among the gang members in the process.

In her analysis of the Gabin myth in relation to PEPE LE MOKO and LA BELLE EQUIPE, Vincendeau notes that there is a

contradiction between Gabin's position *within* his group, (where he reigns supreme) and his place *outside* it, where he is variously an outcast, a deviant or a solitary 'anti-hero'<sup>15</sup>

Mattéo is in a similar position to the Gabin characters for although he achieves power within his group, he remains powerless outwith it, as he does not join the legitimate ranks of the patriarchal system. He is instead part of an alternative community of gangsters, the economic base of which depends upon the transgression of property laws. His ultimate impotence against a true patriarch like Chervin is made clear in the subsequent course of events.

While Mattéo is making his way in the gangster world, Safia is being blackmailed by the private detective who had overheard her conversation with Mattéo. She sells some jewels in order to pay him off and when she refuses to explain to Chervin why she needed the money, he informs her of his intention to divorce her and retain custody of Jaqueline. Banished from his house, she is forced to take up residence in the hotel room where the meeting with Mattéo had taken place. One

drunken night, Mattéo returns to find her there. Realising that she had lied to him for the sake of the child, from whom she is now separated, Mattéo goes to see Chervin to set things straight.

Realising that he can neither oust from the position of father the usurper Chervin, who, as a respectable citizen, has asserted his legal right to Jacqueline, nor take the place of Jacqueline in her mother's affection, Mattéo, as a fundamentally moral character, can only attempt to repair the damage he has done by reuniting the family of which he can never be a part and effacing himself. He therefore renounces any claim to the position of 'father', both in personal terms of his relationship with Safia — he tells Chervin that Safia had never loved him: 'La preuve, elle m'a quitté pour vous suivre. Vous avez un enfant d'elle.' — and in sociological terms of his position of power in the gang, as indicated in the following exchange with one of his subordinates:

— Alors, chef, tu as réglé ton compte avec ton M. Chervin?  
— Non, j'ai rien fait. Le chef avait tort. C'est Grouillot qui avait raison.

These words signal Mattéo's return to the position of innocence he occupied before his attempt to enter the patriarchal order, which in this film as elsewhere, is synonymous with corruption. This return to a more spiritual existence, is marked by his donning the Eastern costume he had set aside during his Paris sojourn and praying to Allah. He then announces: 'Je retourne à la maison du maltais.' A close-up of his face, his eyes staring, is followed by a cut to *la maison du maltais* and the sound of a shot.

This return to a vision of *la maison du maltais* underlines its function within the film as an unattainable ideal. Like the courtyard collective in *LANGE*, it

represents the realization of the imaginary maternal realm within the realm of the father, the imposition of an ideal on reality. Just as at the end of the film Mattéo has been cast out of this *Shangri-la*, which is now only accessible on an imaginary level, so LE CRIME DE M. LANGE ends with Valentine and Lange being driven into exile, out of the society in which their dream could only be temporarily fulfilled.

The heroes of LE CRIME DE M. LANGE and LA MAISON DU MALTAIS conform therefore to the pattern for 'son' figures in that both are excluded from patriarchal society, characterised as criminals in spite of their moral integrity, and involved in an Oedipal conflict with a father-figure over a girl. The extent to which this pattern was endemic in films of the period can be judged by the fact that Anatole Litvak's 1930s adaptation of the Mayerling saga constructs this well-known and frequently filmed mythico-historical romance in almost complete accordance with this paradigm, the element of Oedipal conflict over the girl being missing.

The young male lead of MAYERLING, the ill-fated Archduke Rodolphe, is characterised, like Lange and Mattéo, as a dreamer, a romantic character opposed to the prevailing regime, which is incarnated in the person of his father, the patriarch *par excellence*, Emperor Franz Josef. Rodolphe wanders the streets at night to find out what the masses are thinking and in the first scene of the film is reproached by his father for joining the students in the streets during an uprising against the monarchy. And so, as in LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, the personal is political; in standing for liberal, even revolutionary tendencies against an authoritarian regime Rodolphe joins Lange on the progressive, left-wing side of the political divide, albeit in Ruritanian rather than Popular Front terms. (The allegorical revolt against industrial working conditions is an extra nuance confined to LE CRIME DE M.

LANGE and to a lesser extent LA MAISON DU MALTAIS.)

His treatment at the hands of his father also conforms to the exclusion/criminalization pattern established so far. Because of his nocturnal activities his father has him followed by the secret police, thus placing him on the wrong side of the law. Moreover, Rodolphe is kept at a distance from his father, who repeatedly refuses him an audience. That this has been the rule from childhood is established in Rodolphe's complaint to his valet:

Que ça finisse. Je n'en peux plus. Ces gens me tuent.  
Quelle importance d'ailleurs, qu'est-ce que je fais de  
ma vie? Je ne peux pas aller où je veux, voir qui me  
plaît. Depuis l'âge de 8 ans on m'enferme dans cet  
uniforme et tout ce qui va avec. Je demande secours à  
mon père, il me répond par son aide-de-camp.

These lines evoke the atmosphere of claustrophobia, the notions of death and lack of liberty familiar from *QUAI DES BRUMES*, in which they are also associated with an oppressive patriarchal order. And, as in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, escape from this patriarchal order lies in a love affair with a young woman, in this case Marie Vitsera. Again, the romance central to the Mayerling story incorporates elements specific to the regressive love affairs of paradigmatic 1930s films such as *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *PARADIS PERDU*, in which the negative aspects of the patriarchal order — war, industrialisation — are set against a romantic idyll involving some aspect of nature and the idea of a return to the innocence of childhood.

In *MAYERLING*, Marie is associated with nature through being framed in one scene with a large vase of flowers, while the notion of childish innocence, already present in the childlike looks and exuberance of the young Danielle Darrieux, is reinforced in the circumstances of her character Marie's first meeting with Rodolphe, which occurs at a fairground, where the two indulge in the adolescent pursuit of

throwing rings round swans' necks for candy bars. This fairground setting, with its inherent unreality, together with certain aspects of the scene in which the couple become lovers, where they are framed in a mirror and Rodolphe tells Marie: 'Tu m'enlèves des années — et quelles années.' invites comparison with imaginary realm and the mirror phase of Lacanian terminology. Like Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES* (cf. Chapter One), Rodolphe retreats from alienation in the realm of the father through an illusory identification with another 'self', an *âme soeur*.

The precariousness of the regressive hero's position, based as it is on a false identification with a self which is not the self, is made clear when Marie is sent away by her family and Rodolphe succumbs to self-destructive urges similar to those displayed by François in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, holed up in his room, separated for ever from his alter ego Françoise. Just as François destroys his own reflection before committing suicide, so Rodolphe shoots his reflection in the mirror, yelling: 'Je ne veux pas te voir, tu comprends, je ne veux pas te voir.' The response is in both cases indicative of a disintegration of the personality, a descent into madness from which Rodolphe begs Marie, who returns at this point, to save him, pleading with her: 'J'ai si mal, Marie, ma petite enfant, sauve-moi. J'ai peur de la folie, j'ai peur sans toi.'

This attribution to Marie of the role of 'saviour' prefigures the function of the female characters of the Occupation, who, as Part Two of this thesis will show, frequently embody spiritual ideals. The fluctuation in *MAYERLING* in the signification of the love affair, between the predominantly 1930s connotations of imaginary realm and Occupation connotation of sacred rite, is evident in the change in setting of the lovers' second meeting, which takes place not in the artificial world of a fairground but in the holy atmosphere of a church. In this scene a close-up of

Marie's face, with a band of light on her eyes (the traditional cinematic indication that a character has a 'soul') and religious music swelling in the background also have the effect of transforming the female figure into a quasi-religious icon, and love into a mystic rite.

While the construction of love as a sacred rite in specific mythico-Christian terms is typically a phenomenon of Occupation cinema, the imaginary realm, the site of the lovers' union in 1930s cinema, is also associated with certain spiritual or moral values, as was shown in the above analyses of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* and *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*. Indeed, the central problematic of these films could be described in terms of the impossibility, of imposing the positive values associated with an imaginary realm outwith social reality on a corrupt or intolerant patriarchal order. This same problem is central to *MAYERLING*, where it is denoted on a sociological level by the conventions preventing the union of the lovers: Rodolphe is already locked in a loveless marriage of state decreed by his father. The opposition between Rodolphe's private happiness and his public duty is established in the first scene, when his father speaks to him of the proposed marriage as being 'Pour la couronne et ton bonheur' to which Rodolphe replies: 'Ils sont malheureusement irréconciliables l'un à l'autre.'

And so Rodolphe is denied access to both the public and private spheres; the latter must be sacrificed to the former. However, when he falls in love, he attempts to change his destiny and achieve what is constructed in the film as impossible, i.e. the reconciliation of the private and public spheres through the dissolution of his political marriage and his union with Marie, and to this end he writes to the Pope.

Rome, far from providing an escape, proves however to be one more brick



in the patriarchal structure imprisoning Rodolphe. The Holy Father replaces Rodolphe's marital affairs in the public sphere by writing to the father Franz-Joseph rather than the son to deny the latter's private request for an annulment. The relationship is thus reduced to the status of an illicit liaison. When Rodolphe replies to his father's scornful 'Tu as une liaison.' with 'Je suis le seul ici à en avoir?', the Emperor reasserts his paternal authority, by telling him: 'Tu feras ce que tu voudras quand tu seras le maître. En attendant, cette liaison, tu la rompras.' And so *MAYERLING* provides another example of the phenomenon noted in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, which demonstrates that only the father may cross the boundaries set by patriarchy; the sons, like women, are confined to one side.

In this case Marie and Rodolphe are confined to opposite sides of the divide. The Emperor makes it clear that there is no place for their union within the patriarchal order, and forbids Rodolphe to continue the liaison in the illicit sphere, threatening to send Marie to a convent. Rodolphe answers his father's ultimatum: 'La rupture ou le couvent, il n'y a pas d'autre issue' with 'Si, il y a une troisième', but for the lovers in *MAYERLING*, as for the couples in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, there is no *ailleurs*. The only escape from the patriarchal order is in death. When Rodolphe tells Marie he is going away, she agrees to follow him anywhere, but the only journey he can offer her is to Mayerling and then 'Là d'où on ne revient pas.'

From the first reel of the film it is clear that death is the only possible narrative resolution. *MAYERLING* is typical of 1930s cinema in that it is steeped in an aura of doom. The notion of suicide is already inscribed in the title, the choice of historical subject being in itself a form of predestination. The notions of death and

destiny recur both in relation to Rodolphe, in his mother's remark, 'Personne n'échappe à son destin', and in the skull which he keeps on his desk 'pour [s]e consoler de l'existence', and in association with his relationship to Marie.

The fatal outcome of the relationship is determined from their first meeting at the fair, where the lovers see a puppet show in which a prince goes off to tell his father that he is going to marry a young girl, who in his absence, is carried off by the devil. Rodolphe's comment at this point, 'Elle a aimé et elle a été punie', foretells the fate of Marie. The spectator is reminded of this puppet show in the final sequence in the bedroom at Mayerling when the lovers repeat the lines of the devil: 'C'est avec les heureux qu'on fait les meilleurs tourments.

Death is presented not just as inevitable, but also as a desirable alternative to growing old in the patriarchal order, which is the fate of the unhappy Empress Elisabeth. A comparison between the two women is implied in the following exchange:

E : Vous êtes si jeune. Quel âge avez vous?

M : 17 ans, Madame.

E : A 17 ans j'étais déjà malheureuse. Mais j'étais jeune. Je n'en souffrais pas trop. Les jeunes devraient mourir jeune.

The atmosphere of claustrophobia and lack of liberty associated with the diegetic society in *MAYERLING* is enhanced by the explicit attribution of responsibility for Marie's destiny to the Emperor Franz-Josef, and by extension, to the patriarchal order over which he presides. At the ball, which Franz-Josef had decreed was to be the scene of their final meeting, Rodolphe presents Marie to his father with the words: 'Je vous présente la baronne Marie Vitsera, à qui votre Majesté a bien voulu fixer le destin.' The Emperor's reply, 'Vous êtes très belle,

Mademoiselle, et votre jeunesse vous permet de tout espérer', is cruelly ironic, in that Marie's despair is such that she has just taken the decision to die with Rodolphe at **MAYERLING**.

And so in **MAYERLING**, as in **LE JOUR SE LEVE** and **QUAI DES BRUMES**, the patriarchal regime is depicted as oppressive and destructive, and the father-figure as a hypocritical tyrant. In its negative characterization of both individual patriarchs and the order they stand for, **MAYERLING** occupies a position similar to that of **LE CRIME DE M. LANGE**, where the father-figures are authoritarian, repressive, corrupt and exploitative and in a more muted form, that of **LA MAISON DU MALTAIS**, where Mattéo's father is a shadowy negative figure whose sole function in the film appears to be preventing Mattéo entering the realm of the father. He appears in two scenes, in the first of which he chases Mattéo, in the second Safia, from his home, thereby thrusting her upon Chervin and denying his son the possibility of living his paternity.

This exclusion of the 'sons' from the patriarchal order and the criminalization which accompanies it also features in the three films, and leads inexorably to a fate which echoes that of the Gabin characters, in that they either shoot the 'father' and are forced into exile (Lange) or commit suicide (Mattéo and Rodolphe), in either case definitively removing from patriarchal reality not only their physical presence but also the spiritual or moral values for which they stand, and which can only be realized in an imaginary realm.

If then the pattern of the young male lead's trajectory in these three films, which offer a more or less negative image of the patriarchal order, conforms to that which emerged from the films analysed in Chapters One and Two, what is the fate

of the young male lead in the Pagnol trilogy, which, in its recreation of an “ideal” (archaic/nostalgic) world<sup>17</sup> of elderly male supremacy, takes an altogether more positive view of the patriarchal system? To what extent does his development conform to the paradigm outlined above?

MARIUS, the first film in the Pagnol trilogy, deals specifically with the problem of achieving manhood in patriarchal society through its account of the dilemma of the eponymous hero, a young man torn between his love for his childhood sweetheart, Fanny, and his *envie d’ailleurs*, in this case a desire to run off to sea. This drama is played out against the backdrop of the old port of Marseilles, with a cast of characters which recur throughout the trilogy, constituting a stable community with traditions and values to which the young couple must conform on pain of ostracisation.

The first of these traditions is the taboo against producing illegitimate children. Both Fanny and Marius are reminded at intervals by the older generation of Fanny’s Aunt Zoë, who, pregnant and abandoned by her sailor boyfriend, was forced to take to the streets. With this example in mind, Marius is told by his father, César, to marry Fanny if he has done anything to impair her honour, for in his opinion ‘...le matelot de Zoë n’était pas un homme.’

It is however César himself who prevents Marius matching up to this definition of masculinity — honour, responsibility — by denying him the possibility of achieving manhood within the patriarchal family. He humiliates him in front of Fanny by rebuking him for offering her a cup of coffee without permission in the family cafe, which leads to the following exchange:

M : Si à mon âge je ne peux pas offrir une tasse de café, qu’est-ce que je suis?

C : Un enfant, qui doit obéir à son père. Il fallait que j'attende, moi, l'âge de 32 ans pour que mon père me donne son dernier coup de pied au derrière. Voilà ce que c'était la famille dans mon temps. On avait du respect et de la tendresse.

Although it is not made explicit in the text, Marius's desire for *ailleurs* can only be interpreted as a desire to escape from the inherent contradictions in the demands made upon him by his father: to marry Fanny, which is proof of manhood, but yet remain a son and subservient to his father. By attempting to impose outdated traditions of filial obedience which constitute a denial of his son's adulthood, César makes it impossible for Marius to marry Fanny and live with her in the café where he is dependent upon his father.

Marius can only achieve manhood outwith the family by running off to sea, but this contravenes his community's definition of masculinity, as he unknowingly leaves Fanny pregnant. The next two films in the trilogy, *FANNY* and *CESAR*, chart his progressive exclusion from the patriarchal order and his replacement at the head of his own family by ageing father-figures.

*FANNY* opens with the closing shots of *MARIUS*, which show Marius sailing off into the wide blue yonder leaving the pregnant Fanny behind. Unable to support a child herself and mindful of the shame her pregnancy would bring on her mother, Fanny is forced to marry her other suitor, the wealthy Panisse, a school friend of César's, who is therefore old enough to be her father. Having been unable to have children by his first wife, Panisse is delighted to accept Fanny's baby, a little boy they baptise Césariot, as his own.

For Marius, *ailleurs* turns out to be a form of exile. He returns two years later, homesick and still in love with Fanny, only to find that he has no place in his

community. His role as husband and father has been filled by Panisse, while his place as son has been usurped by his own baby, Césariot, in whose name his own father drives him away, telling him: 'Tu es un danger pour l'avenir de ton enfant. C'est lui qui te renvoie.', and replying to his reproachful: 'Tu ne m'aimes plus' with 'Si je t'aime. Seulement tu es grand maintenant. Lui, il est petit.'

This process of exclusion continues in CESAR, in which an element of criminalization is added. Rather than carrying on from where FANNY left off, CESAR begins eighteen or so years later, when Césariot is himself on the edge of manhood, and the elderly Panisse on the verge of death. When Panisse dies, Césariot is informed that Marius is his natural father and begins to enquire about him. It emerges that Marius is now running a garage in another town and is never spoken about in his native community as he is a source of shame for his father, having acquired a criminal reputation.

This reputation is based firstly on the story told by a passing client in César's bar, who claimed to have shared a prison cell with Marius, and secondly on an altercation he had with César on his last visit to Marseilles, when he had slapped his father, an act evaluated by César as 'presqu'un parricide.' It appears to be confirmed when Césariot visits Marius incognito, and is informed by two of Marius's employees that his father runs a drug-smuggling ring.

The misunderstanding is cleared up, when after discovering that Marius's employees were playing a practical joke on him, Césariot brings Marius to the café to meet Fanny and César. It emerges that the only cell occupied by Marius was in a naval prison and various other rumours were equally unfounded. This, Marius tells César, is the sum total of his crimes and punishments, 'sauf le premier, qui est au

début de tout.' When César asks him what it is, he replies: 'Interdit de séjour', and explains: 'C'est vous qui m'y avez condamné. Vous m'avez interdit Marseilles, le seul endroit du monde où je n'étais pas seul.' He then goes on to accuse César and his cronies of having wanted to believe he had turned bad to spare themselves any feelings of guilt at having driven him away.

And so blame for the exclusion and criminalization of the 'son' is laid fairly and squarely at the door of a community which sacrifices individual happiness for the sacrosanct ideal of the bourgeois family, and especially at the feet of César, who is patriarchy personified. The conflation of the notions of criminalization and exclusion in the term used by Marius, 'Interdit de séjour' suggests an equation between the law as a social concept, and the psychoanalytical idea of the Law of the Father, for it is only in the psychoanalytical dimension that criminalization is the necessary corollary of exclusion from the realm of the father, the site of Law.

There are numerous indications in the film that the sociological reasons César puts forward for Marius's banishment — the debt owed to Panisse, the honour of Fanny, the future of her child — are simply a smokescreen for his refusal to relinquish power to a younger rival. This is stated explicitly in Marius' reproach to his father: 'T'étais content de me voir partir. Si j'avais épousé Fanny, j'aurais été le chef de la famille et j'aurais eu de l'autorité sur le petit. Le vieux Panisse te laissait faire.'

Father and son are thus locked in an Oedipal conflict not, as in the majority of the films analysed above, over a woman (although César's reaction to Marius' engagement — 'La vie recommence. C'est comme si c'était moi le fiancé' is indicative of his drive to usurp any position of potency occupied by his son), but over

a child, and more importantly, paternal status itself. Panisse is simply a proxy father for the dominant César, whose de facto paternity is indicated in the baby's name. Césariot replaces Marius in César's affections, because a baby, unlike an adult son, permits César to re-play the role of all-powerful father without posing a threat to his authority. The threat that he might oust César from his position of authority in the patriarchal order was Marius' real crime; this, not the slap — the mythic nature of which is indicated in the fact that it is only related as an event in the distant past, and not shown as a real event on screen — is what César means in the otherwise exaggerated term of parricide.

The relationship between Marius and patriarchal society thus conforms to the pattern established so far as regards the elements of exclusion and criminalization. Like Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and the 'sons' in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, *LE BONHEUR* and *PRIX DE BEAUTE*, he is in a position of economic impotence, remaining financially dependent throughout the film on the two father-figures, first César, then Panisse, who financed his garage. He is therefore in a state of dependence similar to that of his own son on Panisse, to whom he loses his mistress and his child, and so is doubly denied 'father' status.

Equally, just as the above analysis of *MAYERLING* demonstrated that sons occupy a position of impotence similar in some respects to that of women in patriarchy, so a study of the trilogy reveals a certain equivalence in the situations of Fanny and Marius. While Marius is driven away by his father in the name of his child, Fanny is cornered by the generations coming before and after her, and forced to deny her sexual desire for Marius in the name of her role as daughter and mother. This is stated explicitly both at the end of *CESAR*, when she spots César spying on



her meeting with Marius, and directs at him her reproach to the older generation:

Vous êtes encore venu vous mêler des choses qui vous ne regardent pas. Sans vous, sans ma mère, sans les vieux que vous êtes j'aurais été heureuse depuis 20 ans.

and also earlier in the film, in a reproach delivered to Césariot in answer to his indignant disgust at the idea of his mother's sexuality:

C'est toi qui m'as fait épouser Honoré. Tu m'as fait perdre mes autres enfants, ceux que mon vieux mari n'a jamais pu me donner. Moi, je n'ai pas vécu. Ma vie s'est réduite à t'écouter grandir. Et tu me reproches maintenant ce qui s'est passé avant ta naissance. Mais avant ton premier cri, je n'étais pas une mère. J'étais une femme comme les autres.

The similarity between these two reproaches adds a new level of meaning to the repetition of César's name in Césariot, suggesting that the grandson represents the continuation of the patriarchal order personified in César, an order which denies sexual desire, confining women in the role of mother or daughter and casting out young men who may become rivals.

On the one hand then, the patriarchal society depicted in the trilogy is as claustrophobic and destructive as that in *QUAI DES BRUMES* or *MAYERLING* in that the sexual desire of anyone other than the patriarch cannot be accommodated within it. On the other hand however, the justification within the terms of the film for this denial of desire, i.e. the interests of the child, highlights one of the fundamental differences between the trilogy and the other films analysed, namely the primacy within the diegesis of parent/child rather than male/female relationships. Not only are Fanny and Marius the only visibly sexually active couple in the trilogy, but this sexual activity occurs only in the first part. Otherwise, both Marius' father and Fanny's mother are widowed (there are oblique references to a lady friend of César's

but she is never seen) and the sterility of the relationship between only other couple, Fanny and Panisse, is made clear at several points in the narrative. Although at the beginning of the trilogy there is some hint of the typical Oedipal conflict between Marius and Panisse over Fanny, the emphasis changes rapidly to rivalry over the son: in (the somewhat ironically named) FANNY Panisse tells Marius he can have Fanny but pleads with him to leave Césariot.

This side-lining of the Fanny/Marius love affair is important, in that it marks the point at which the trilogy diverges from the paradigm. Representations of the imaginary realm, which in the other narratives was associated with the central love affair, are entirely absent from the trilogy. There is consequently no other value system present in a series of films where the patriarchal discourse is constantly reaffirmed. It is symptomatic of the patriarchal hegemony of the Pagnol oeuvre that the space occupied in other works by representations of the imaginary realm is here a part of the patriarchal order.

Thus, the *marseillais* community dominated by César, although claustrophobic, is presented as close-knit and supportive, and is longed for by Marius in exile. It can therefore be equated with the maternal world of the Casbah in PEPE LE MOKO and LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, and with the courtyard in LE CRIME DE M. LANGE. This substitution of the paternal for maternal realm has as its corollary the replacement of the mother by the father, as a comparison of the parallel situations in which Marius and Mattéo find themselves makes clear. As demonstrated above, both are at one point forced to relinquish their paternal claims and their position as 'child' and disappear entirely from the family structure for the sake of their own offspring. While in LA MAISON DU MALTAIS it is his child's mother who drives the 'son'

away, in FANNY this role falls to César.

The other significant difference between the trilogy and LE CRIME DE M. LANGE / LA MAISON DU MALTAIS / MAYERLING lies of course in the ending, which in the case of the Pagnol films, sees a father/son reconciliation and the reintegration of the son into patriarchal society, rather than the parricide and/or suicide of the 'son', the outcome the other three films share with the archetypal Gabin narratives. In a final sequence which sums up the father-dominated, parent/child privileging discourse of the film, Marius and César walk off into the woods together, exchanging the following thoughts:

M : Tu sais que Césariot ne portera jamais notre nom?

C : Lui non, mais les autres.

Fanny is noticeably absent from the final shot, her desire for Marius eclipsed by the men's desire for her children. In her absence she fulfils the traditional female role of object of exchange between men, functioning as a token of the father/son reconciliation, the mother who will bear children in their name. It is this father/son reconciliation which is the real resolution of CESAR, the follow-up to FANNY, which despite the misleading title, actually focused on the grief of César for his lost son rather than on the grief of Fanny for her lost lover.

This example of patriarchal fantasy fulfilment, in which female desire is denied and sexuality has no place outwith the process of procreation, can be contrasted with the imaginary maternal world of the cooperative in LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, where, despite the general atmosphere of childlike exuberance, children per se are not presented as important (the scene in which Estelle's baby dies ends in laughter) female desire is validated (despite their dubious pasts, both Valentine and Estelle get their man) and sexual activity is rife, as the *conciierge's* shocked response

to Charles' and Estelle's passionate, public kisses — 'Ce sont des enragés' — makes clear.

Thus, despite the differences in mood, the positive ending of *CESAR* on a note of reconciliation and reintegration, the more uncertain ending of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* with the lovers in exile, both outcomes demonstrate in their own way that female desire and sexual freedom cannot be accommodated within patriarchy. The vital distinction between the two works is that *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* foregrounds the shortcomings of patriarchal capitalism by proposing an other, more desirable social order, which, embodied by Valentine and Lange, lives on outwith the social order in some undefined space, while the trilogy offers no alternative to the status quo, whose contradictions it attempts to contain rather than expose.

The identification of the lovers with values lacking in the dominant social order is, as we have seen, a feature not just of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, but also of *MAYERLING*, *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, *QUAI DES BRUMES* and *LE JOUR SE LEVE*. In their ultimate exclusion from the diegetic society, be it by exile or by death, the lovers in these films become a lasting symbol of opposition to that society. In the trilogy, on the other hand, the union of Marius and Fanny, precisely because it does not embody any values inimical to the patriarchal regime, can be sanctioned by and integrated into the patriarchal order, thereby providing a semblance of the resolution of conflict which only a more detailed analysis of the film reveals as a sham.

This distinction between the Pagnol trilogy, and other narratives of the period dealing with son/father conflicts, can be attributed in large part to the divergent world-views of the directors in question. If, however, the narrative outcome is

happier for Marius than for other 'son' figures, he nevertheless undergoes in his passage to manhood a process of exclusion and criminalization similar to that endured by the young male leads of the archetypal films of the 1930s. Given the fundamentally different world-view of, on the one hand, Pagnol, on the other hand, Renoir, Carné and Prévert, to what can this similarity be ascribed?

In her thesis Ginette Vincendeau has noted the predominance of male actors in the 40–60 age group in lists of the most successful box-office stars of the French cinema of the 1930s<sup>18</sup> and analysed the frequency of father/daughter relationships in the films of that period.<sup>19</sup> She explains this phenomenon as a reflexion of demographic trends and power structures within society at that period, structures which discriminated against all women and younger men:

France had had a very low birthrate since 1870 compared with other European countries, and in 1938 it touched its lowest point in peacetime as a result of both widespread neo-Malthusianism and the human losses of WWI. The French population of the 1930s was therefore an ageing one with, after 1935, more deaths recorded than births. This demographic phenomenon was accentuated by the economic neo-Malthusianism of the French bourgeoisie which was highly unfavourable to the younger generation... from the village mayor to the school teacher, the majority of those exercising political, administrative, moral or economic power at all levels were war veterans.<sup>20</sup>

She also explains that 'marriages between mature men and younger women were still widespread in 1930s France in the middle classes' as a result of a 'legal system geared towards keeping wealth and authority in the hands of the older generation', which led to 'marriages of reason not of desire'.<sup>21</sup>

If then the Pagnol trilogy's depiction of a regime which excludes young men from power until late in their adult life is not entirely dissimilar to that of *LE CRIME*

DE M. LANGE, LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, MAYERLING, where they are excluded from it entirely, it is because all these works are giving cinematic expression to the social reality of France at that period. The potency of the father-figures and corresponding impotence of the 'sons' reflect on a psychological level the power structures privileging older men within society. Vincendeau's reference to demographic trends is particularly applicable to the structures and themes observed in the Pagnol trilogy, accounting for both the presentation of César and Panisse as ageing patriarchs, insisting on the observation of out-dated social codes of filial respect which maintain them in the positions of power which they are unwilling to relinquish to the younger generation, and for the obsession with producing babies.

That Pagnol regarded the concentration of power in the hands of elderly men as an on the whole desirable form of social organisation is suggested not only in the conciliatory end of the trilogy, but also in the portrayal of the patriarch César as a fundamentally sympathetic and well-meaning, if somewhat overbearing character. In this the trilogy differs again from the other three films, in which the patriarchal heads of the established order are depicted in negative terms ranging from merely unsympathetic to evil and corrupt, and the younger male generation, in whom spiritual virtue resides, are shown to be consistently incapable of attaining power.

While one might expect communist fellow-travellers like Renoir and Prévert to portray a capitalist as exploitative and corrupt, and LE CRIME DE M. LANGE could possibly be dismissed, for the purposes of this argument, as a conscious political tract which sought to shape rather than express public opinion, it is interesting to note that the same negative characterisation of father-figures occurs and the same power structures emerge in genuinely 'popular' films like LA MAISON DU

MALTAIS which came eighth in the list of the top twenty films, in terms of box-office receipts, of 1938 published by the *Cinématographie Française*,<sup>22</sup> and MAYERLING, which came fourth in the *Cinématographie Française*'s poll of the 15 most popular films of 1936,<sup>23</sup> both of which were shot by directors generally regarded as competent artisans rather than *auteurs* whose work revealed a coherent world-view.

This is surely indicative of a certain pessimism lurking in the national psyche, in that it suggests a lack of confidence in those at the top of the social and political hierarchy accompanied by despair that the structures can be modified or the leaders replaced. In a situation where a class of ageing patriarchs are so firmly embedded in positions of power that the younger generation is powerless to remove them, change can only occur through their voluntary abdication. The 'death-wish' of Batala and Valentin could be interpreted in this context as wish-fulfilment on the part of Prévert, akin to the unlikely suspension of the normal laws of patriarchal capitalism which allowed the forming of the co-operatives in LANGE and LA BELLE EQUIPE.

### CHAPTER THREE : NOTES

1. For a more detailed account of the genesis of the Pagnol trilogy see Ginette Vincendeau, 'Pagnol's MARIUS, FANNY AND CESAR' in *French Film, Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1990) pp. 67—82.
2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'French Cinema of the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) p. 225.
3. cf. Margarethe von Trotta, 'Eine Weibliche Filmästhetik' in *Augenzeugen* ed. by H.H. Prinzler and Eric Rentschler, (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1988) p. 200.
4. Raymond Durgnat, *Jean Renoir* (London: Studio Vista, 1975) pp. 109—126.
5. Julian Jackson, "'Le Temps des Loisirs": Popular Tourism and Mass Leisure in the Front Populaire's Cultural-Political Vision.' paper given at a conference on the French and Spanish Popular Fronts at Southampton University, 1986, p. 2.
6. Jackson, p. 11.
7. Michael Seidman, 'The Birth of the Weekend and the Revolt against Work: The Workers of the Paris Region during the Popular Front (1936—1938)' *French Historical Studies*, 12 (2) (Fall 1981), p. 264.
8. Seidman, p. 253.
9. Jackson, p. 16.
10. Jackson, p. 17.
11. Seidman, p. 275.
12. René Clair, quoted in Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente; le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) pp. 74—75.
13. Vincendeau, p. 355.
14. Jackson, p. 17.
15. Vincendeau, p. 375.
16. Ibid.
17. Vincendeau, p. 225.



18. Vincendeau, p. 179.
19. Vincendeau, pp. 212—233.
20. Vincendeau, pp. 219—20.
21. Vincendeau, p. 221.
22. quoted in Vincendeau, p. 166.
23. quoted in Ginette Vincendeau, 'The Popular Cinema of the Popular Front', *La Vie est à Nous*, NFT Dossier No. 3, ed. by Ginette Vincendeau and Keith Reader, (London: NFT, 1986) p. 80.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Father Figures and the Patriarchal Order

in

LA FIN DU JOUR, PARTIR, L'HOMME A L'HISPANO,

LA BETE HUMAINE, MONSIEUR COCCINELLE,

MENILMONTANT, SIXIEME ETAGE

and LA RUE SANS NOM

In his 1970 documentary film on the rise and fall of the Popular Front, 36 —  
LE GRAND TOURNANT, Henri de Turenne quotes the following *chansonnier* quip  
from the period:

- Pourquoi la France est-elle gouvernée par les  
hommes de 75 ans?
- Parce que ceux de 80 ans sont morts.

The joke refers to the situation outlined at the end of the previous chapter, namely the pervasiveness of elderly males in positions of power, not just in politics but throughout French society in the 1930s. As it is this situation, or more precisely its reflection in the films of the period, which will form the subject of this chapter, it is perhaps useful to begin with an overview of some of the social conditions prevailing at that period.

The quip quoted above notwithstanding, the greatest political problem of the 1930s was not, according to one historian, the advanced age of government ministers but rather the brevity of cabinets, of which there were forty-two between the wars, each averaging six months.<sup>1</sup> Maurice Larkin goes on to point out that: 'Such brevity meant that it was extremely difficult for a government to undertake any reform programme that would take time or was likely to meet with opposition in parliament.'<sup>2</sup>

The course of reform was also held up by a 'disproportionally large rural vote,'<sup>3</sup> resulting from the fact that the growth of industrial cities was not reflected in the distribution of seats in the Chamber.<sup>4</sup> This militated against any socialist measures being introduced as 'the combined electoral strength of the rural population and the possessing classes would continue to outweigh the power of the urban work-force to

demand social reform at the taxpayer's and consumer's expense.'<sup>5</sup> According to Larkin, it also constituted 'a potentially dangerous situation in the 1930s, with its socio-economic and international tensions, since the country voter was generally more interested in local issues than in national ones.'<sup>6</sup>

Politically, therefore, France was ill-equipped to deal with the internal and external problems facing the country, hampered by ministers and a system of government which had been formed in accordance with the requirements of a pre World War One society, and had not adjusted to meet the challenges of the modern world.

The heritage of the past had its effect not just upon the political system, but also upon the economy of the country. In industry, for example, the majority of French businesses remained in the hands of the founding family, who resisted the mergers which would have increased the size of the firm and so allowed the introduction of modern production methods.<sup>7</sup> The loss of life in World War One was also an important factor in accounting for what Larkin describes as 'the elderly composition and ethos of much of French business management.'<sup>8</sup> Part of this ethos was an unwillingness to reinvest profits in the business, an unwillingness reinforced by the Depression and which explains the fact that by the late 1930s the average age of industrial machinery in France was 25 years, as opposed to seven in Britain.<sup>9</sup>

Inter-war France was therefore a society weighed down by the past, both in its political and economic institutions and in the men which directed them. Hence the frequency with which it has been described by historians as a *société bloquée*,<sup>10</sup> a term which evokes the claustrophobic atmosphere detected in a number of the films discussed in the preceding chapters, an atmosphere which textual analysis shows to

be attributable to the patriarchal attitudes and values which prevent normal, healthy development within the depicted society.

We have seen that the female and younger male characters in these films are victims of a concerted effort to perpetuate existing patriarchal structures, which by definition exclude women from positions of power, but which also ensure that younger men are prevented from displacing the ageing male at the top of the hierarchical heap. The limited nature of the choices open to these characters is indicated in the fact that eight out of the twelve films (counting the Pagnol trilogy as one text) end with the death (frequently by suicide) of the main protagonist, two with the irretrievable loss of a lover and hence the possibility of happiness, and one with the main protagonists fleeing the country — hardly a recommendation for the possibility of fulfilment within existing social structures.

In those films which could be termed as having a consciously left-of-centre discourse — those scripted by Prévert — the general air of social malaise is augmented by a more forthright criticism of the status quo, which is designated as inherently corrupt through individual representatives who refer obliquely or explicitly to some of the less desirable aspects of French society in the 1930s; thus, Zabel is linked in *QUAI DES BRUMES* with colonialist imperialism, while Batala in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* epitomises bourgeois capitalist exploitation.

The aim of this chapter is two-fold: firstly, it will examine in detail a number of representations of both the corrupt or impotent father-figures which were common in the cinema of the 1930s and the social order with which they are associated in order to demonstrate that, far from being the preserve of the poetic-realist/Popular Front canon, the problematic of a claustrophobic society dominated by elderly males

who at worst exploit or at best are powerless to protect the younger generation is one which informs a range of films, leaving an overall impression of an unhealthy society in which effort and energy are channelled into maintaining a moribund structure rather than being devoted to change and renewal. Secondly, it will consider the relationship between class and patriarchal status by looking at whether every *homme d'un certain âge* is automatically endowed with patriarchal power.

The exploitation of the younger generation by a father-figure with the intent of maintaining a moribund structure is a theme that has already been touched upon in the preceding chapter, where an analysis of the MARIUS/FANNY/CESAR trilogy showed the process by which paternity rights were transferred from Marius to the impotent Panisse, a manoeuvre which replenished the barren branches of an old family on the point of demise, as the following speech made by Panisse's sister to Fanny makes clear:

...je te tutoie car tu es de notre maison. C'est une maison honnête et riche, mais qui a toujours été un peu triste, car nous n'avions pas d'enfants, ni les uns, ni les autres. Alors, nous allions tous partir sous la terre, le dernier aurait emporté notre nom. Mais toi, tu viens d'accoucher et de nous donner un beau garçon.

It did so however at the expense of two successive younger generations, in that it entailed the sacrifice of both the young lovers' happiness — hence Fanny's reproach to César: 'Sans vous, sans ma mère, sans les vieux que vous êtes, j'aurais été heureuse depuis 20 ans.' — and their progeniture, as Fanny indicates in her complaint to Césariot that her marriage to Panisse made her lose 'mes autres enfants, ceux que mon vieux mari n'a jamais pu me donner'.

The inherent sterility of a society in which such operations are condoned is masked, and Fanny's not unfounded criticisms offset, by the Pagnolesque happy end,

which centres on a discussion of all the children a reunited Fanny and Marius are going to have, a happy end which is in itself a function of the patriarchal discourse dominating the film — the reunion is engineered and endorsed by César — against which the elements of dissent, such as Fanny's protests, carry little weight. The positive characterization of the father-figures played by Raimu and Charpin in the trilogy, which, like the happy end, is symptomatic of what Vincendeau called the "ideal" (archaic/nostalgic) world of Pagnol',<sup>11</sup> in that it recreates a patriarchal myth, is however far from being typical of the portrayal of older male characters in the cinema of the period, which is in many cases closer to the critical treatment meted out to Zabel in *QUAI DES BRUMES*. Similarly, contemporary society is in many instances portrayed in a style closer to that of Prévert rather than Pagnol, as claustrophobic and/or corrupt, a place to be fled rather than an idyll to be sought.

In this respect, the treatment of the father-figures in the Pagnol trilogy can be contrasted with that in Julien Duvivier's 1938 film, *LA FIN DU JOUR*, which deals with the same underlying theme, that of the older generation renewing itself at the expense of the younger generation, but in a quite different way, the difference already being indicated in the title. Whereas the trilogy had ended with the opening up of new possibilities of recapturing lost opportunities and producing a new generation, the title *LA FIN DU JOUR* indicates right from the opening credits the notion of closure and death.

The action of the film takes place almost exclusively in a retirement home for old actors. Dramatic interest centres upon the personal tragedies of three of the inmates, Marny (Victor Francen), St Clair (Louis Jouvet) and Cabrissade (Michel Simon). Marny is embittered by his professional and private failures in life, the lack

of recognition of his talent, and the loss of his beloved wife, Simone, who died in mysterious circumstances after running off with the Don Juan-like St Clair. Cabrissade is the *enfant terrible* of the home, an eternal understudy of no proven talent, who seizes the chance of playing the leading role he had always dreamed of at a benefit performance of *L'Aiglon*. Once on stage, he dries up, and then, his illusion of a frustrated talent shattered, dies. St Clair attempts to prove his seductive powers by persuading a naïve waitress to commit suicide because of her unrequited love for him. Marny prevents the suicide, and St Clair goes mad, identifying completely with the stage role of Don Juan. The film ends in a graveyard, with Cabrissade's funeral address and the news that St Clair has been transported to an asylum.

From this summary of failed lives, lost illusions, madness and death, it will be clear that the cosy world of Pagnol has been exchanged for the bleak universe of late 1930s poetic realism, of which *QUAI DES BRUMES* is an archetypal example. It is therefore hardly surprising that St Clair, the 'father-figure' through whom the exploitation of youth theme is mainly articulated, bears a greater resemblance to Zabel than to Panisse or César.

Both *QUAI DES BRUMES* and the Pagnol trilogy feature the desire of an older man for a teenage girl, in the first instance, Zabel's incestuous desire for his ward Nelly, in the second, Panisse's wish to marry Fanny. In as much as, according to one Jungian analyst, incest can be interpreted as a desire for rejuvenation:

When an adult regresses in an incestuous manner, he can be seen as attempting, by linking with his roots, to recharge his batteries, to regenerate himself spiritually and psychologically.<sup>12</sup>

the signification of the two desires may be seen as similar, Zabel seeking on an



individual level the regeneration achieved by Panisse on a familial/social level through the child Fanny brings to his barren house. If, however, in the trilogy, the union of Panisse and Fanny is portrayed as acceptable if less than ideal and not without social advantages for all and sundry, in *QUAI DES BRUMES* the desire of Zabel for Nelly is marked as deviant, a source of danger for others — jealousy leads Zabel to kill Nelly's boyfriend — and a source of anguish for Zabel himself, who sums up his predicament as follows: 'C'est une chose affreuse que d'être amoureux, amoureux comme Romeo, quand on a comme moi une tête comme Barbe-Bleue.'

St Clair, like Panisse and Zabel, is an older male who desires a young girl, in this case, Jeannette, a waitress young enough to be his daughter. His desire, like that of Zabel, is denoted as pathological in a number of ways. Firstly, there is no affection for Jeannette as a person. Rather, she functions for St Clair as a signifier of 'woman', being interchangeable with and a representation of all the other women St Clair has known, as the following exchange makes clear:

St C : Tu as les yeux d'une princesse russe, les jambes  
d'une danseuse, la bouche de la femme d'un diplomate  
qui s'est ruiné pour moi. Le tout ensemble, une  
délicieuse femme qui s'est tuée...

J : ....à cause de vous?

St C : Pour moi.

Thus, St Clair, even more than Zabel, is the epitome of a Bluebeard character in his relentless chase from one conquest to the next, his 'collection' of women proof of his seductiveness, and hence of his triumph over age.

Secondly, St Clair's desire is pathological in that, like Zabel's it is linked with death, in this case that of the object of affection rather than a younger rival. As the above quote suggests, St Clair had driven a mistress, the wife he stole from Marny, to suicide, an event he attempts to repeat in order to prove his continuing

seductiveness, by persuading the naive Jeannette to commit suicide, leaving behind a letter dictated by St Clair himself which duplicates the letter written by Marny's wife. Marny however appears in time to stop Jeanette, telling her: 'Tu ne comprends pas qu'il joue avec toi, qu'il se sert de ta vie pour continuer à croire à sa jeunesse', a remark which foregrounds the underlying vampirish qualities inherent in the general theme of the sacrifice of youth to age.

That the theme of a moribund older generation drawing their life force from the young is central to the film is indicated in the fact that it is repeated in a minor key in the sub-plot concerning the character of Cabrissade. Like St Clair, Cabrissade is intent on retaining an illusion of youth, describing himself as a 'jouvenceau égaré dans une assemblée de patriarchs'. In his case however it is not the seductive aspects of youth he wishes to cling to, but its boyish exuberance, which he expresses in playing childish tricks on the other residents, walking around in the nude and jumping on the flower beds. When remonstrated with by the director, who asks him: 'Quand serez-vous raisonnable?', he replies: 'Jamais. Etre raisonnable, c'est être résigné. Etre résigné, c'est être vieux. Je ne veux pas vieillir.'

This admirable spirit of revolt is brought to the fore when the director announces that, because of the home's financial difficulties, wine and electricity are going to be rationed. Cabrissade is friendly with a group of scouts who camp near the home every summer, and in particular with their leader, whom he regards as the son he never had. That evening the scouts appear after lights out in the home with a cask of wine, under the influence of which Cabrissade leads the residents in a rebellion against the measures taken by the home, drawing up a list of demands by candlelight. The midnight feast atmosphere of this sequence is indicative of the regressive nature

of Cabrissade's desire for youth, in particular in his relationship to the scouts, in which he plays at being one of them.

However, the would-be rebellion collapses in face of the economic realities of the situation, Cabrissade's threat of a mass exodus becoming redundant in face of the directors news that they are indeed all leaving as the home is being closed for lack of funds. This first indication of Cabrissade's impotence pre-figures his real defeat, when, the scout leader falls in love with a girl guide from a nearby camp and the two young people decide to marry. The loss of his replacement son marks the end of Cabrissade's regressive rebellion against age.

The two young people come to announce their departure just as this actor who had spent his career understudying a leading man who was never ill is finally about to go on stage in the role of *l'Aiglon*. The shock of hearing that his 'son' will not be coming back next year is so great that Cabrissade dries up completely, and instead of scoring the triumph which would have justified his existence, he is booed off the stage, muttering as he goes 'Ce n'est pas de ma faute, je suis vieux.' His spirit broken, he totters off to his room and dies.

Although Cabrissade is a more endearing character than the sinister St Clair, both share the same fundamental trait: a regressive desire to remain youthful which, on the part of St Clair, takes on the Bluebeardish form of the sacrifice of youth on the altar of his vanity. The futility of such a desire is implicit in the ends the two men meet; St Clair's madness and Cabrissade's death. It is made clear in the text that both made the capital mistake of seeking artificially to maintain themselves in the position of youth, rather than founding a family to whom they would cede their place. This lost opportunity is hinted at in St Clair's discovery on arriving at the home that he

had a son he had never known by one of the actress inmates, and in Cabrisade's obsession with the scout, his ersatz son.

These two tragic figures are compared with two of their fellow residents, an old couple still in love despite long years of companionship, who finally decide to marry and whose subsequent wedding is attended by their five children and twenty grandchildren. The conclusions to be drawn from this example of fertility and of a contented, serene old age, in comparison with the frantic, sterile efforts of Cabrisade and St Clair to cling on to their youth are self evident.

This one example of fertility set apart, *LA FIN DU JOUR* paints a bleak picture of an enclosed world fixated on the past with no future perspective. The overall atmosphere is similar to that of *QUAI DES BRUMES*, in that in both films a feeling of claustrophobia is created by an element of repetition. In the Carné/Prévert film, the growing love of Nelly and Jean was repeatedly blocked by a resurgence of violence, creating the impression of a cyclical fate from which there was no escape. In *LA FIN DU JOUR* repetition is introduced by St Clair's obsessive desire to maintain his waning reputation as a great lover, which leads to a repeated recreations of the past in the present.

In the first instance he is shown sending himself perfumed letters in order to convince his fellow residents, many of whom are among his past mistresses, of his continued attractiveness to women. When one incredulous actress dares him to read one of the letters aloud, another old lady recognises it as a letter she had written to him in 1913. What appeared merely ridiculous is thus revealed to be slightly macabre, foreshadowing the main repetition, that of his relationship with Simone, Marny's wife, in the liaison with Jeannette. The past is revived both in the element

of stealing away — before St Clair's arrival at the home, Jeanette had kept Marny company — and of course in the attempt to repeat the suicide, which would have been St Clair's revenge for his public humiliation over the letters.

Although the trajectory of Marny, the third principal character in the film, is more positive than that of St Clair and Cabrissade in that, by saving Jeannette from undergoing the same fate as his wife and triumphing in *l'Aiglon* after Cabrissade's exit, he to some extent makes good past personal and professional failures, the film passes rapidly over these minor and somewhat belated triumphs, focusing instead on the madness of St Clair and the death of Cabrissade, whose funeral occupies the last scene in the film. The overall impression given in *LA FIN DU JOUR* is thus of a moribund society drawing to its close, populated by corrupt and impotent patriarchs who try in vain to usurp the place of the young. Given the ambient atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that the two most dynamic elements in the film, the young scout and girl guide leaders, intend to leave the country and begin their married life in the colonies.

The overwhelming pessimism and claustrophobic atmosphere of *LA FIN DU JOUR*, like that of *QUAI DES BRUMES* can and frequently has been attributed to the period of its production, the late thirties, 'un avant-guerre qui sent déjà la poudre, la mort et la fin de civilisation',<sup>13</sup> as Jeancolas elegantly puts it. Although this interpretation has its undoubted validity, the presence of a number of factors forming an integral part of *LA FIN DU JOUR* in films from the early 1930s suggests that the social referent of the 1938 film is not limited to the pre-war context.

The statement of the young scout leader in *LA FIN DU JOUR*, 'Je veux aller au Maroc, dans un pays neuf, où l'on respire', could equally well be the *cri du coeur*

of the young hero from either of two earlier films, *PARTIR* (M. Tourneur, 1931) or *L'HOMME A L'HISPANO* (Epstein, 1933), both of which deal explicitly with the attempts of 'son' figures to escape from a society depicted as claustrophobic and corrupt, only to be prevented from doing so by older, economically powerful men who wilfully prey upon the young.

*PARTIR* opens on the notion of escape with a montage of shots — a travel poster of Zermatt, a boat in a glass case, a travel agent's shop front — symbolising *ailleurs*, over which a voice-over intones: 'Vous allez partir, partir...ouvrir une porte sur le monde qui permet à l'homme de s'échapper des liens qui le retiennent.' The montage of shots ends on the legs of a young man, the camera pulls back and we witness a scene which contrasts with the message contained in the opening sequence, in that the young man is denied the possibility of leaving, as he lacks the necessary funds to pay for the ticket about which he is enquiring.

This momentary set-back is overcome when the young man, Jacques, manages to get himself hired as tenor in the troupe of variety players to which his girlfriend Florence belongs, and is thus able to embark with them as they sail for a tour of South America. During the crossing Jacques confesses to Florence that he had to leave France because, in the course of a heated exchange with his uncle over his inheritance, which, Jacques had discovered, his uncle had embezzled and then frittered away, the uncle had fallen and hit his head, leaving Jacques in fear that he would be charged with murder. He intends therefore never to return to France, but to start a new life with Florence on a plantation in the New World.

The behaviour of the two lovers is observed by a couple of older businessmen who are characterised as *louche* in their affairs. They prove to be equally perverse

in their everyday behaviour, as one bets with the other that the young couple will not finish the trip together, an arrangement which would suit him as he has designs upon Florence. Felix, the sympathetic manager of the variety troupe learns of Jacques' predicament and advises him to leave the ship at the next port, before the authorities learn of his whereabouts and have him arrested on board ship.

At the next port of call, Jacques leaves the ship as if he were going sightseeing and waits for the manager to bring him his suitcase at a pre-arranged place. While he is waiting, however, the businessman who had wagered that the young couple would finish the trip together joins him and taunts him with the thought that Florence had wanted him to leave just so she could cheat on him.

In the meantime, Florence, who had been sharing a cramped cabin with three other dancers, had unsuspectingly accepted the second businessman's offer of a cabin to herself on the first-class deck. Jacques rushes back on board to find, as he thinks, his suspicions confirmed and refuses to leave. From then on his fate is a foregone conclusion. Before the ship reaches its destination, a radio message comes through to arrest Jacques. Unwilling to submit, Jacques seizes the first chance to jump overboard, and drowns.

Thus, *PARTIR* follows the classic pattern established in Chapter Three: an innocent 'son' figure undergoes a process of criminalization and banishment at the hands of a 'father'. What is however unusual in this film is its double structure: the opening sequence, with its evocation and then denial of the notion of escape duplicates in the first two minutes the structure of the entire film. This is a reflection of the double betrayal of Jacques by two sets of father-figures, the initial criminalization/banishment process at the hands of one embezzling uncle, being

completed by the two shady businessmen who add the usual elements of an older man/younger woman/younger man triangle, and the notion of no escape, leading to the death of the 'son' figure.

Indeed, the film goes to great lengths to place the blame for Jacques' death squarely on the shoulders of the businessman who brought him back on board ship, using the audience's identification with Felix, the most sympathetic and sensible character on board the boat,. The radio operator, whom Felix had initially blamed for passing on the police message, is exculpated from responsibility in Jacques' death through his self-sacrificing dive into the sea to fish him out, and it is in the end the businessman whose face Felix punches when the passengers disembark, the direction of his fist indicating the spot where blame has come to rest.

Maurice Tourneur, the director of *PARTIR*, failed to equal the success and esteem he had enjoyed in Hollywood in the silent period on his return to France, where he shot mostly superior commercial films, into which category *PARTIR* can be placed. The theme of a corrupt patriarchal class blighting the future of young hopefuls was however one which transcended the popular/art divide before Carné began his career, as is demonstrated in the remarkable similarity in plot between *PARTIR* and a film made two years later by one of the acknowledged masters of the 1920s *avant-garde*, Jean Epstein.

Like *PARTIR*, *L'HOMME A L'HISPANO* opens on the notion of exile. Georges, a young man who has just gone bankrupt, announces 'J'en ai assez de la médiocrité en France. Je pars.' He gets however no further than Biarritz, being held up by a series of encounters. On the train journey he shares a carriage with Lord Oswill, an elderly Englishman in plus-fours, who enlivens the journey with a series



of cynical misanthropic comments (e.g. 'Les femmes se ressemblent toutes. Personne n'aime personne.') and, through idle curiosity, probes the reasons for Georges' desire to leave France. On arrival at Biarritz, Georges encounters a rich friend, who has bought a magnificent Hispano-Suiza for his mistress, is however unable to deliver it because of the unexpected arrival of his wife, and so asks Georges to drive around in it for a couple of days, pretending it is his.

While pretending to be *l'homme à l'hispano*, Georges meets and falls in love with Stéphane, an upper-class married woman. He then bumps into Lord Oswill again at the golf club who immediately spots that he has a problem and guesses what it is: 'Vous êtes amoureux. Elle vous prend pour ce que vous n'êtes pas.' On returning home, Lord Oswill discovers that his wife, who is many years his junior and with whom he has a mere marriage of convenience, has a lover. Initially annoyed, he laughs when he discovers that it is *l'homme à l'hispano*, and uses his privileged knowledge of the situation to manipulate the two lovers, finally inviting Georges to a ball at his home.

During the ball he takes Georges into his study and lays his cards on the table, telling him: 'Je tiens à ma femme. Je ne l'aime pas, mais j'y tiens.' He then threatens to reveal the truth about George's financial situation unless he agrees to disappear. Georges goes off into the grounds, a splash is heard, Lord Oswill sees his younger rival in his ornamental lake and leaves him to drown.

As in *PARTIR*, it is emphasised in the text that the father-figure is directly responsible for the death of the younger man, in this case through the figure of Oswill's solicitor, who is characterized as an honest upright man and so represents the Law. Oswill and the solicitor are in the study when shouts announce that

Georges's body has been fished out of the lake. The solicitor turns to Oswill and says in definite tones, 'Vous l'avez tué', a judgement which Oswill's response, 'Non, c'est lui', cannot dispel.

L'HOMME A L'HISPANO thus follows the same pattern as PARTIR: in both cases a bankrupt young man who intends to start a new life abroad is driven to suicide by a corrupt old man, who acts not out of anger or hate, but cynically and dispassionately, appearing to take a perverse pleasure in manipulating the lives of younger people. While these films have neither the stylistic qualities nor the intense pessimism of the key poetic-realist films of the late 1930s, their corrupt patriarchs and diffuse feeling of no-escape nevertheless foreshadow the characters of Valentin in LE JOUR SE LEVE and St Clair in LA FIN DU JOUR as well as the limited horizons of these and other films, thereby indicating that the unease conveyed in the later narratives is a function not only of the fluctuating international tensions of the latter part of the decade but also of unchanging conditions within French society itself.

It is however — unsurprisingly — in a film of the late 1930s that these themes find their most potent expression. Not in QUAI DES BRUMES, which, since its notorious citation by the Vichy authorities along with André Gide and the *congés payés* as a factor in the moral decline and subsequent defeat of the French nation,<sup>14</sup> has acquired a certain reputation as the cinematic epitome of pre-war pessimism, but curiously enough in a work by the most vehement critic of the Prévert/Carné film (at the time of its release), Jean Renoir, whose 1938 adaptation of the Zola novel, LA BETE HUMAINE, effectively offers a darker version of the main themes of QUAI DES BRUMES.

LA BETE HUMAINE is, as we are told at the beginning of the film, 'l'histoire de Jacques Lantier, fils d'Auguste Lantier et de Gervaise, de la famille des Rougon Macquart'. Jacques is an engine driver who, like the rest of the Rougon Macquart, has an unfortunate hereditary condition. In his case, sexual desire is accompanied by an uncontrollable urge to murder the object of his affections, which reduces him to enforced celibacy. One night he witnesses the murder of the *président* Grandmorin by the latter's *protégée* Séverine, and her husband, the assistant station-master, Roubaud. In order to ensure his silence, the Roubauds cultivate his friendship. Jacques has an affair with Séverine, the fact that she has assisted in a murder satisfying by proxy his murderous instinct. However, the situation with her husband soon becomes untenable, Jacques finds he cannot kill a man in cold blood and so cannot release her from Roubaud. The only way out for the lovers is in her murder and his suicide.

It is hardly surprising that, two years after LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, a film made in the 'climat d'effervescence et d'espoir'<sup>15</sup> which immediately preceded the electoral victory of the Popular Front, Renoir should choose to adapt a Zola novel. A literary work based on the notion of the determining effect of hereditary factors on the human character, constituting a destiny which the individual was powerless to resist, was well-suited to the climate of pessimism in the period between the fall of the Popular Front and the onset of war, reflecting as it did the theme of ineluctable fate which was central to the classic films of that period.

What is interesting in Renoir's adaptation of Zola is that he modifies the original theme of the novel in such a way that it falls into line with the theme of a corrupt patriarchal society discussed above. The first images of the film imply an

intention to remain faithful to Zola, in that they consist of the following quotation from the book appearing on the screen:

A certaines heures il la sentait bien, cette fêlure héréditaire. Et il en venait à penser qu'il payait pour les autres, les pères, les grand-pères qui avaient bu... les générations d'ivrognes dont il était le sang gâté. Son crâne éclatait sous l'effort, dans cette angoisse d'un homme poussé à des actes où sa volonté n'était pour rien, et dont la cause en lui avait disparu.

followed by the signature Emile Zola, which is superimposed on a photo of the man himself. The passage quoted appears quintessential Zola, with its notions of hereditary instinct overcoming conscious will. However, a comparison with the novel reveals that, contrary to what the idiosyncratic punctuation would lead the spectator to believe, important and substantial parts of the original text have been left out. In his selective quotation procedure, Renoir has chosen to suggest ellipsis where none exists ('bu' is followed immediately by the phrase beginning 'les générations...' in the novel)<sup>16</sup> and to give absolutely no indication of the radical cuts he has made elsewhere in the passage.

Part of the missing text explaining Jacques' compulsive desire to stab or strangle young women is incorporated into the dialogue of a later scene. What is however entirely omitted from the film are lines such as the clauses following on from '...le sang gâté' quoted above:

...un lent empoisonnement, une sauvagerie qui le ramenait avec les loups mangeurs de femmes au fond des bois.<sup>17</sup>

or lines as the following, which precede 'Son crâne éclatait...' quoted above:

...chaque fois c'était comme une soudaine crise de rage aveugle, une soif toujours renaissante de venger des offenses très anciennes, dont il aurait perdu l'exacte mémoire. Cela venait-il donc de si loin, du mal que les femmes avaient fait à sa race, de la rancune amassée de

mâle en mâle, depuis la première tromperie au fond des cavernes?<sup>18</sup>

In other words, passages attributing Jacques' murderous instincts to a form of atavism, which is in fact the theme of the novel, are eradicated and the notion of *la bête humaine*, which in the novel refers primarily to this resurgence of primitive impulses in Jacques, is displaced onto Séverine, who is first shown with a cat in her arms, a feline symbolism which recurs throughout the film, and onto the anthropomorphized locomotive, *la Lison*. 'Blame' for Jacques' condition is given not to distant ancestors who swung through trees, but to immediate forefathers, 'les pères et les grand-pères qui avaient bu...', and who would have lived during the Third Republic.

The explanatory prologue is superimposed on clouds of rising steam, an image which refers both to the railway setting of the film, and to Jacques' condition, as is made clear later in the film when he describes his impulse to kill as 'comme une espèce de grande fumée qui me monte dans la tête et qui déforme tout'. This explanation occurs during an early sequence in the film which illustrates Jacques' condition. On a visit to his godmother, he meets her daughter, Flore, in the fields. Flore was like a sister to him during their childhood, but now that she has grown up the two are sexually attracted to each other. Jacques lets himself get carried away and almost strangles Flore. He then explains his action to her in a monologue which is adapted to the first person from the same piece of the original Zola text as the prologue, which it amplifies and repeats:

Quand je suis comme ça, je suis comme un chien enragé qui a envie de mordre. Et pourtant je ne bois pas, même pas un petit verre d'eau de vie... Je finis par croire que je paye pour les autres, pour les pères et grand-pères qui ont bu, pour toutes les générations et

génération d'ivrognes qui m'ont pourri le sang. C'est eux qui m'ont donné cette sauvagerie... Et pourtant, je t'aime, Flore, je t'aime de tout mon coeur. Je t'aime tellement que je ne voulais même pas venir, tellement j'avais peur.

Apart from several documentary-type montages of shots from trains entering or moving between stations, this is the only sequence in the film shot in the open air. Jacques pursues Flore through a meadow of grazing cows, almost strangles her by a railway embankment, then sits on a hillock to explain the problem to her. The dialogue scene is filmed in a series of low-angled close-ups which frame the frustrated lovers against a clear sky. The angle of the shot lends a tragi-heroic quality to Jacques, while the natural setting, with its Popular Front implications of health and fitness, contrasts with the situation of sickness, sterility and the frustration of natural impulses described in the dialogue, giving Jacques' plight an added poignancy. The sequence ends on an extreme close-up of Jacques saying wistfully: 'Je crois que les femmes, pour moi...', and gazing into the distance, followed by a fade-out onto black, which contrasts with the luminous background of the preceding shots and suggests a black outlook for the future.

Thus, the first fifteen minutes of the film presents the spectator with all the elements associated with the poetic-realist films of the late 1930s. There is the notion of ineluctable fate firmly established at the beginning of the film in the prologue, which emphasises both the hero's powerlessness and the film's debt to Zola, which should awake certain expectations in a French spectator of moderate education. It is then repeated in the relatively long opening sequence, which shows Jacques and his stoker, Pecqueux, aboard a locomotive heading for Le Havre, the speeding train functioning as a symbol for the irresistible movement towards a pre-determined fate.

Moreover, the name of Gabin in the credits should, as much if not more than the name of Zola, awake certain expectations, as by 1938 the Gabin myth was well-established.

These expectations are vindicated when the 'fatal flaw' of the Gabin hero prevents him consummating a relationship, and so acceding to the bucolic idyll which would also be refused him in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* a year later. As in the Carné film he had just completed, *QUAI DES BRUMES*, this 'fatal flaw' is symbolised by an external element of the setting. If, in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, the *brouillard* which haunts Jean and ultimately prevents his escape with Nelly is linked to his experience of colonial war in Tonkin, an officially sanctioned form of omnipresent patriarchal violence which recurs in the form of corrupt individual patriarchs, in *LA BETE HUMAINE*, the *fumée* which symbolises Jacques' *mal* and prevents his union with Flore is also expressly linked to corrupt patriarchs, in this case those of past rather than the present, and on an individual rather than social level. In both cases, the damage done to the Gabin character by patriarchal society takes the form of a violent streak which leads him to commit a murder, in conformity with the 'criminalization of sons' pattern.

The notion of patriarchal corruption on a social level is present in *LA BETE HUMAINE* in the character of Grandmorin. Grandmorin is a 'Bluebeard' character of the same type as Zabel, an elderly man who sexually abuses young girls, among them his godchild, the orphaned Séverine, who, it is suggested, might even be his own daughter. But whereas Nelly resisted Zabel's advances, Séverine was a compliant victim. Both Grandmorin's 'Bluebeard' qualities and Séverine's own perversity come across in the scene in which she describes her childhood relationship to Grandmorin

as follows:

Tous les enfants en avaient peur, même sa fille Berthe. Quand il apparaissait au détour d'une allée, tous s'enfuyaient. Mais pas moi. Moi, je l'attendais, le menton ferme, le museau en l'air. Je lui souriais, il me donnait une tape sur la joue. J'obtenais tout ce que je voulais. Jamais il ne me grondait.

The reference to her nose as a 'museau', the fact that she is stroking a kitten in her arms at this point and the physical resemblance of the flat-nosed Simone Simon to a cat suggests that the sexual abuse at a young age impaired Séverine's moral development, turning her into an amoral *bête humaine* who is equally ready to comply with her husband's request to go and see Grandmorin to ask for a favour as she is to aid her husband in killing him.

And so like François and Françoise in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, who share the same name day, same social background and so appear to form two halves of a whole, Jacques and Séverine are complementary characters, but in a more negative sense in that their similarity is based entirely on the damage done to them in one way or another by corrupt patriarchal figures. Whereas in the more positive *Carné* film the meeting of François and Françoise provides the occasion for an albeit brief regression to an ideal imaginary realm, in *LA BETE HUMAINE* the relationship never gets away from the notion of sterility and perversity.

Initially, the extent of the damage to their respective capacities for a healthy love affair is indicated in Séverine's unusual response to Jacques' declaration:

Vous m'aimez? Mais c'est épouvantable. Il ne faut pas m'aimer. Je ne peux aimer personne... Il ne faut pas m'en vouloir. J'ai eu une enfance épouvantable... J'ai besoin de confiance, de tendresse. Moi aussi, je peux en donner, beaucoup. Mais l'amour, il ne faut pas y penser.



the last part of which is reminiscent of Jacques' refusal of Flore's love ('Ne parlez plus de ça. Il ne faut pas m'en vouloir') and thus emphasises the equivalence between the two characters, an equivalence not suggested in the novel.

When they do eventually sleep together, their first sexual encounter takes place in a disused shed on a night of driving rain, a less than auspicious setting and one which contrasts sharply with the cosy greenhouse setting of the François/Françoise courting scene. If it is not the setting which is inauspicious, it is the content of the lovers' exchange which is perverse. The second love scene shows Jacques lying on a bed with Séverine and interrogating her about the details of Grandmorin's murder in such a way that it appears to be a bigger turn-on for him than sex. The fantasy life of Jacques thus bears little resemblance to that of François, whose dreams of bicycle rides in the country with Françoise at Easter are associated with notions of health, life, rebirth.

Séverine's dreams also revolve around the notion of death, but in her case they take the form of a desire to be rid of her husband, whom she sees as an obstacle to her happiness with Jacques, a constant reminder of their sordid past. She suggests that Jacques murder him, but he is unable to kill a man in cold blood, and it is after this failure that the brooding, claustrophobic atmosphere which pervades the film closes in on the couple.

Just as Nelly in *QUAI DES BRUMES* had sought to escape from the oppressive atmosphere at home with Zabel in meaningless relationships, so Séverine tries to flee her fear of her husband by taking a new lover, whom she does not love, but with whom she hopes to 'recommencer quelque chose de nouveau, de meilleur, quelque chose sans plaisir peut-être, mais qui m'aurait calmée.' This thinly veiled

desire for death is a result of her disappointment in Jacques, with whom, as she explains to him in the following passage, she can see no future:

Vois-tu, devant nous maintenant c'est barré, nous n'irons pas plus loin. Notre rêve de vivre ensemble, ailleurs, toute cette félicité qui ne dépendait que de toi, il est impossible, puisque tu n'as pas pu, l'autre soir... avec toi, je n'ai plus rien à attendre. Demain sera comme hier, les mêmes ennuis, les mêmes tourments. Ça m'est égal, ça ira come ça voudra. Je n'ai rien d'autre à faire ici que de traîner ma vie et que d'attendre que Roubaud me tue.

LA BETE HUMAINE thus depicts a society as claustrophobic and potentially violent as that depicted in QUAI DES BRUMES. But whereas in the Carné film there were at least two possible avenues of escape from this society — a future *ailleurs*, in South America, and a regression to an idyllic past with Nelly — in LA BETE HUMAINE none of these options are available. Not only is there is no future for Jacques and Séverine in their present situation, and no *ailleurs*, as it is only attainable by murder and, as Jacques points out, 'on ne construit pas son bonheur sur un crime, there is also no idyllic past to which to regress. When Jacques tries to convince Séverine to come back to him she replies:

Je t'avais dit, devant nous, c'est barré. On aurait mieux fait de rester comme on était, camarades, sans rien faire. Tu te souviens de notre belle promenade dans le dépôt, si innocente. Ça me faisait oublier Grandmorin. Tu vois, Jacques, quand on a connu toutes les saletés que je ai connues, étant petite fille, c'est la folie de vouloir connaître un amour comme les autres.

What we have here is not therefore the nostalgia for an idyllic past associated with childhood and/or a return to nature, familiar not just from the Carné films, but also from LE PARADIS PERDU, LA BELLE EQUIPE, L'ENTRAINEUSE etc., but nostalgia for a sterile state of sexual repression as a preferable alternative to the

horrors of sexual abuse.

Given the hopeless situation, it is scarcely surprising that the one evocation of a lovers idyll in the film, which occurs when Jacques tries to reassure Séverine by telling her:

Mais non, tu oublieras tout et puis on sera heureux.  
Tiens, tu vois, en ce moment je rêve qu'on est  
ensemble loin, loin à l'étranger, et puis je travaille, et  
on aura une petite maison à nous, et puis le soir tu  
m'attends sous le porche et puis je te prends dans mes  
bras et je sers fort, fort et puis on s'aime, on s'aime  
comme personne ne s'est jamais aimé...

is a prelude to him stabbing her, before committing suicide himself. His act can only be understood as a response to Séverine's death wish and/or their hopeless situation, as there is no justification in the text for a sudden resurgence of his 'mal', all the factors given in the original novel having been eliminated from the murder scene in the film, just as the passage quoted above has been added and the circumstances of Jacques' death altered (in the novel he does not commit suicide but is killed by Pecqueux) in conformity with the myths of the period.

What Renoir has therefore done in *LA BÊTE HUMAINE* is take the basic Zola ingredients of characters and story-line and, working from the fundamental notion of a pre-determined fate, emphasise those aspects of the novel which fit in with the consciously or unconsciously perceived patterns recurring in the cinematic creation of the period — corrupt father-figures — make changes and additions to accommodate the dominant myths of the late 1930s — the privileging and romanticization of the doomed love story, the Gabin character's suicide — to arrive in the end at a composition of doomed characters locked in a corrupt society. While the end result bears a strong structural and thematic resemblance to *LE JOUR SE*

LEVE and particularly to QUA I DES BRUMES, it paints a darker picture than either of the Carné films in its evocation of a completely corrupt society in which the younger generation have been tainted by depraved patriarchal figures to the extent that they are no longer the repositories of moral values which cannot be realised in society, and so there is no ideal world to which they can escape, however briefly, no positive values with which to offset the decadence of patriarchal society.

Whence the irony of what Jeancolas calls the 'polémique un peu vaine',<sup>19</sup> which was taking place at the very period Renoir was shooting LA BETE HUMAINE, and in which he irked Carné and especially Prévert, who was the scénariste of the Popular Front film LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, by repeatedly insisting that QUA I DES BRUMES was a

film de propagande fasciste parce que les étrangers qui  
le verront auront le droit de penser qu'un pays qui  
produit des types de l'espèce de Gabin ou de Pierre  
Brasseur est un pays mûr pour la dictature.<sup>20</sup>

The striking similarity between QUA I DES BRUMES and LA BETE HUMAINE goes beyond the 'personnages peu libres' and the 'éclairages expressionnistes' noted as common to both by Jeancolas.<sup>21</sup> What is remarkable is the exactitude with which Renoir recreates both the notion of corruption by patriarchal society surrounding the Gabin character in the earlier film, and its expression in an external element of the *mise-en-scène*. His apparent inability to perceive that he was repeating the structures and atmosphere he was at that very moment criticising in the Prévert/Carné film is a testament to the extent to which the individual world-view of *auteurs* is influenced by the ambient social conditions of the period in which they create.

The works discussed above can thus be taken to reflect a certain

disenchantment with power structures obtaining in the society in that the sense of claustrophobia and despair which permeate them did not suddenly appear with the threat of war, but simply intensified as the decade wore on, producing the pessimistic tone symptomatic not just of the poetic-realist canon, but also of lesser known films of the late 1930s, such as Bernard-Deschamps' 1938 film *MONSIEUR COCCINELLE*.<sup>22</sup>

Although the tone of this remarkable film is far lighter than that of the films normally regarded as representative of the immediate pre-war cinema — it is a sort of surrealist black comedy — it in fact paints a picture of French society as bleak as anything to be found in the works of Carné or Duvivier. However, whereas in the films analysed above the notion of a *société bloquée* was in part articulated through the inscription of individual patriarchs as powerful, corrupt, 'Bluebeard' figures, bent on wrecking the lives of the younger generation, in *MONSIEUR COCCINELLE* the same notion is expressed through a 'father'-figure who, despite his fantasies of power, in fact occupies the position of impotence normally associated with 'son' figures.

The film recounts a major event in the life of the Coccinelle family, which consists of the eponymous Alfred Coccinelle (Pierre Larquay), cowed office worker and hen-pecked husband who dreams of being 'un dictateur à cheval', his domineering and penny pinching wife Melanie, their two children who are frequently mentioned but never actually appear in the film, and, the catalyst of the action, Alfred's eccentric Tante Aurore. Having in her youth been prevented by her family from marrying her suitor, the magician Illusio, Aurore has since lived as a recluse in her room, alone with memories of her lost love. When she receives a letter

announcing the return of Illusio, the shock is so great that she collapses in a lifeless heap. The 'death' of Tante Aurore opens up new horizons for the Coccinelles, promising them wealth and social status. These hopes and dreams are however shortlived, as Aurore wakes up from her catatonic trance and goes off with her Illusio.

Despite its light-hearted, comic tone, MONSIEUR COCCINELLE is fundamentally similar to LA FIN DU JOUR in that it also depicts a closed, backward-looking society from which the only escape is death. It does not however feature a corrupt patriarch, an absence which can arguably be attributed to the economic circumstances of the 'father'-figure, Alfred. In LA FIN DU JOUR, St Clair is distinguished from his poverty-stricken fellow residents by a brief sequence which shows him squandering money inherited from an ex-mistress on cars and hotels on the Côte d'Azur and so associates him with the monied, upper-class lifestyle enjoyed by the corrupt patriarchs of PARTIR and L'HOMME A L'HISPANO. Alfred Coccinelle, on the other hand, epitomises the down-trodden, lower middle-class *fonctionnaire*, impotent in both his professional and private life.

The film's first sequence demonstrates the dual tyranny of work and wife which rules Alfred's life. A brief moment of regressive pleasure at a *fête du quatorze juillet*, in which Alfred is bouncing around on a wooden horse blowing a toy trumpet, fantasizing aloud: 'Les Coccinelle sont libres. Je suis un homme libre', is interrupted by a cut to Mme Coccinelle, who dispels Alfred's fantasies with the words: 'Allons nous coucher. Demain le bureau.'

The extent to which work infringes upon Alfred's freedom is conveyed in two parallel scenes, a description of which should give some idea of the unusual *écriture*

of the film. The first of these scenes shows, in a style borrowed from expressionist drama, Alfred going into work, one anonymous bowler-hatted, black-suited figure in a long, slow, procession of anonymous bowler-hatted, black-suited figures. The second scene, separated from the first by a speeded-up shot of the hands of a clock spinning round, shows the same line of anonymous figures leaving work, but this time they dance out in a chorus line which would not be out of place in a musical comedy signed by René Clair.

These two scenes establish that Alfred is an unwilling wage slave, an insignificant cog in the large commercial wheel. His professional impotence is synonymous with his anonymity, which is in fact his chief characteristic. This is indicated in the opening sequence of the film, which introduces Alfred by means of close-up shots of pages from his *carte d'identité*, one of which bears the inscription, 'Signes particuliers — aucun'. Alfred's lack of power at work is matched by his lack of authority in his home, which is ruled over by his sharp-tongued, solidly built wife. That he is no more potent in bed than out of it is indicated in a close-up of a tiny, priapus-shaped cutting of a cedar of Lebanon, a pathetic apology of a phallic symbol which is lovingly tended and kept under a protective cloche by Alfred.<sup>23</sup>

This impotence is part of the wider themes of sterility and frustrated sexuality which permeate the film. Looking at the kitchen maid writing a love letter, Mélanie comments: 'C'est une réfoulée — comme dans mon journal de mode.' But the frantic way she herself channels her energy into housework and morning gymnastics would suggest that she, rather than the maid, is suffering from repressed sexual desire. That sexuality is situated outwith the Coccinelle household is indicated in a scene in which a former army comrade of Alfred's returned from the colonies shows him a

photograph of a nude negress, which Alfred eagerly examines under a magnifying glass. Sexual desire is thus relegated to the realm of the exotic rather than the everyday, and to the domain of fetishized representations of women rather than the real thing.

The same movement away from life towards artificial representations is evident in the panoply of objects littering the room in which the second *réfoulée* of the Coccinelle household, Tante Aurore, resides. For her as for Alfred, desire is contained in the realm of dreams and fetish objects, in this case a bird in a musical box given to her by Illusio, and old photos taken at the time of their courtship. Aurore's looking through these old photos leads in to a flashback/dream sequence, which shows in a stilted, stylized manner the two lovers, an idyll broken by the voice of parental authority announcing: 'Une Coccinelle n'épouse pas un illusioniste', and finishes on a close-up of Illusio saying: 'Pour tous les amants l'amour est fantaisie, car la vie, c'est la fantaisie.'

But the dream world Aurore inhabits is not life, but a form of living death. It is a static world in which there is no development and time stands still, as is indicated by the fact that the Aurore of the flashback has the same appearance and is dressed in the same old-fashioned way as the Aurore of the diegetic present. She thus resembles a pressed flower or a pinned butterfly which preserves an aspect of life in death. These comparisons are suggested both verbally and visually in the text, in the ex-soldier's description of Aurore as having 'déchée dans sa tige virginale' and in the stuffed cat and the tailor's dummy wearing the white dress *de jeune fille* that Aurore was wearing in the flashback, which clutter up Aurore's room.

A cut from a lingering close-up of another of Aurore's lifeless objects, painted



birds on an old-fashioned screen, to a nature documentary type shot of real birds underlines the artificial, lifeless nature of the world which Aurore inhabits. This is one of a series of nature shots showing the moon rising, frogs croaking, insects buzzing which are inserted in a completely surreal manner into the film, and which both by their content, and by the way in which their sudden, unmotivated insertion jars with the rest of the text, indicate the extent to which primitive natural sexuality is totally excluded from the Coccinelles' sterile existence, an exclusion which appears all the more abnormal given the family name.

The sterility of their world is suggested in the fact that the Coccinelle children, although their existence is mentioned, never actually appear in the film. All that we learn of them is that the daughter dreams of being an actress. The reaction this provokes in Mélanie — 'Une Coccinelle faire du cinéma? On en parlera' — is reminiscent of the remark that sealed Aurore's fate — 'Une Coccinelle n'épouse pas un illusioniste' to an extent which suggests that the cycle is repeating itself and that the younger generation too shall be condemned to a frustrated, sterile existence.

As is commonly the case in films of the period, the device of repetition is but one expression of the theme of claustrophobia. The situation depicted in *MONSIEUR COCCINELLE* is truly one of *huis-clos* in that no alternative world is proposed. The traditional escape route to the colonies is dismissed as a desirable alternative in the sequence featuring the visit of the ex-army colleague home from overseas. At the end of the evening Alfred accompanies his former comrade to the station, and on the way the two sit on a bench and compare their lives. Alfred's complaints of the monotony of his existence — 'le collège, le régiment, le bureau, voilà ma vie', is matched by the soldier's complaints of the life in the colonies, 'une vie solitaire sous un climat

qui vous crève'. Alfred's regrets at not having known 'les grands espaces, l'infini' are countered by the soldier's regrets at not having known 'la vie de famille, le bifteck assuré'. During their exchange of regrets, a number of cut-away shots show Alfred demolishing sand pies and the rim of a puddle with the tip of his umbrella, allowing a child's paper boat to sail into a gutter and sink, thus providing a visual metaphor for the loss of childhood dreams in the disenchantment of adult life.

Just as the colonies are ruled out, so the alternative escape route in the films of the 1930s, the flight into an imaginary world, is problematized in that it is linked in a disturbing manner with fascist tendencies and death. Alfred's dreams are not of escaping from or constructing an alternative to the system which oppresses him, but simply of exchanging his role of oppressed for that of oppressor, advancing from the obscurity of his position as one of the masses to become a 'dictateur à cheval'. He accedes to such a position of authority when news gets around of Tante Aurore's demise. The wish-fulfilment nature of the sequence in which he walks down the street, lifting his hat in a greeting to the admiring passers-by who whisper in awed tones: 'C'est le monsieur qui a perdu sa tante', is emphasised by Alfred being made the focal point of the tracking shot, which follows his triumphal progress through the town.

Through the death of his aunt Alfred has achieved the freedom and recognition he craved. Thanks to his bereaved status, he is entitled to time off his hated office job, an event emphasises in the contrast between the morning stroll as focus of attention as opposed to his normal participation in the parade of bowler-hatted figures. He is also freed from the tyranny of Mélanie's penny-pinching ways, of which much play is made in the film, as unnecessary expenditure is now sanctioned

in view of the expected inheritance.

Alfred's moment of glory is however shortlived as Aurore comes round and the expensive funeral arrangements Alfred had made are cancelled, which leads to a demonstration by angry *fournisseurs*, who are shown marching *en masse* through the streets, chanting the motto: 'Nous avons droit à nos funérailles.' In his article on MONSIEUR COCCINELLE in the issue of *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque* devoted to images of the petit-bourgeoisie, Marcel Oms offers the following interpretation of this sequence:

L'évocation est assez explicite des mouvements contestataires comme celui du 6 février 1934 plutôt que d'une éventuelle dérision des défilés populaires où prolétariens.<sup>24</sup>

It is true that there are a number of references in the film to those elements of petit-bourgeois mentality which would make that class fervent Pétainistes in occupied France. Alfred is himself the prime example, with his dreams of generals and dictators, and his definition of himself as a 'révolutionnaire de juste milieu'. That the definition is preceded by an explanation that his ancestors were present at the taking of the Bastille in 1789 and on the barricades in 1848 suggests that French revolutionary fervour is now the prerogative of the political right.

There are however also a number of references to symbols associated with the political left. The *fête du quatorze juillet* for example, of the opening scene of the film, is an element which features frequently in populist films (eg. HOTEL DU NORD (Carné, 1938), QUATORZE JUILLET (Clair, 1932)) and which is generally associated with proletarian political values, while two relatives who hurry over to the Coccinelle abode at Béton-sur-Seine to claim their share of the inheritance use as transport a tandem, a vehicle generally associated with the Popular Front promotion

of sport and fresh air for the masses in populist works of the period such as *FRIC-FRAC*, a 1939 film adapted from the successful 1936 boulevard comedy of the same name.

In *MONSIEUR COCCINELLE*, both symbols are used against the grain, in that the 14th of July fair is the setting for Alfred's dreams of being a dictator, and through the amusingly macabre spectacle of the acquisitive pair of relatives cycling along with a wreath around one of their necks, the tandem is linked with death. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that the shopkeepers' demonstration might refer to two related ideas at the same time, evoking the right-wing anarchist movements which would later support fascism, while also, in the same order of ideas as the tandem and *fête du 14 juillet* references, symbolising the degeneration of the political left, which was unable to stem the rise of fascist sympathies among the petite bourgeoisie.

All in all then, *MONSIEUR COCCINELLE* offers a disturbing image of a society closed in upon itself, with no perspective on the future — death looms larger in the text than the absent children — and from which there is neither geographic nor spiritual escape. *Ailleurs* is as unfulfilling as *ici* and the realm of imagination is, for Alfred and (most of) his relatives, occupied by vaguely fascist fantasies and an obsessive interest in the pecuniary advantages of other people's death.

The only character to escape the narrow confines of suburban life is the romantically inclined Aurore, swept off at the end of the film by her *Illusio*, who sails through the ranks of protesters, reciting:

la vie, o la triste vie  
sans un rayon de fantaisie  
dormir, manger, boire et compter,  
moi seul, je suis la vérité.

and throws open the locked gates of the besieged Coccinelle residence to claim his bride.

That this 'happy ending' represents an escape from the artificial, sterile world in which Aurore was living is suggested in her parting words to Alfred with the words 'Les coccinelles ont des ailes' which, as well as evoking the notion of liberty and flight, suggests a return to nature, in contrast to the shots denoting its exclusion earlier in the film. That M. Coccinelle is not however going to escape in a similar manner is indicated in alternating shots showing on the one hand, Aurore joining Illusio in the garden, and on the other, Alfred, cowering behind closed curtains in the darkened room in which he had been hiding from the protestors.

The persistence of Alfred's fantasies of escaping his downtrodden existence is expressed in the comment he makes on the magic tricks he observes through a chink in the curtain. Watching Illusio approach the bell jar covering the puny priapic plant, symbol of his impotence, he muses:

Qu'est-ce qu'il va faire avec ma boule de jardin? Il va peut-être faire pousser mon cèdre du Liban.

That it is only the lot of Aurore, however, that is to be changed is underlined in the final montage of shots which shows Illusio leaving the seedling untouched and sending the bell jar flying off into the sky, where it turns into a wedding bell ringing out amongst the stars. The death knell to Alfred's hopes of empowerment is rung by Mélanie, who tells her husband: 'Allons nous coucher. Demain le bureau.' The fact that this last line of dialogue is a repetition of Mélanie's line from the opening scene reinforces the sense of no escape. For Alfred nothing has changed; there is no way out of his oppressive, narrow existence.

The claustrophobic note on which the film ends is, contrary to expectation,

only very partially relieved by the flight into fantasy outcome of the Illusio/Aurore narrative strand, in that the manner in which the final image of the pair rumbling off in Illusio's caravan is shot undermines the positive connotations of freedom one would associate with such an ending. The image is that of the back of the caravan disappearing into darkness. Although the 'nothingness' enveloping the caravan could be seen as indicative of the impossibility of representing an alternative to the status quo, similar to that informing the ending of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, the earlier film at least produced a light-coloured no-man's land across which the protagonists moved freely. In so doing it avoided the unfortunate connotations of gloom and confinement contained in the final shots of *M. COCCINELLE*.

In the above analysis it was suggested that Alfred's impotence was directly related to his lack of social status and/or financial power, as this is what distinguishes him from powerful father-figures such as Zabel, aligning him rather with impotent son figures. A similar phenomenon can be observed in three populist films of the 1930s — *MENILMONTANT* (Guissart, 1936), *SIXIEME ETAGE* (Cloche, 1939) and *LA RUE SANS NOM* (Chenal, 1934) — each of which features one or more impotent father-figures whose lack of power is implicitly linked with his modest social origins. Two of these father-figures are coincidentally played by the actor who incarnated M. Coccinelle, Pierre Larquey.

The opening sequence of *MENILMONTANT* situates the film not just in a specific geographic location, but also in a whole mythology of proletarian Paris dear to Carné and Duvivier. The montage of shots showing the narrow streets and courtyards of Ménilmontant, accompanied by a voice-over situating Ménilmontant topographically — 'entre Père Lachaise et Belleville' — but also socially, as inhabited

by 'la classe laborieuse', is not dissimilar to the opening montage of shots of the Casbah in *PEPE LE MOKO* in that the Casbah is soon superimposed, at least in the imagination of Gaby and Pépé, with another working-class area of Paris, in their case Montmartre.

The voice-over continues:

Il était une fois dans le Ménilmontant de Paris trois vieux messieurs qui essayaient de vendre leurs jouets aux enfants. Et voici qu'il leur arrive le splendide malheur de réaliser un rêve.

This fairy tale tone is reminiscent of the story-telling of Mattéo and Amadée, the poet heros of *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS* and *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*. Like Mattéo and Amadée, the central characters of *MENILMONTANT* are dreamers. They are not however 'son' figures, but three old men - *le père Chinelle* (Gabrielle Signoret), *le père Jos* (Pierre Larquey) and *le père Martin* (Georges Bever). However, despite the titles of *père*, these old men do not conform to the image of the patriarch as the traditional holder of power in patriarchal society, but, as indicated in the opening sequence, are attributed characteristics normally associated with 'son' figures, notably a proletarian background and a childlike innocence which is at odds with the laws of capitalist society.

'Proletarian' is probably too political a term to use in that the three old men belong to the mythical rather than social class of *petit peuple*, having all the traits of characters from the populist *chansons réalistes*, as they trundle round Paris, selling their home-made windmills and jumping jacks to children in the *beaux quartiers*, and giving them away to the poor street urchins of Ménilmontant. Like the *fleuristes* and *blanchisseuses* who populate the scripts of Prévert, these old men represent the *petit métiers*, the disappearing world of artisans frequently presented as incarnating positive

values in opposition to the negative, alienating aspects of patriarchal capitalism in 1930s films.

The three fathers dream of creating a huge playground-cum-amusement park which will offer a safe, stimulating environment and alternative to the streets for the children of Ménilmontant. Like the heroes of *LA BELLE EQUIPE* and *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, they are only able to realise this dream through the suspension of the normal laws of capitalism. As in *LANGE*, the dream is funded by a benevolent capitalist, in this case the widowed owner of a biscuit factory, who is so grateful to the three old men for returning a lost diamond ring that she gives them a blank cheque. The fairy tale quality of this example of honesty bringing its own reward is underlined in the terms of the question put to the three virtuous men by the grateful widow: 'Si vous rencontriez une fée, qu'est-ce que vous lui demanderiez?'.

True to fairy-tale form, the *bonne fée* promptly disappears on a trip to India, leaving the three old men in charge of the money. This possession of economic power is however short-lived. Local politicians, mindful of the fact that there is an election coming up and a children's park will capture votes, decide to take over the project. They soon succeed in completely eliminating the three old men from any part in the enterprise, using the pretext that the park can only be built if the municipality provides the land, and the town will only sell a site to 'gens responsables, pas à de vieux rêveurs qui n'ont jamais su réussir leurs affaires.'

The toymaker's adopted son responds to another objection the town makes to their participation: 'Ils ne sont même pas contribuables', with the reply: 'Bien sûr, ils ne gagnent pas beaucoup mais ils contribuent leur coeur', an exchange which illustrates the two conflicting value systems; capitalism/wealth on the side of the city



fathers, opposed to the toymakers' humanitarian values. Capitalism wins. Not only are the three old men excluded from the project, the old shack in which they live is demolished to make way for the park they conceived and when the park is opened, they are denied entry to the inauguration ceremony because they do not have an invitation.

The structure of MENILMONTANT thus follows a pattern similar to that of LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, LA BELLE EQUIPE and PARADIS PERDU, in which the dreams of young men, which are in opposition to the prevailing capitalist system and work ethic, are realised in a space denoted as an imaginary realm in that it is either linked with a maternal figure, like the grateful widow or shown to be a regressive phase in the development of the central characters, or presented as an anomaly in the patriarchal order, or a mixture of the three. The variants here are firstly, the age of the dreamers, and secondly, the comparatively positive outcome of the film. If the representatives of the patriarchal order succeed in ousting the three old men from control of the park project, the project is nevertheless carried out, which implies that something positive can be done for youth within the patriarchal order.

The positive ending is undoubtedly part of the right-wing discourse of the film, particularly evident in parts of the dialogue which eulogise a kind of benevolent capitalism, as for example in the following exchange between two Ménilmontant women, when they see the grateful widow calling upon the toymakers:

- C'est elle qui paye tout ça.
- Elle a des milliers d'ouvriers dans ses usines. Ce sont eux qui payent.
- Allons donc, faut pas exagérer. Il y a des patrons qui ne font rien pour les ouvriers.

as well as in the memorable comment made by one of the toymakers about their adoptive son's boss — 'S'il y avait plus de patrons comme lui, il n'y aurait pas deux classes.'

Even within this right-wing discourse, however, the happy ending is not only brought about by a process clearly denoted as a fairy tale, but is also undermined by the menacing note contained in the last line of dialogue. On being informed they can't get in without an invitation, the adoptive son's fiancée observes: 'Ca n'a pas d'importance. Il y aura de la joie dans ce parc. Comme bientôt dans le monde.' Père Jos promptly quashes this optimistic idea with a cynical: 'Vous y croyez?'

While MENILMONTANT does not contain the notions of sterility present in the first two films analysed in this section, it is perhaps worth noting a certain dislocation in parent/child relationships within the film. Despite the honorary title of *père*, none of the three old men have actually fathered a child. They look after the welfare of children who are not theirs, including their adoptive son, who was an *enfant trouvé*, and who is himself repeating the pattern of caring for a child which is not his by marrying a girl who is responsible for her little orphaned sister.

These unorthodox family structures can be compared with the 'orphan' theme in the Carné/Prévert films; in QUAI DES BRUMES for example the cynical loner Jean finds an *âme soeur* in Nelly and a replacement 'family' in the motley crew populating Panama's shack, while in LE JOUR SE LEVE the two *enfants de l'assistance*, François and Françoise are, by their very names, clearly denoted as soulmates. In each case, these elective affinities provide the nurturing environment traditionally the province of the family which allows the character to progress, in contrast to the accredited 'family' within each film, the legal guardian and the

putative father of Nelly and Françoise respectively, who are depicted as corrupt and self-seeking and linked with a destructive environment.

The reservations implied by the muted happy-end notwithstanding, the honorary fathers of MENILMONTANT succeed by and large in improving the lot of the up and coming generation, unlike both the father-figures in the Carné/Prévert films and the Pierre Larquey character, Hochepot, in Maurice Cloche's 1939 film, SIXIEME ETAGE, who ultimately proves as deficient as Zabel or Valentin in caring for his daughter, but deficient in a different way. Hochepot resembles Larquey's previous incarnation as *le père Jos*, being a well-meaning but impotent father, whose lack of power is in relation to his lack of social status. This distinguishes him from the patriarchs of the Carné/Prévert films, who can be equated with the corrupt father-figures of the LA FIN DU JOUR, PARTIR and L'HOMME A L'HISPANO, in that they occupy a position of power in social or psychoanalytical terms (wealth, mastery of language and law) and their deficiency is a function of their evil intent to pursue their perverse pleasure at the expense of the younger generation.

SIXIEME ETAGE falls into the same category of populist film as MENILMONTANT, in that it also takes place among the *petit peuple* of Paris, this time those of Montmartre (as a couple of shots of a painted backdrop of the Sacré Coeur remind us). Again the film is reminiscent of certain aspects of LE CRIME DE M. LANGE in that it takes place exclusively in a typically Parisian tenement governed over by Florelle.

Like the occupants of the courtyard in LE CRIME DE M. LANGE, the inhabitants of the eponymous sixth floor (the floor usually occupied by the poorest tenants) form a mutually supportive close-knit community, linked together, as her

name suggests, by the Florelle character, Mme Lescalier, who plays the role of a sort of mother hen, relaying gossip, watching the comings and goings of visitors to the tenement, and watching out for the welfare of her neighbours, in particular the young Edwige, a sickly adolescent who lives alone with her father Hochepot, a kindly but chaotic writer of popular novels. As in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, the impression of community is reinforced by the camerawork, which links the individual spaces occupied by the tenants, following them not just along corridors and upstairs, but also panning from balcony to balcony as neighbours cross from one living space to the next, or converse out of the window.

As a result of her (unspecified) illness, Edwige has been confined to her father's apartment, but because of the fluidity of movement on the sixth floor, this confinement has not meant seclusion. As well as the motherly attentions of Mme Lescalier, she received frequent visits from her neighbour, Georges, whom she refers to by the somewhat infantile name of Jojo, and describes as being a brother to her. His feelings towards her are however something more than fraternal and he asks her father for her hand in marriage. Hochepot refuses on the grounds that, because she has been confined to the tenement, she has not had the chance to meet other young men whom she might really fall in love with.

She does not however have to leave the tenement to meet the man of her life. He comes to her in the shape of Pierre Brasseur, who plays Jonval, a student from a wealthy family who has decided to slum it for a while in Montmartre. He provides an external element of attraction for Edwige in the somewhat incestuous sixth floor community, but these attractions prove to be fatal, in that Jonval embodies the negative element of lack of authenticity usually associated with verbose father-figures,

as opposed to the silent authenticity of the *petit peuple*.

Thus, the seduction is presented as a game, in which Edwige encourages him and which begins as follows:

E : J'aimerais que vous me fassiez la cour — seulement pour rire, bien entendu.  
 J : Ce n'est qu'un jeu?  
 E : Ce ne devrait être qu'un jeu pour vous.  
 J : Quel rouge à lèvres vous mettez?  
 E : Devinez.  
 Jonval kisses her. E : Ce n'est plus un jeu?  
 J : C'est le jeu.

When it emerges that the 'game' has resulted in Edwige falling pregnant, the sixth floor rally round. M. and Mme Lescalier put pressure on Jonval, who swiftly agrees, if without great enthusiasm, to marry Edwige. Edwige however, has become aware of his lack of integrity and refuses his offer in the following exchange:

E : Vous n'aimez personne. Vous n'avez jamais aimé personne. Jurez-moi que vous m'aimez vraiment.  
 J : C'est tellement compliqué tout ça.  
 E : Non, c'est simple. On aime ou on n'aime pas. Je vous plains. Ca doit être terrible de n'aimer personne.

And so SIXIEME ETAGE not only takes up the *simple/compliqué* terminology beloved of Prévert, it also distributes it along the same class lines, the *petit peuple*, being all that is simple and straightforward, the bourgeoisie treacherous and *compliqué*, a distinction which figures not only in the Carné/Prévert films, where the eloquent Zabel and Valentin torment the strong silent Gabin heroes, but also in other films such as LA FIN DU JOUR, where the waitress Jeanette is characterised as devoid of artifice - Marny tells her: 'Tu es toute simple. L'amour ne t'a pas encore appris à mettre du rouge à lèvres' - and so provides a positive contrast to her seducer St Clair, who woos her with stories reflecting the fantasy world in which he lives.

The vital distinction between St Clair/Valentin/Zabel on the one hand and

Jonval, played by Pierre Brasseur, on the other, is of course one of age. In endowing a young bourgeois with the negative characteristics of elderly father-figures, *SIXIEME ETAGE* provides a perfect illustration of the fact that the hero and villain role distribution in the French cinema of the 1930s is dependent on class/ economic power as well as on age,<sup>25</sup> a fact borne by the bourgeois 'son' figure having as a concomitant a 'father'-figure of more modest social standing who is denied the power normally associated with 'father' status in patriarchal society.

Thus, the bourgeois Jonval's sexual potency is in contrast to the poor artist Hocheput's social impotence, in the sense that this benevolent father is powerless to give his daughter the opportunity he was aware she needed to break away from the community and go into the outside world. His failure results in the film ending on the same notions of claustrophobia and confinement which permeate films depicting corrupt father-figures.

As a result of her pregnancy Edwige falls ill again, and the doctor, warned by the tenants not to tell the truth to Hocheput, attributes her illness to her confinement in the tenement: 'Elle est liée à cet immeuble, dont elle ne sort pas. Les autres jeunes filles sortent, elles mènent leur vie, mais Edwige reste là.' Edwige herself resigns herself to continuing her existence among what she wistfully refers to as 'Le sixième, mon petit monde à moi', and decides to marry the faithful Jojo to protect her father from the truth.

The community depicted in *SIXIEME ETAGE* thus has the same ambiguous function as the Casbah population in *PEPE LE MOKO*, described by Vincendeau as 'both a liberating presence (it is comforting, supportive and protects Pépé from the police) and a repressive one; it is, in effect, a prison.'<sup>26</sup> Vincendeau adds the

interpretation that:

The strong identification of the Casbah with women designates this structure as the classical Oedipal dilemma of the (male) child's relation to the mother.<sup>27</sup>

The drama depicted in *SIXIEME ETAGE* is of the same order of ideas, in that Edwige's trajectory is unmistakably one of regression. Unable to escape a supportive but stifling maternal community she marries her childhood playmate with the childish name, who is like a brother to her. The presence of a father-figure in the maternal world of the sixth floor suggests that this regression can be interpreted as a female version of the Oedipal conflict. That Edwige's inability to solve her Oedipal conflict is as deadly for her as for Pépé is indicated in the last shot of the film, which shows the community driving off to her wedding in a long black car with wreaths of white flowers lying in the back window. It is a shot as ambiguous as the final sequence of *M. COCCINELLE*, in that the car bears a distinct resemblance to a hearse. In both films, the ostensible signification of the ending, that of new beginnings, is undermined by an underlying notion of confinement.

Hochepot's failure as a father would appear to lie in his integration in the maternal world of Mme Lescalier. He is never shown outside the building, and, in psychological terms, his profession of writer links him to the imaginary realm. He is therefore unable to offer his daughter an alternative to this maternal world. Thus, *SIXIEME ETAGE* presents the same dilemma as the films studied in preceding chapters, in that it shows a member of the younger generation trapped in the imaginary realm, unable or unwilling to accede to the realm of the symbolic, which is shown as the site of inauthenticity and alienation. The only variation on this familiar pattern is that the positive values of kindness and authenticity are here

invested in an impotent father-figure, who is linked with the regressive imaginary realm, and the negative value of inauthenticity is associated with a son figure. This is indicative of the importance of the social referent underlying the psychoanalytical structure, which links the realm of the father with those classes holding power in patriarchal society, the individual representatives of which are not always 'fathers' in terms of age.

This relationship between power and social class in the cinema of the 1930s is demonstrated in *LA RUE SANS NOM*, which portrays three father-figures whose failure with regard to their families is part of the general atmosphere of poverty and despair which pervades the film. *LA RUE SANS NOM* is generally considered a forerunner of the poetic-realist films of the late 1930s with its depressing depiction of the lives of the working-class in a slum district of Paris. It has however stylistically little in common with its successors in that it places the accent on realism rather than poetry, giving an unstylized portrayal of squalor unlike anything in the work of Carné or Duvivier. Whereas Carné happily recreated in the studio idealized, sanitized versions of working class communities in films such as *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *HOTEL DU NORD*, Chenal showed the demolition of run-down slums and the consequent disintegration of the slum communities in *LA RUE SANS NOM*, thus painting an accurate picture of the social realities of the period

Thematically too it diverges from the Carné/Prévert *films à thèse*, in which working class communities serve as repositories of all that Prévert finds positive in human nature in opposition to the bourgeois capitalist baddies. IN *LA RUE SANS NOM*, the only external evil lies in the faceless threat of the bulldozer, not in one of Jules Berry's villain impersonations, otherwise social ills come from within, from



children gone wrong or from the strains inherent in a life of poverty and hard work. The fathers' 'impotence' is directly linked to their hopeless struggle to provide for their families in such a milieu.

The film opens with the arrival of a former criminal, Finocle, and his daughter Noa in the *rue sans nom*. After an absence of many years abroad, Finocle had discovered his daughter earning her living by prostitution, and having decided to take her away from that life, comes to seek refuge with his former accomplice Mahoul who lives in the *rue sans nom*. He promises the girl a new and better existence, telling her: 'Tu auras des chambres de toutes les couleurs, un parc pour te promener, des perroquets, des plafonds dorés.'

The drab, dirty, poverty-stricken reality of the street provides a sharp contrast with this colourful picture, and this initial disappointment prefigures Finocle's eventual inability to provide a new existence for Noa. One of Mahoul's neighbours falls in love with the beautiful girl he had admired from afar, and asks Finocle for her hand in marriage. Finocle refuses on the grounds he wants 'un genre avec un faux col', and this bourgeois aspiration is Noa's undoing. Left at the Mahouls, she is raped by the son Manu who then denounces her father to the police, in order to be able to make Noa work the streets for him. Mahoul warns Finocle, who refuses to flee, believing he can buy Manu off. The police arrive, Mahoul denounces himself as former accomplice, and the two men walk off handcuffed together into the sunset. The last two lines of dialogue are Finocle's question: 'Ma fille et Manu. Ce n'était pas vrai, euh?', and Mahoul's reply: 'Non, ce n'était pas vrai.' The father is thus left with the illusion of his daughter's virtue, while the daughter is left in the same situation as that in which he had found her.

The notion of hopelessness, of the impossibility of changing one's fate, is also suggested in the comparison of the two men's lives. On the evening Finocle arrives, Mahoul compares himself with his former comrade, finding that he himself looks much older, which he attributes to his years of working in a factory to support his family. But despite the different paths the men have taken, the one abandoning his daughter and leading a life of crime, the other doing his duty as hard-working father and honest citizen, the end result is the same: both are powerless to prevent their children going wrong, becoming a prostitute and a pimp, respectively. Their powerlessness within their families is matched by their lack of authority in patriarchal society. The last shot of them both in handcuffs brands them (with little justification in the case of Mahoul) as criminals, hence indicates their exclusion from the site of Law and so places them in the position generally held by 'sons'.

The powerlessness of Finocle and Mahoul is reflected in the most poignant image of impotence in the film, that provided by Mahoul's neighbour, Johannieu. Johannieu becomes obsessed by the beauty of Noa to the detriment of his family responsibilities, as is made clear in his wife's reproach: 'Tu approches la cinquantaine, t'as jamais été beau, et tu dépenses tes sous à faire le rupin tandis que les enfants n'ont pas de quoi manger', when he spends money he can ill afford on sprucing up his appearance. The obsession gradually takes on the form of a paralysis, whereby Johannieu ceases entirely to work for his family, spending his whole day in an armchair looking out of the window in the hope of catching a glimpse of Noa.

His workload then falls on his wife, who, unable to play the role of breadwinner and homemaker at the same time, is obliged to leave the latter role to her neighbour, *la Mahoule*, who, in a gesture of female solidarity, offers to take over

the housework, and to her own children, the eldest of whom is required to look after his younger siblings. It is through this older son that Johannieu's failure in the role of father is made clear. The boy falls ill as a result of his lack of leisure and fresh air, and during his illness it is Mahoul who takes over the role of father, as is made clear in a cut from Mahoul at the boy's bedside to a close-up of Johannieu sitting immobile and indifferent to the family drama in his chair, and then a reverse-shot of a fetishistic symbol of his obsession, Noa's stockings hung up at the window opposite.

Mahoul amuses the sick child with a story not dissimilar in its exoticism to that told to Noa by Finocle:

Demain, tu seras guéri et tu feras un long voyage que j'ai fait il y a longtemps, aux pays des nègres, et des chinois... Je voudrais refaire ce voyage pour que tu voies tout ça. Allez, on s'embarque....

At which point he realizes the child is dead.

LA RUE SANS NOM does therefore bear a certain thematic if not aesthetic resemblance to the later poetic-realist films in as much as that it portrays a miserable, depressing world from which there is no way out. The only escape is into an imaginary world, which soon reveals itself as either illusory or synonymous with death. There is however an essential difference between this 1934 film and those made later in the decade. The unhealthy claustrophobic atmosphere does not refer here to a vague existential *angst*, which on closer analysis appears to be linked to the patriarchal capitalist order as represented by various corrupt father; it is rather a realistic reflection of the unattractive aspects of proletarian life of which the father-figures are as much victims as their families, and of the impossibility of escaping from that *milieu*.

If Manu, who rapes and intends to prostitute Noa, is a more potent figure than Johannieu, who can only stare at her, frozen in impotent admiration, it is only that Manu hopes in this way to discover an alternative to the poverty-ridden existence led by his father. But by making her work for him he is simply repeating in a different form the pattern of life in the Johannieu household, in which it is the wife who supports the family. Several scenes in the film indicate that this is indeed a general pattern, in that it is the women who form the backbone of the community. La Johannieu's cry to Noa on the death of her son: 'C'est toi qui as tué mon fils. Tu souffriras à ton tour' also suggests that the younger generation will simply repeat the destiny of their elders.

If in LA RUE SANS NOM the pervasive atmosphere of hopelessness and the impotence of the working-class father-figures are inextricably linked with the unattractive conditions of working life portrayed in the film, it could be argued that the recurrence of these themes in later films like SIXIEME ETAGE, which offer the mythologized spectacle of a picturesque *petit peuple* celebrating the iconic *14 juillet* in the shadow of the Sacré Coeur, may also reflect to some extent the wider political reality underlying the individual situation depicted in LA RUE SANS NOM, namely the inability of the Third Republic to undertake any social reform on behalf of the urban proletariat for the various reasons — the brevity of cabinets, the disproportionate influence of the rural population and propertied classes — outlined above.

Similarly, the corrupt, exploitative bourgeois father-figures, who had as their real life counterparts the crooked politicians and financiers involved in the various financial scandals which beset the Third Republic, are perhaps indicative of a certain

lack of faith in the integrity of the ruling class, or more generally in political and social structures ill-equipped to deal with contemporary issues. Certainly, it would appear unlikely that the repeated inscription in a variety of films of the 1930s of a diegetic society characterised as claustrophobic, frequently accompanied by a desire on the part of the younger generation wish to escape, is not in some way linked to the contemporary reality of a *société bloquée* in which the vested interests the mature, middle-class incumbents of positions of authority were detrimental to the advancement of the young and the socially disadvantaged alike.

## CHAPTER FOUR : NOTES

1. Maurice Larkin, *France since the Popular Front: government and people 1936—1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 36.
2. Ibid.
3. Larkin, p. 37.
4. Ibid.
5. Larkin, p. 45.
6. Larkin, p. 36.
7. Larkin, p. 8.
8. Larkin, p. 9.
9. Larkin, p. 11.
10. S. Hoffman (ed), *In Search of France* (New York, 1963) quoted in Larkin, p. 1.
11. Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French Cinema of the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) p. 225.
12. Andrew Samuels (ed), *The Father — Contemporary Jungian Perspectives*, (London: Free Association Books, 1985) p. 30.
13. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente; le cinéma des Français 1929-1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) p. 230.
14. cf. Marcel Carné, *La Vie à Belles Dents* (Paris: Vuarnet, 1979) p. 174.
15. Jeancolas, p. 191.
16. Emile Zola, *La Bête Humaine* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1972) p. 98.
17. Zola, p. 98.
18. Zola, p. 99.
19. Jeancolas, p. 273.
20. Jeancolas, p. 272.

21. Jeancolas, p. 273.
22. MONSIEUR COCCINELLE was chosen as the film with which to open the VIII<sup>e</sup> Colloque Cinéma et Histoire / Histoire du Cinéma organised by the Institut Jean Vigo and the Cinémathèque de Toulouse in November 1987, the subject of which was 'La petite bourgeoisie dans le cinéma français'.
23. In contrast to the straight-laced Anglo-saxon cinema, the French cinema of the 1930s dealt with the theme of male impotence in a refreshingly open manner. It seems to have appealed to that same ribald Gallic humour which found in the notion *cocu* a source of endless amusement, and it actually formed the basis of one comedy, VOUS N'AVEZ RIEN A DECLARER? (Joannon, 1936), the plot of which revolves around a young man's inability to consummate his marriage.
24. Marcel Oms, 'Monsieur Coccinelle de Bernard-Deschamps' *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque* (50), 63-66, (p. 64).
25. In this it resembles Marc Allégret's 1938 film, ENTREE DES ARTISTES, which provides a similar example of this point in the character of François, a bourgeois acting student and sometime Don Juan, whose artifice is contrasted with the authenticity of Isabelle, a young, orphaned *blanchisseuse*.
26. Vincendeau, p. 352.
27. Vincendeau, p. 352.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Father Figures and the Law :

*l'Etrange Monsieur Raimu.*



One of the basic thematic structures used in French cinema of the 1930s to denote the concept of a *société bloquée* discussed in the previous chapter is that of the non-coincidence of law with the idea of justice, as demonstrated in the repeated criminalization of morally righteous 'sons' by corrupt but socially respectable father-figures. It was suggested that the psychoanalytical interpretation of this phenomenon — the inability of son figures to pass through the Oedipal phase and accede to the realm of the father, the site of language and law — has a corollary in the ambient social conditions, which promoted the interests of elderly males at the expense of the younger generation, the social referent being underscored in the fact that the father/son division is frequently overlaid by a bourgeois/proletarian division.

This chapter will examine the variations upon this theme offered in three films, *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE* (Colombier, 1933), *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* (Grémillon, 1938) and *GRIBOUILLE* (Allégret, 1937), all of which deal expressly with the ambivalent position vis-à-vis the Law of a father-figure, played in each case by Jules Raimu, an actor who made his way up through the *caf'conc's* of his native Midi and the *Boulevard* of Paris to dominate the French stage and screen from the mid-1920s to his death in 1946.

The role with which Raimu is most closely associated is of course that of César in the Pagnol trilogy, a work which, as foregoing analyses have shown, presents, in distinction to the other texts discussed in detail, a (male) ideal world in which patriarchy is a relatively unproblematic concept, women are kept in their place, younger rivals driven from theirs, and the family/community reigns supreme, a pattern also detected by Vincendeau in another Raimu/Pagnol opus, *LA FEMME DU*

BOULANGER.<sup>1</sup> If a closer analysis reveals cracks in the edifice, this is in no way detracts from the positive attitude to the father-figure which emanates from these films, a positive attitude which is noticeably lacking in the other texts.

A similarly positive inscription of the Raimu father-figure in films by directors other than Pagnol would suggest that it is not just a function of Pagnol's particular world-view, but is also, at least in part, a manifestation of, to borrow Vincendeau's term, the 'star-text',<sup>2</sup> i.e. the factors which an individual star, by the strength of her/his persona, imposes on the plot of each film in which s/he appears. This chapter will address both this issue of the star-text and, with regard to *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR* and *GRIBOUILLE*, the resulting question of how a positive inscription of a patriarch can be squared with the negative inscription of patriarchal society predominating in the non-Pagnol melodramas of the 1930s.

In *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTÉ* (Colombier, 1933), which, despite melodramatic elements, is predominantly a comedy, Raimu plays the role of Tafard, a possibly crooked financier who escapes from the Santé, where he has been held pending the investigation of his affairs, and takes up a post of nightwatchman in the corsetry firm of Mme Génissier and son under a false name. Adept at manipulating people as well as managing financial affairs, he rapidly becomes commercial manager, transforms the old-fashioned family firm into a modern enterprise and improves the turn-over a hundred fold, partly by the introduction of modern working methods and equipment, but mostly by using the firm as a cover for gun-running and other shady deals. When the truth about these extra sources of income emerges, Tafard leaves the Génissier firm to set up his own bank, funded by the sale of shares in non-existent mines. After selling off all his own shares, Tafard discovers that the

mines really exist and gives himself up to the police, in order that the revelation of his true identity should destroy confidence in the shares and enable him to buy them back. The police inform him however that, after due investigation, his affairs proved to be sound, and only his breaking jail can be held against him. Tafard insists nevertheless on a brief stay in the Santé, from where he directs the setting up of a new business.

Apart from the fine comic performance of Raimu, the main point of interest in the film lies in the illustration it provides of some the aspects of 1930s French society outlined at the beginning of Chapter Four. The firm Génissier before the arrival of Tafard, gives a graphic example of, to quote Larkin, 'the elderly composition and ethos of much of French business management.'<sup>3</sup> The firm is run by Mme Génissier *mère* who treats family and employees alike in an almost feudal fashion — the first scene at the shop shows her giving an employee twenty francs and a New Year's kiss on the forehead in time-honoured tradition, then demanding that her daughter-in-law remove from display the frilly suspender belt she had made, on the grounds that 'La maison Génissier fabrique des corsets à basques. Tant que je vivrai elle continuera à fabriquer les corsets à basques.'

The derisive attitude of the seamstresses towards the unattractive garments they produce would suggest that Mme Génissier was not taking account of market demand. Nevertheless, her resistance to modern products is matched only by her reluctance to install modern equipment, as may be judged from the old-fashioned appearance of shop and workrooms and the quaint speaking tube apparatus with which she communicates with her accounts clerk - or would if it were not broken. This, plus her habit of keeping her entire savings in bank notes in the office safe, make her the

epitome of the family business proprietor in the 1930s France, described by Charles Kindleberger as follows:

They minimize risks rather than maximize profits, and hence save in liquid form as insurance against adversity rather than invest in product or process innovation. They produce to fill orders rather than for stock, They are characterized by secrecy and mistrust; they fear banks, government and even the consuming public.<sup>4</sup>

If the Génissier establishment reflected the actual state of many companies in the early 1930s, the character of Tafard could be seen as anticipating the Stavisky affair of 1933-34, though Stavisky was merely one in a series, albeit the best-known, of the financial scandals which beset the Third Republic between the wars, one of which, the *affaire Hanau*,<sup>5</sup> was the talk of the town in April 1931, the date of first performance of the play on which the 1933 film was based.

Nevertheless, with hindsight the following exchange between Tafard and his ex-mistress after his escape from prison:

- Ils vont te chercher.  
- Oui, mais faiblement. Il y a trop de gens que mon procès embête. C'est pour ça que mon instruction dure depuis si longtemps. Tiens, la semaine dernière pour leur faire peur, j'ai demandé à être entendu par la commission d'enquête. Il paraît que ça a fait un refus là-bas au palais bourbeux ...

cannot fail to recall the Stavisky affair, with its unresolved question of whether Stavisky's suicide was not in fact government commissioned murder, because of fears that if he were 'brought to book, his trial might reveal that Radical politicians were involved in his slippery financial enterprises.'<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the murder, the press did in fact reveal that the affair had been blocked in the judicial process eighteen times, a revelation which brought down the cabinet of Camille Chautemps, the brother-in-law of the *procureur général*.

If the Tafard character bears some resemblance to contemporary actors on the financial scene, he also shares a considerable number of traits with the fictional father-figures analysed so far. Like the Jules Berry characters, Valentin and Batala he possesses the power of language, which he uses to manipulate all and sundry, to the extent that like Valentin, he appears almost a sort of magician, able to influence people's actions by the power of his words. This is amply demonstrated in the first sequence, in which he escapes from the Santé by hypnotising his guard, sending him to sleep with an account of his case:

...le juge d'instruction persiste à me dire, M. Tafard, vous avez hypnotisé les gens de la finance. Hypnotiser. Voyons, gardien, est-ce que j'ai une tête à endormir les gens?

the only response to which is a resounding clunk as the guard's head hits the table.

As Génissier's commercial manager, he uses his way with words to boost sales through publicity, in the form of letters from satisfied customers — which he dictates to Amédée, Mme Génissier's clerk and devoted factotum, himself. To Amédée's scandalised protest, 'C'est un mensonge', he replies 'Non, Monsieur, c'est de la littérature', thus placing himself on the same plane as that other spinner of tales with little regard for objective truth, Valentin.

Tafard's attitude to the law is equally cavalier. On the one hand, his expert knowledge of its finer points and/or gift of the gab enable him to emerge unscathed from his brush with the police, who have discovered that he is trafficking arms but who cave in before the following tirade:

Faut-il vous rappeler les articles 1, 2 et 3 de la loi du 14 août 1885 sur le trafic d'engins non-chargés que vous avez singulièrement l'air de confondre avec l'article 1 du loi de 24 mai 1834 sur l'obtention des armes de guerre...

On the other hand he shows a complete disregard for the system of law in force, setting himself up as an equal with the examining magistrate — he tells the guard: 'Le juge veut me convaincre que je suis coupable. Je veux le convaincre que je suis innocent. On n'en sortira jamais.' — and demanding to be judged by his own frame of reference, the figures quoted in the stock exchange:

Si vous voulez me connaître, ce n'est ni au juge d'instruction, ni au procureur de la République qu'il faut demander des renseignements. Non, il faut aller à la rue Vivienne, où il y a un grand tableau noir où l'on inscrit des chiffres. Et là on vous dirait qui je suis et ce que je vaudrais.

Thus, although Tafard, like some of the corrupt father-figures mentioned in preceding chapters, Zabel in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, for instance, or Noblet in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, situates himself on the side of the Law with little apparent justification, there is a significant difference in the two cases. Whereas the father-figures dealt with up till now have been mere hypocrites, blatantly breaking the moral code they seek to impose on others, Tafard justifies his acts by reference to his own code of values, a position which remains morally ambiguous till the end of the film.

He does however conform to the established pattern of patriarchal behaviour in that, like César in the *Marius* trilogy, and Chervin in *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, Tafard places himself at the head of a 'family' and attracts the wife of the son. The family in question is that formed by Mme Génisse, her son Hector, daughter-in-law, Fernande and faithful accountant, Amédée, who, for the purposes of the argument, can be considered to function as a weak father-figure in the family firm.

Before the arrival of Tafard, the firm is run by the despotic Mme Génissier, who treats her family as employees, a condition accepted by her weak and compliant

son. There is therefore a variation from the usual pattern, in that the son is already emasculated by an overbearing mother, and therefore no rival to the dominant father-figure, who supplants instead the weak 'father', Amédée, within the family firm. He does this by refusing to be his subordinate when initially offered promotion, creating for himself a post which overlaps with Amédée's functions, and insisting that henceforth the firm be run according to his, Tafard's, methods - a point he puts across by haranguing the family, and in particular Amédée, with such force that the latter falls off his seat, literally swept away by Tafard's command of language. The triumph is underlined by the feminization of Amédée, who, in the dictation scene described above is reduced to the traditionally female role of secretary, as is underlined in Tafard's parting shot, 'Je vous baise la main.' This is in contrast to Tafard's virility, which is emphasised in the scene by his smoking a big, fat cigar.

Tafard's virility is also indicated in the traditional manner, by his having possessed or having had the offer of the women 'belonging' to or desired by all his potential male 'rivals' i.e. Amédée, Hector, and his own younger side-kick, Zwerch. This is emphasised by the successive arrival of all three women, each with a plan to save him, in the room where Tafard is besieged by the police after his decision to go back to jail. His sixteen year old secretary, who had refused to go out with Zwerch on the grounds she was saving herself for the boss is followed by Claire, Tafard's ex-mistress, who had introduced him into the Génissier firm and is now engaged to Amédée, who underlines Tafard's virility and his own lack of it with the wistful comment: 'J'espérais que nous arriverions au mariage tous les deux purs et sans tâche. Il n'y aura que moi.' Finally, Fernande, Hector's wife, arrives and proposes that they run off together. It would thus appear that the pattern already detected in

QUAI DES BRUMES, PEPE LE MOKO, L'ENTRAINEUSE, PRIX DE BEAUTE, LA MAISON DU MALTAIS and MARIUS/FANNY/ CESAR — older man emasculates younger rival and/or steals the girl because of his superior economic power — also applies to CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE.

If some of Tafard's traits are already familiar, so too is the image of a stifling society given in CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE. Just as Nelly, in QUAI DES BRUMES, fled from the oppressive atmosphere chez Zabel, so another rebellious daughter figure, Fernande, complains about life with another bourgeois shopkeeper, Mme Génissier, in similar terms, telling Claire: 'J'étouffe ici. Vivre dans une cage... quand je pense qu'il y a des femmes chics qui ont tout ce qu'elles veulent. Tout ce qui fait la vie belle quand on est jeune et pas trop laide — le luxe, quoi.'

These words are given all the more impact by the movements of the camera and of the actress, who is filmed from within the shop looking out of the window towards a world she cannot reach, which increases the notion of lack of liberty. Moreover, on her walk towards the window, she stops to look at a whale-boned corset displayed on the wall, commenting 'Regardez-moi ça' — thereby creating a link between the notion of the cage in which she is imprisoned and the restricting clothing within which women of a past generation were imprisoned and which Mme Génissier *mère* continues to produce.

Thus, just as the oppressive atmosphere in QUAI DES BRUMES has a sociological referent in the events of that period (the pervasive aura of death being linked symbolically with colonial violence), so the stifling atmosphere here is attributed to the 'elderly ethos' reigning *chez* Génissier, which as suggested above, is a reflection of the prevailing ethos in businesses throughout France in the inter-war



years.

Just as Nelly sought to flee Zabel in the arms of a small-time gangster, Fernande tries to escape her narrow, impoverished existence by borrowing from a money lender, a move which, like Nelly's proves a leap from the frying pan into the fire. She gets increasingly deeper in debt until saved by Tafard, who appears to take on a role similar to that played by Valentin in the life of Françoise in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*. Just as that *beau parleur* brightens up Françoise's drab existence with picture post cards and tales of the Côte d'Azur so Tafard promises to transform Fernande's dull routine into the life of luxury she dreams of. Her life is then indeed transformed from one day to the next, as Tafard, by dint of frenzied wheeling and dealing, arranges for her to have a box at the Opera, and the evening dress and fur in which to appear there. The Cinderella-like quality of the transformation is emphasised in her words of thanks to her benefactor: 'Vous êtes une fée'. These words may appear to situate Tafard on the same illusionist plane as Valentin but subsequent developments show that this is not the case. Thanks to the methods he employs to modernise the firm of Génissier, the turnover rises a hundredfold and Fernande's dreams of luxury become a daily reality.

Despite certain apparent similarities, there is therefore an appreciable difference between Tafard and the father-figures encountered so far who conform to one of two main patterns: unproblematic patriarchy in Pagnol's idealized world or corrupt father-figures in a menacing and/or stifling world. In *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, the corrupt father-figure/stifling world, which have hitherto been part of the same causal nexus, suddenly part company, and a new pattern emerges, in which the claustrophobic atmosphere is attributed to an overbearing mother rather

than a corrupt father, and the morally ambiguous father-figure is not only unrelentingly sympathetic but is also positioned in the text as the solution to, not the source of, the problem.

Whereas Nelly is saved from the frying pan/fire syndrome by the young male lead, who is on the side of moral virtue in opposition to the corrupt Zabel, whose licentious designs on Nelly are neither reciprocated nor validated in the text, Fernande's weak idiot of a husband is a totally inconsequential figure, who figures with his mother and the whale bone corsets on the list of impediments to Fernande's happiness ('Vous vous rendez compte de mon existence? Vivre ici parmi les corsets à basques, avec une belle-mère avare et un mari stupide') and the spectator can only sympathise with Fernande's choice of Tafard over her spouse when she pleads with him to run off with her at the end of the film.

Just as Tafard transforms Fernande's life, so too he revitalises the Génissier firm, turning an ailing if not moribund family business into a modern concern, with the latest equipment, fittings, products and sales techniques. Everything that was in a state of stasis is now set in motion. The once peaceful corridors of the *maison Génissier* reverberate with the comings and goings of Tafard's side-kick, as he buys, sells and swaps to the refrain of Tafard's shouts of 'Grouille-toi!'. More importantly, the 1000 franc notes which had been lying dormant in a drawer are also set in motion, as Tafard persuades Mme Génissier to invest in a series of shady deals. Tafard's plaintive comment on this subject:

Quand je regarde la maison Génissier, cette vieille maison où l'or entassé depuis tant de lustres sommeille sans produire, je souffre...<sup>7</sup>

can of course be taken to refer to the very real problem of lack of investment which

contributed to the depressed state of the economy and the poor industrial performance of France in the 1930s.

Tafard is therefore presented as a vital force, taking on the role which should logically have gone to a younger man, of a new broom sweeping away the old ideas which prevented prosperity. However, the morality of his measures remains questionable throughout the film, as the spectator oscillates between two positions offered by the text. On the one hand, Tafard is introduced in the first sequence of the film as an inmate of the Santé, a financier suspected of corruption, and the series of shady deals he conducts throughout the film culminating in the selling of shares in a fictitious mine, do nothing to dispel this first notion of culpability. On the other hand, there are his protestations of innocence, backed up by his ex-mistress, Claire, who describes him as *'un financier qu'on disait véreux mais que je savais honnête'*, and given weight by his reluctance to accept the life savings which the Génissiers' cook thrusts upon him, and which he returns the following day with interest and firm instructions not to play the stock exchange again.

On the whole, the spectator succumbs to the wit and charm with which Raimu endows Tafard, and, like the screen characters, replies *'Oui'* to Tafard's repeated question: *'Avez-vous confiance en moi?'* This confidence is vindicated at the end of the film when the police inform Tafard that his affairs have been found to be in order, thus reintegrating the character into the prevailing legal order. And yet...

The manner in which Tafard is shown to conduct his affairs throughout the film militates against this neat conclusion, as the spectator is by now not only convinced that Tafard is a law unto himself, but also sufficiently under the spell of his charm to be indifferent to the social sanctioning of his acts. The notion that Tafard

operates in a way which has little to do with the existing social and legal order in France is enhanced in the text by a series of references to America and the American cinema, culminating in the scene in which Tafard announces his departure from the firm Génissier by sweeping into the board room, flanked by his side-kick and his secretary, in a style obviously modelled upon Hollywood gangster movies.

Tafard is therefore placed firmly on the level of illusion, operating not just as fairy godmother for Fernande, but also as a fantasy figure for the spectator. And the fantasies he embodies are right-wing anarchistic in nature. His tirade against the existing business methods of the Génissier firm, which sweeps Amédée off his seat, resembles the impassioned rhetoric of the right in France and Germany, while the following explanation of his motivation:

Jouir de la vie, pour moi....c'est être le plus fort, c'est jongler avec le risque, c'est disputer aux êtres leur bien le plus cher, l'argent. Et le leur arracher justement en spéculant sur leur avarice et leur égoïsme... C'est encore mon meilleur plaisir de rendre cet argent à sa destination première après qu'il a changé de mains parce que je l'ai voulu.

can scarcely be described as the outpourings of a socialist conscience.

And so despite the comic atmosphere, the happy ending and the pervasive charm of Raimu, *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE* leaves one with a certain unease. If *QUAI DES BRUMES* was considered 'depressing' with its sober tones and ill-starred love story and accused of being a 'fascist' film, in that it showed characters ripe for a dictatorship, it at least had the merit of equating the colonialist extension of capitalism with violent and destructive social forces and of presenting a concept of moral integrity, symbolised in the theme of doomed love, which functioned as an ideal by which to condemn the evil forces which destroy it.

In *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, on the other hand, there are no discernible moral concepts, no aim beyond that of achieving vast profits and no value other than money. If Mme Génissier initially recoils in horror from the 'indecent' suspender belt Fernande suggests she sell, she is happy to market scanty items of underwear in vast quantities when convinced it will improve turnover, just as her initial show of outrage at Tafard's gun-running activities does not prevent her investment in his bank. The usual source of opposition to the status quo in poetic-realist films, the young male lead, is eliminated and his role conflated with that of the father-figure, who takes on aspects which would normally be the preserve of a younger man — vitality, the promotion of modern methods — but then effects social changes in the area of efficiency not of morality. The values of the capitalist bourgeoisie represented by Mme Génissier are safeguarded, not challenged, as, Tafard, a proverbial piece of mutton dressed as lamb, simply adapts them to the twentieth century.

If the young men in the film are inconsequential, the older men who give way to Tafard are not only weak but are also feminized at the moment of Tafard's triumph by lines such as 'Je vous baise la main' (to Amédée) and 'Tu dors, ma cocotte?' (to the hypnotized guard). Tafard is therefore presented as the only true male in the play, operating in a society whose predominant features are weakness and femininity. All of which could be taken to express an unconscious fascination with the idea of a beguiling, strong father-figure who would set la France back on the right course.

*CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE* is thus the patriarchal film par excellence, going beyond the work of Pagnol in its creation of the all-powerful father. While the director of the *MARIUS* trilogy treats the patriarchal heritage of French society with

sympathy and respect, there is at least present in his work some opposition from a younger generation which gives rise to thematic constellations similar to those detected in the work of other filmmakers of the period, for whom the prevailing social values are more problematic. It is an opposition which is completely lacking in the present film.

More importantly, Pagnol's world is clearly mythical, a nostalgic celebration of the patriarchal myths of a past generation in screen communities which, while not being without social relevance, were already anachronistic in 1930s France. *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, on the other hand, paints an accurate picture of the ills of contemporary society, and proposes as a solution a modernized version of patriarchal capitalism organized by a charismatic leader who operates outwith the existing system according to laws of his own.

*L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* (Grémillon, 1938) is closer to the world of Pagnol, at least in geographic terms, in that it is set in Toulon, where Victor Agardanne is a prosperous shopkeeper and respected member of the bourgeois community. He is also the leader of a gang of burglars, who supply the goods for his bazaar. When one of the gang threatens to blackmail him, Victor murders him and allows Bastien, an innocent cobbler, to be sent to prison for his crime. Seven years later... Bastien escapes from prison and reappears in Toulon. A guilt-stricken Victor hides him in his apartment, thus allowing him to meet and fall in love with Madeleine, Victor's wife. Robert, the new husband of Bastien's ex-wife and former accomplice of Victor, reveals Bastien's whereabouts to the police for the reward money, and accompanies the police to Victor's apartment. Victor tries to silence Robert by strangling him, thus demonstrating his guilt and leaving the field clear for the formation of a new couple,

Bastien and Madeleine.

Beyond the fact that both are incarnated by Raimu, Victor bears a number of resemblances to Tafard, notably in the domains of language and the law. His eloquence is demonstrated in the first sequence in which he appears, in which he is shown talking a customer into buying a useless piece of bric à brac. While such mastery of language, as indeed identification with the Law, is generally the preserve of father-figures in films of the period, Victor's relationship to the law is reminiscent of Tafard's both in the ambiguity of his double role as fence/respected shopkeeper, and in the manner in which he is a law unto himself. His criminal activities are never justified or explained in the film, but presented almost as an extension of his business.

This lack of recognition of the validity of the law obtaining in society on the part of Victor is emphasised in his last line in the film. Driving off under arrest with his former friend, a police superintendent, he remarks to him: 'Tu avais de drôles de fréquentations.' As Geneviève Sellier notes in reference to this passage in her book on Grémillon's work, 'On laisse le mot de la fin au coupable, qui se met dans une position de juge vis-à-vis du représentant de la Loi!'<sup>8</sup>

There is of course an essential difference in that, whereas in *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, Tafard's actions, if morally ambiguous throughout the film, are shown in the end to conform to the prevailing legal code, in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* Victor's culpability is established at the beginning of the film. This difference is however superficial in as much as it does not affect the process of spectator identification, which takes the same object — Raimu — in both the films. Victor, like Tafard, remains a seductive character throughout the film.

Sellier suggests that the reason for Victor's seductiveness lies in the lack of

explanation for his criminality (his association with the gang of robbers is shown in an establishing sequence at the beginning of the film, and is therefore a given element in the plot), which means that the spectator's super-ego does not intervene, leaving her/him free to identify with a character who gives free reign to the anti-social elements in all of us.<sup>9</sup> The only criminal action on Victor's part which is actually shown — the murder of a not particularly sympathetic hoodlum who is trying to blackmail him — is unlikely to arouse indignation and so does not interfere with this process of identification.

A third point of comparison with Tafard lies in Victor's association with mobility. Just as Tafard brought movement to the stasis of the Génissier establishment so Victor is described by Sellier as 'le moteur du récit'<sup>10</sup> in the first section of the film. Sellier points out that the mobility of the character — he moves between his shop and home, anxious for news of his wife who is giving birth — is underscored by the mobility of the camera, which accompanies him in his movements.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, Victor is linked with another kind of mobility, the flow of cash. Again, Sellier notes that in the opening scenes, Victor is in two cases 'le bénéficiaire d'achats qui relèvent du superflu'<sup>12</sup> i.e. the picture frame he sells thanks to his eloquent tongue, and — ironically — a pair of sandals bought by Bastien's wife with money she had difficulty in extracting from her cobbler husband. The series of exchanges of which Victor is the centre continue later in the day, when Victor gives Bastien's child a present, in return for which he pockets the cobbler's awl (which will be instrumental in throwing suspicion for the murder on Bastien.) Finally, he exchanges money for stolen goods with his gang.

In CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE, the economic activity created by



Tafard is presented as a positive value, in that it offers a productive alternative to the unfruitful stagnation of the firm Génissier. In *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR*, this activity has no moral value nor does it constitute an alternative to the notion of claustrophobia, which is, as we have seen, the traditional shorthand for negative aspects of society in films of the period. The idea of claustrophobia is introduced, both visually and verbally in the sequence in which Bastien is cooped up in Victor's apartment. In one scene Bastien and Madeleine are filmed with the shadows of the shutters falling across them. A shot of a pet bird in a cage symbolically reinforces this visual impression that the lovers, like Fernande, are in a cage. The cage is both physical — the inadvisability for the hunted Bastien to leave the apartment — and moral, in that the debt owed by a dutiful wife to her spouse and a fugitive to his benefactor prevent Madeleine and Bastien living out their love. It is this latter predicament to which Bastien is referring when he announces to Madeleine he is leaving in the following terms: 'Malgré tous vos soins, j'étouffe ici. J'ai besoin de respirer un bon coup d'air.'

In contrast to Tafard, therefore, Victor is the cause not just of mobility, but also of its opposite, stasis. That these are in fact the two facets of the same process, just as hiding (immobilising) and selling (circulating) stolen goods are the concealed and displayed faces of his Janus-headed identity, is indicated in Victor's use of the term 'receler' to describe his harbouring of Bastien in his apartment. This suggests that the illegal concealment of Bastien is a repetition of the illegal concealment of stolen goods, just as the failed attempt to silence his former accomplice Robert by strangling him at the end of the film, is a repetition of Victor's successful silencing of an accomplice by stabbing him near the beginning of the film. This repetition in

the second part of the film of the pattern of events 'seven years earlier' constitutes a structure already familiar, the cyclical structure suggesting the ineluctability of fate in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, *PARADIS PERDU* and similar narratives and which adds to the oppressive atmosphere of these films.

There is therefore no alternative to stifling confinement associated with Victor. An alternative is contained in the film, but it is linked with Bastien, who, following his escape from prison, is shown in a relatively long sequence of light, airy shots crossing the wide, open space of the *montagne du Faron* outside Toulon. These location shots, which are in themselves unusual in the studio-bound cinema of the period, contrast not just with Bastien's later immurement in Victor's apartment, but also in the scene immediately following this sequence on the mountain, which shows Victor and family sitting immobile on their balcony, listening to military music. The contrast is audial as well as visual, in that Bastien's wanderings over the mountain are accompanied by a female voice singing a strange sort of chant. This is in stark opposition to the patriarchal military music and suggests that these open spaces provide some unspecified alternative to the corrupt and stifling patriarchal society represented by Victor.

The thematic opposition between Victor and Bastien is also evident in the other domains discussed above, those of economic activity, language and law. Sellier points out that Bastien is practically excluded from the circuit of commercial exchanges of which Victor is the centre at the beginning of the film,<sup>13</sup> a lack of participation which points to the presence in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* of another familiar pattern, that of the exclusion of 'sons' from the realm of the father.

The fact that Bastien and Victor are both established as fathers in their own

right at the beginning of the film, Bastien of a three year old son, Victor of a newly-born baby, does not invalidate such an interpretation, in that firstly, the slight build of Pierre Blanchard compared with the corpulence of Raimu, makes him appear of another generation (although the actual difference in age was only 9 years) and secondly, their respective relationship to money, which equals power in patriarchal capitalist society, suggests a father/son positioning.

Their contrasting financial positions are made clear in the opening sequences, in which we see Victor, proprietor of both a well-stocked bazaar on the seafront and a well-appointed bourgeois apartment, giving a present to Bastien's son, which indicates an affluence and generosity absent in Bastien, who is shown in his modest, dingy work premises - cum - living quarters in the back street of Toulon, arguing with his wife over her demands for money, money which Bastien obviously has problems earning.

The father/son split is then presented in its psychological as well as sociological dimension in that, after establishing this basic opposition, the film follows the classical father/son schema identified so far. Bastien's initial exclusion from the circuit of exchange is rapidly followed by complete banishment from Toulon, when he is falsely convicted of the crime committed by Victor and sent to prison in Cayenne. The false conviction arises in part from another of the attributes of the 'son' in the set of oppositions — taciturnity in contrast to the 'father's' verbosity. Like Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and François in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*, Bastien cannot deal with problems verbally and can only express his frustration in violence. When his wife expresses her dissatisfaction with the lifestyle he offers her, he refuses to reply. When she criticises his silences, he throws his dinner plate in the

sink, walks out and gets drunk, an action which takes him close to the scene of the crime and so leads to the false conviction.

As in the Pagnol trilogy and *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, the process of criminalization and banishment is accompanied by the symbolic supplanting of the 'son/father' by the patriarch as head of his family, when Victor's economic potency is displayed once more in the pension he pays to Bastien's wife and son. This familiar pattern would seem to be reversed when Bastien reappears and appropriates in his turn Victor's wife. It is however simply a variation in the pattern, in that it is Victor who virtually throws the couple together, insisting that Bastien meet, upon his arrival, Madeleine, who was already in bed and is therefore introduced in her nightwear. The way in which Victor presents her — 'Elle est plus jolie que moi, hein!' ... Crois-tu qu'elle est épatante, ma femme.' — almost as a piece of merchandise being offered to Bastien indicates that it is always Victor who controls the situation, manipulating the others' movements with his salesman's spiel, just as in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE* it is the corrupt father-figures Valentin and Batala who goad their younger rival into shooting them, and so are themselves responsible for their own defeat.

The notion of self-defeat is also applicable to *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR*, in that it portrays a world in which one of the most cherished social institutions, the family unit, cannot be maintained. As in the Pagnol trilogy, the family, with the emphasis on (male) parent/child rather than husband/wife relationships is presented as of prime importance. The film begins on the day of the birth of Victor's son, which as well as emphasising Victor's virility, offers us the spectacle of the happy family unit — proud father, exhausted but radiant mother around the crib. It is when

Amédée threatens to reveal Victor's criminal activities to his family, inviting him to ponder on what his wife and, more importantly, his son would think, that Victor stabs him, an act which is self-defeating in that, far from protecting the family unit, it leads to its degeneration and eventual disintegration.

When we rediscover the family seven years later, marital harmony has been replaced by tension, as Madeleine reproaches Victor with having changed since the birth of their son, suggesting that the boy has come between them and that Victor is not capable of loving two people at the same time. While this interpretation would accord with the primacy frequently accorded to children in the films of the period, one might assume that the murder, which coincided with the birth of the child, and whatever suppressed feelings it has engendered in Victor, is responsible for his changed behaviour, just as it will be responsible for his eventual removal from the family unit when his guilt is discovered.

Bastien's family unit is even less successful. His relationship with his wife has already deteriorated to such a degree by the beginning of the film that all family feeling is reserved for his son. It is to see him that he escapes from prison, proving the words of the police who use the son as a trap: 'Les femmes, ça s'oublie, mais les petits, ça vous accroche au coeur.' He discovers however that, under the influence of his wife's new partner, his son has become 'un voyou', a point demonstrated in the son's betrayal of his father when he reveals Bastien's whereabouts in exchange for a present.

This disintegration of the various elements of the family units can be attributed to Victor's crime, and is therefore, like the references to claustrophobia discussed above, a symbol of the self-defeating sterility of a corrupt patriarchal society.

Although the film does appear to offer a positive alternative in the formation of the new couple, Bastien and Madeleine, this 'happy end' is in fact as ambiguous as the ending of *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*.

Just as Amédée and Valentine are last seen heading towards territories new and unspecified, which looks suspiciously like a form of exile from the close-knit Parisian community, so the only alternative space in *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR* is the wide-open mountain ranges around Toulon, which, as shown above, are placed in opposition to the confining patriarchal society depicted in the film. It is therefore far from clear where this new couple is going to operate and what form it will take, and this shadowy alternative cannot hold much weight against the detailed depiction of the existing society offered in the text.

Thus, if *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR* appears to bear a certain superficial resemblance to *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTÉ* in that both films have as central characters seductive if (potentially) corrupt father-figures with an independent position to the law, a closer examination reveals that *VICTOR* in fact follows the pattern established in previous chapters in its presentation of a dominant father/weak son dynamic and of the stifling, sterile society in which the conflict takes place. The one factor which distances *VICTOR* from the works of Carné, Feyder and the other films analysed so far, and draws it closer to *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTÉ* and the *MARIUS* trilogy is the presence of Raimu, which lends the father-figure not just a certain fascination — which would also be true of characters incarnated by Jules Berry, Saturnin Fabre or Jouvet — but a reassuring paternal (in a positive sense) presence absent from the corrupt characters of other films.

The spectator's fascination with the character of Victor can be attributed not

only to the identification response elicited in the construction of the text, as outlined above, but also to the physical presence and acting style of Raimu, who invests the character with a chubby but dynamic *bonhomie* which, in that it is far more seductive than anything the other actors are able, within the context of their parts to offer, contributes in turn to the identification process. The combination of beguiling personality and reassuring paternal presence sets Raimu apart from other leading male actors of his generation and could be said to constitute his 'star text'.

The unique place Raimu occupied amongst his peers can be attributed in part to the breadth of his range, a breadth indicated in his extraordinary progression from the *caf'conc*'s and revues of his youth to the prestigious Comédie-Française, which he was invited to join in 1943. One biographer sums up Raimu's unique quality as follows:

Les autres grands de l'époque - tels Dullin et Jouvet, Michel Simon et Saturnin Fabre, Blanchard et Jules Berry, Harry Baur et Fresnay - jouent sur un seul registre. Deux à la rigueur pour Michel Simon. Raimu, lui, pratique le perpétuel mariage des contraires et des contrastes: il est grand dans la truculence, saugrenu dans le tragique, ridicule dans la cérémonie, cérémonieux dans le ridicule... ...Sourde et caressante dans l'émotion mais apocalyptique dans la fureur, [sa voix] confère aux personnages de Raimu une "humanité vraie".<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, none of these 'greats' was associated with one particular part, which was seen as a reflection of their off-screen selves, whereas Raimu was very much identified with the role of his fellow *provençal*, César, which he created on stage and which would provide his first great cinema role. It was indeed his own identification with the character of César which made him reject the proposed role of Panisse, arguing 'César me ressemble. Ses tendresses, ses colères, sa mauvaise foi

sont les miennes.<sup>15</sup> He then insisted that Pagnol build up what had been a secondary role, to which he added his own material, took over to a considerable extent the direction of the play, suggesting the addition and elimination of scenes, and was therefore in part responsible for the final form of the play, of which the film was a faithful adaptation.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, while Raimu clearly did not have the mythic status of Gabin, and certainly did not play variations on César from one film to the next, it could be argued that his association with this one role, which he had been instrumental in creating, made him the bearer of a 'star text' analogous to that constructed by Gabin in a series of films in the second half of the 1930s,<sup>17</sup> in that the qualities associated with César/Raimu — an overbearing but fundamentally goodhearted father-figure — would inform the variety of (frequently paternal) roles which he played. The resulting, mainly positive, associations, together with the performance of Raimu, the range which enabled him to seduce spectators through characters endowed with a 'humanité vraie', work against the possibility of the patriarchal characters he played becoming the stock villains played by the one-dimensional Jules Berry. And this holds good in texts unlike *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, where the patriarchal lead is locked in the familiar pattern of conflict with son/daughter figures and linked with the same negative aspects of patriarchal society as the unsympathetic father-figures portrayed elsewhere.

The potential problem of tension between the 'star-text' of Raimu and other requirements of the filmic text was, as we have seen, dealt with in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* by foregrounding it, acknowledging in the very title of the film the ambiguity of the central character, and turning the underlying tension into the basic



enigma of the film. A similar method is used in Marc Allégret's 1937 film, *GRIBOUILLE*.

*GRIBOUILLE* recounts the tale of Camille Morestan (Raimu), petit-bourgeois proprietor of a bicycle shop, and father of two teenage children, who, on being called for jury service, performs his civic duty in a particularly zealous manner by persuading the other jurors to acquit the accused, a young girl called Natalie, (Michèle Morgan) and then taking her under his wing, providing her with a job in his shop and lodgings in his home. When his son Claude falls in love with her, however, he attempts to preserve his family from what he now sees as the bad influence of Natalie by sacking her and threatening to send Claude to boarding school. He then discovers Claude ready to run off with Natalie and the contents of the till, in a fit of rage hits Natalie over the head with a heavy statuette, and, believing he has killed her, goes off to give himself up but is stopped by his wife, who tells him the girl has regained consciousness and will be nursed back to health.

As in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR*, Raimu's status as central character is already indicated in the film's title, *GRIBOUILLE*, which, according to the *Petit Larousse* means a 'personne brouillonne, sottise et naïve' i.e. a muddle-headed if well-meaning fool, and is used by Camille's wife at the end of the film to describe her husband's confused, even contradictory, behaviour towards his protégée - 'Sauver une femme et l'assommer trois mois après, c'est bien toi, Gribouille.'

This is in fact the last line in the film, and it is again indicative of Raimu's status that, just as the last word in *VICTOR* was left to Victor, so the last scene in *GRIBOUILLE* is devoted to the Raimu character, concentrating on Camille's remorse at having 'killed' Natalie and ending with this analysis of his character. This

privileging of the father-figure over the two lovers, which is the contrary of the dramatic emphasis found in the Carné films, for example, is commensurate with the star status of Raimu, as opposed to the relatively unknown actors playing the lovers. Gilbert Gil was at the beginning of his career as a likeable *jeune premier*, a part beyond which he never progressed, and Michèle Morgan, was playing her first big role, a year before *QUAI DES BRUMES* would make her a star.

Camille is like the other Raimu characters studied in this section not only in that he dominates the film but also in his adoption of an independent position towards the law, which in this case is an institutionalised form of the patriarchal law already encountered in *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, a law which judges women according to their sexual behaviour, and which positions them either in the public domain of the prostitute or the private domain of the wife/daughter/sweetheart.

The trial at which Camille does his jury service deals with the case of Natalie Roguin, who is accused by a rich industrialist of having killed his son. The boy in question was her lover, who, presumably unable to marry her because of her unsuitable social situation — as well as being poor she had a Russian for a mother and a deserter for a father — had ruined himself and stolen from his father in order to support her as his mistress. The unlikely nature of the charges brought against her indicate that the crime for which she is being tried is of a symbolic nature, referring not to a judicial offence, but to the threat that promiscuous women present to the patriarchal order in a social and psychoanalytical sense.

This interpretation is lent weight by the prurient insistence of the prosecutor on questions of how soon she had slept with the victim and how many lovers she had had, points which have very little obvious relevance to the crime. Natalie's response

to another of the prosecutor's comments, this time on her lack of an air of honesty or decency — 'Non, je n'ai pas l'air honnête, c'est bien ça qui est terrible. Je crois que je le suis, mais je n'en ai pas l'air, — indicates the impossibility for a woman in the position to which she has been allocated to assert an integrity outwith and in face of the patriarchal codes. It is in fact only the intervention of a benevolent father-figure — Camille — who prevents her condemnation.

He does this by addressing his fellow jurors in a manner completely opposed to the patriarchal discourse which had permeated the trial, transforming the 'evidence' into the following fairy tale:

Il y avait une fois une toute jeune fille très pauvre et très malheureuse. Elle rencontra un soir sous la pluie un beau jeune homme...

As previous chapters have shown, whether it be Jean describing Nelly as little Red Riding Hood in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, Mattéo telling his exotic tales to Safia in *LA MAISON DU MALTAIS*, or Amédée transforming a Parisian courtyard into the Wild West in *LE CRIME DE M. LANGE*, this fairy tale discourse is the province of 'son' rather than father-figures.

The characterization of Camille as a patriarch is further confused by his appropriation of certain symbols normally reserved for 'sons'. Thus, despite his petit-bourgeois shopkeeper status, he is frequently seen wearing a cloth cap, the proletarian headgear adopted by the Gabin character in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*. Similarly, the nature of the business he runs, a bicycle shop where young couples come to buy tandems, carries connotations of the Popular Front's policy of sport and leisure, and hence of progressive socialist ideals.

In his gradual usurpation of the role which should have been played by

Natalie's lawyer, an ineffectual character who neither defends his client with any degree of conviction nor concerns himself with her welfare after her acquittal, Camille could thus be seen to be replacing a bankrupt patriarchal system with a more advanced, less rigid variety of paternalism, incorporating some of the positive aspects which are associated with the younger generation in other films of the period. However, as soon as Natalie is safely installed *chez les Morestan*, the familiar father/son/girl triangle sets itself in motion, as Camille's incestuous desire for Natalie drives him towards the criminalization and exclusion of his son, and thus relocates him in the position traditionally occupied by father-figures.

The notion of incest is evoked in terms of a misunderstanding, arising from Camille's decision to introduce Natalie into his home under an assumed name as the daughter of an old friend. His son Claude recognises Natalie from the trial and can only explain his father's duplicity in terms of him bringing his mistress under the family roof, an assumption which gives rise to the following dialogue when father and son meet on the stairs leading to Natalie's room:

Camille : Ce n'est pas très correct pour un jeune homme de se présenter chez une jeune fille à cette heure de la nuit.

Claude : Tu trouves sans doute que c'est plutôt la place d'un homme de ton âge?

Claude's suspicions — and theoretically those of the spectator — are allayed when he is witness to a scene in which Natalie, forced by Mme Morestan to write letters to her 'father', who is in fact dead, is comforted by Camille, who tells her: 'Envoyez-les. Je vous répondrai. Vous voulez bien, mon petit, que je sois votre père de temps en temps?' This supposed proof of the purity of Camille's intentions is however undermined by a variety of other factors which point to, at the very least,

suppressed, incestuous desire.

Firstly, there is the suspicion of the other characters, not just of Claude, but also of Camille's prospective son-in-law, who tries to seduce Natalie. When Camille reproaches him with wanting to sleep with his employee, he gets the response, 'C'est une idée que vous avez eue avant moi.' Secondly, the fact that Camille's decision to introduce Natalie into his family under a false identity has no obvious justification in the text points to a subconscious sense of guilt on his part that can only come from suppressed illicit desire. Thirdly, his violent opposition to Claude's proposed marriage with Natalie is only fully explicable if sexual jealousy is added to the reason that is suggested in the text i.e. Camille's fear that Natalie might, after all, be an adventuress and that the chain of events leading to her trial might repeat themselves with his son.

This sexual jealousy almost sets off the familiar pattern of son/father rivalry, banishment and criminalization, in that Camille threatens to send Claude to boarding school, to which Claude responds by robbing the till in order to run off with Natalie, whom Camille has dismissed as a troublemaker. The situation is however defused when Camille discovers Claude with his fingers in the till and 'kills' Natalie, who unfortunately appears at that moment, with the cry 'Ça recommence.'

The most obvious reading of this ending would have Camille, on realising the extent of the havoc Natalie has wrought on his family, making good his mistake in getting her acquitted by acting as a one-man judge, jury and hangman, an interpretation which would fit in with the tendency noted in Raimu characters to make their own law. Such a reading would however only take account of the subjective viewpoint of the Camille character, and is militated against by the characterization of

Natalie in the text, who is shown to be a force for good — she gets the male characters in the film to go to church — and the innocent victim of male sexual advances — she does nothing to encourage the erring fiancé and actively tries to discourage Claude in his plans.

When these factors are taken into consideration, the ending can be interpreted as working in her favour, completely exonerating her in retrospect of the charges made against her in the trial at the beginning of the film, in that it shows her falsely condemned on the same counts where her innocence has been demonstrated. It also shows that the escape route, or the passport to an honest existence, which Camille appeared to offer Natalie, was illusory, in that he himself, through sexual jealousy and/or through bourgeois preconceptions of what kind of girl he can accept in his family, blocks her passage from the public to the private sphere, denying her the status of sweetheart and condemning her to the position of employee/adventuress.

Camille's cry of 'Ça recommence' can thus be taken to refer not to the spinning of a web of female wiles to trap *fils de bonne famille*, but to the circular fate of women in patriarchy, who cannot escape the positions allotted to them by men. The verbal intimation at the end of the film that Natalie is not in fact dead but is going to be made well again for Claude is simply a red herring, in that it postulates a happy ending which cannot be accommodated within the text, but is relegated to a never-neverland outwith the space of the film. The last shot of Natalie shows her reeling under her executioner's blow and this is the real outcome in accordance with the internal logic of the film.

The postscriptum sequence in which Camille is prevented by his wife from turning himself over to a police officer and brought back home serves a double

purpose. As well as shifting the dramatic focus back to Camille, it serves to attenuate his violent act of the preceding sequence in accordance with the characterization of the father-figure offered in the rest of the film. It is by this attenuation of the negative aspects traditionally associated with father-figures that the positive 'star text' of Raimu can be accommodated within GRIBOUILLE.

Through the attribution of certain characteristics generally associated with 'son' figures to Camille, the film begins by using the same strategy as *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, whereby the father-figure is presented as an alternative to rather than the source of negative aspects of the patriarchal order. When the familiar pattern of incestuous desire/ rivalry with the son emerges it is evoked *en sourdine*, as a possible misunderstanding on the part of the diegetic characters, rather than as an indication of patriarchal infamy. Finally, the (attempted) assassination is treated as a function of his character; just as the murder in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* was a symptom of Victor's strangeness, so Natalie's knock on the head is an endearing mistake on the part of muddle-headed, well-meaning Gribouille.

Despite these attempts at attenuation, a closer examination of the text reveals that Camille is indistinguishable from the completely negative father-figure Zabel in one essential respect; he too is ultimately presented as responsible for the corrupt patriarchal society in which a daughter figure is imprisoned, his cry of 'Ça recommence' functioning as an admission of his failure to provide an alternative to the bankrupt ideology of his peers.

Thus, despite the positive aura lent to the father-figures in *L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR* and *GRIBOUILLE* by the Raimu star-text, both ultimately conform to the typical 1930s pattern of patriarch representing the Law, as opposed to justice. Both

Victor and Camille are associated with one of the elements on which the patriarchal system is based, i.e. the confinement of women within the private (wife/sweetheart) or public (*femme fatale*/whore) sphere. In L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR, the series of visual and verbal metaphors of imprisonment are associated not only with Victor's wife, but also with Bastien, the 'son' who was unjustly criminalized and banished by Victor, a scenario hinted at and only narrowly avoided in GRIBOUILLE. In CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE, on the other hand, the predominant pattern is reversed, in that the spectator is presented not with a patriarch who embodies the Law but behaves unjustly, but one who acts for the greater good outwith existing legal parameters. Given the social context of the period, this *anarchiste de droite* discourse inherent in the revamped patriarchal capitalist ethic of the film represents a somewhat disturbing departure from the norm.



## CHAPTER FIVE : NOTES

1. Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French Cinema of the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) p. 223.
2. For a detailed analysis of the functioning of a 'star-text' with regard to Jean Gabin, see Vincendeau, pp. 244—308.
3. Maurice Larkin, *France since the Popular Front: Government and People 1936—1986*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 9.
4. 'The Postwar Resurgence of the French Economy' in Hoffman (ed), *In Search of France* (New York, 1963) quoted in Larkin, pp. 8—9.
5. The character of Mme Hanau, 'banquière sans scrupule, qui a ruiné un nombre considérable de gens trop confiants', (Daniel Lacotte, *Raimu* (Paris: Ramsay, 1988) p. 119) is not too far removed from that of Tafard.
6. Larkin, p. 15.
7. Tafard's remark is reminiscent of a similar thought on the part of Sacha Guitry, expressed in the following monologue from his 1936 film, *LE ROMAN D'UN TRICHEUR*, in which he too plays the part of a morally ambiguous hero:

Pour moi, l'argent n'a de valeur que quand il sort de votre poche. J'estime qu'un homme qui ne dépense pas ses revenus brise la cadence de la vie en interrompant la circulation monétaire... Un chèque sans provisions est une opération criminelle proscrite au code pénal. Si j'étais le gouvernement, comme dit ma concierge, je poursuivrai les gens qui ont des provisions sans chèque.

This suggests that the stagnating economy was a dominant concern of the period.

8. Geneviève Sellier, *Jean Grémillon, le cinéma est à vous* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989) p. 124.
9. Sellier, pp. 124—129.
10. Sellier, p. 134.
11. Sellier, p. 130.
12. Sellier, p. 130.

13. Sellier, p. 131.
14. Daniel Lacotte, *Raimu* (Paris: Ramsay, 1988) p. 102.
15. Lacotte, pp. 92—93.
16. Lacotte, pp. 93—112.
17. see 'Jean Gabin et son Destin', in Andre Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* 4 vols (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1959-1962) III, 79—82, and Chapter Four, 'The only French Star, Jean Gabin,' in Vincendeau, pp. 244-308.

## **PART TWO**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The first part of this thesis examined the positions allocated to women, young men and father-figures in the films of the 1930s. Chapter Two showed that the principal function of female characters was to articulate male desire, notably the regressive desires of 'son' figures. Female desire was on the other hand consistently repressed as a threat to the patriarchal order. Films in which female characters were the ostensible subjects merely demonstrated the impossibility of women attaining such a position in patriarchy, by illustrating the 'fate' — punishment and banishment from the filmic space — awaiting women who dared to desire.

Chapter Three revealed an analogous process of criminalization and marginalization by which young men were denied access to language and the law. Unable to accede to the realm of the father, or regress to the imaginary realm, these 'sons' frequently found suicide the only way out of an untenable situation. The analysis undertaken in Chapters Four and Five of the values attributed to the 'father'-figures who dominated 1930s French cinema confirmed the existence, already exemplified in earlier chapters, of a dichotomy at the heart of the patriarchal system; the patriarchs who in de facto terms embodied the law proved to be morally bankrupt, all spiritual values reposing in the 'sons' (and sometimes the 'daughters') and, like them, excluded from the system.

The overall picture which emerges is that of a sterile, corrupt society, a *société bloquée*, in which growth and development are severely hampered, but from which there is no escape, a notion conveyed by the claustrophobic atmosphere pervading film after film. While this can be interpreted at the level of character analysis as symptomatic of an unresolved Oedipal dilemma on the part of the younger

males, two areas of sociological application have been suggested in the foregoing chapters.

On the one hand, this diegetic society has its real-life corollary in the legal and economic system of 1930s France, which invested power in older males. The psychological construct 'realm of the father' can thus be viewed as a metaphor for patriarchal capitalism. On the other hand, a number of films have demonstrated that the dichotomy power/powerlessness is frequently organised along economic as well as age lines, the opposition father/son coinciding with the class division bourgeois/proletarian.

This second part will follow up these issues by looking at the roles of women, young men and father-figures in the French cinema of the Occupation, in order to determine the extent to which the patterns identified above persist in this later period, and to detect any modifications they may undergo in order to reflect the changing structure and consciousness of a society coming to terms with military defeat, foreign occupation and a new, non-democratic form of government. While the overall approach will thus remain the same, there will be a change in methodology in the introduction of a new analytical framework.

The use of the terminology of the Freudian/Lacanian school of psychoanalysis in Part One was in part dictated by its impact on the field of feminist film theory, its repeatedly rewarding application in this area being such that any discussion of the position allotted to women in film could only be the poorer for neglecting such a valuable critical tool. Lacanian concepts also proved useful in identifying and elucidating the pattern of exclusion/regression common to many 1930s films, an approach which permitted the analysis of an individual character's development to be

used as a basis for drawing certain conclusions about the society in which s/he evolved.

In my consideration of certain elements of the cinema of the Occupation I decided to take a slightly different approach. Rather than take the psychoanalytical concepts used to define a character's progress as metaphors for sociological phenomena, as outlined above, I shall adopt Jung's notion of archetypes and regard the characters themselves as symbols of the collective unconscious. The shift in emphasis from Lacan — whose concepts will still be used where deemed appropriate, notably in the discussion of patterns which remain unchanged in the cinema of the Occupation — to Jung is motivated by the belief that the terminology of analytical psychology is more suited to interpreting some of the developments which distinguish the cinema of the Occupation from that of the 1930s.

This movement between two fundamentally different schools of thought is I believe justifiable in as much as neither can be said to be 'true' in any absolute sense but both can claim to offer useful insights into the functioning of the human psyche. Writing about the usefulness and limits of psychoanalysis in feminist film theory, Mary Ann Doane describes it as 'one of the most blatantly symptomatic of cultural productions' which 'enhances the legibility of the ideological effects of Western culture's construction of femininity.'<sup>1</sup> I would regard both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology in a similar light, as as much cultural products as the films they can be used to describe, but with the advantage that they provide a schema and a vocabulary with which to locate and name the assumptions and values which underpin a given culture.

The appropriateness of the use of Jungian terminology in a discussion of the dominant trends in Vichy cinema was in part suggested by Yves Chalas' interpretation of this period of French history. In his essay *Vichy et l'Imaginaire Totalitaire*, Chalas puts forward the proposition that totalitarian societies arise because of democratic, capitalist societies' neglect of the spiritual, mythical dimension of human nature. According to his theory, Vichy was initially welcomed by the French population because it responded to their primal needs, embracing the totality of the human experience in what Chalas calls its 'double discours de la mystique et de la technique.'<sup>2</sup> and so overcoming the alienation which is an inevitable feature of the work process in capitalism.

Whether this thesis is tenable or not, Chalas' essay serves to highlight the mythical/religious discourse which characterised Vichy and which, as I shall demonstrate, was not without influence on the films of the period. Pétain's avowed aim — the regeneration of a 'sick' France through a return to archaic values — echoes to a certain extent the main thrust of Jung's work, which is concerned with curing the neuroses caused by the spiritual void prevalent in Western society and restoring modern wo/man to health through recourse to primal archetypes. It is for this reason that I feel that the terminology of analytical psychology is especially useful in analysing the influence of Pétainist ideology on the cinema of the Occupation, in that its concepts are of particular relevance to Vichy's representation of itself in its public discourses.

At this point it is perhaps necessary to distinguish between the terms 'the cinema of the Occupation' and 'the cinema of Vichy'. To my mind, the first is a purely chronological term, referring to the historical period in which the films under

discussion were produced, a period which, given the long, drawn-out nature of the process of film production, extends beyond the dates of the German military Occupation of France (June 1940—August 1944)

The problem of classifying films as part of the ‘cinema of the Occupation’ corpus is discussed in *15 ans d’années trente*, in which Jeancolas points out the limitations of the approach taken by Roger Régent and Jacques Siclier in their seminal works on the cinema of this period.<sup>3</sup> Like a number of other researchers, they limit the corpus to the list of 220 films laid down in ‘le bilan statistique des films de long métrage mis en chantier depuis l’armistice’ published in *Le Film* of 1 July 1944.<sup>4</sup> While this method of classifying as ‘films of the Occupation’ those films put into production between June 1940 and July 1944 has the merit of including works which would only be completed and/or released after the Liberation (as is the case of *FALBALAS* and *LA FIANCÉE DES TENEBRES*, two films which will be considered in the course of the present work), it leaves out a number of films:

commencés avant ou pendant la drôle de guerre, et terminés, modifiés parfois, mutilés, mis au goût de jour sous l’influence des événements, des disparitions, des interdictions, et diffusés avec la bénédiction des censures du temps, celle de Paris et celle de Vichy, dans l’une ou l’autre ou les deux zones de la France du Maréchal.<sup>5</sup>

The films coming into this category which will be discussed are *REMORQUES*, shot in a stop-start manner between the summer of 1939 and 1941 and released by the German company Tobis in France in November 1941, and the Pagnol film *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*, on which shooting had begun at the Pagnol studios in Marseilles in May 1940, and was resumed after a two month interruption in August of that year, the studios in the Midi being quicker to recommence



production than those in occupied Paris, where production did not start up again until 1941, by which time *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* had already been released in the *zone libre*.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* provides the perfect example of a film modified in accordance with political developments, and will therefore be looked at as a reflection of the emerging Pétainiste ideology, the circumstances in which it was produced had far less bearing on *REMORQUES*, which contains no direct references to contemporary events and can be more profitably looked at in terms of the development of themes in the work of its director, Grémillon.

If I use 'cinema of the Occupation' purely as a term of chronological reference denoting the body of films produced within a specific period, in distinction to the 'cinema of Vichy', which refers to the content of these films as a reflection of the dominant ideology of the time, it is because all works so far published on the cinema of this period agree that there was no 'cinema of the Occupation' in the sense of a cinema promoting the nazi ideology of the occupying powers, at least as regards feature-length films of fiction.<sup>7</sup> The freedom from pressure from the Occupying powers to produce propaganda films can be explained by the fact that the Germans, in accordance with their view of occupied France as a reservoir of men and materials to feed the German war machine, saw the cinema industry primarily as a commercial enterprise to be appropriated and exploited rather than as a means of propaganda.

Among a string of other measures designed to direct the flow of profits from the French film industry to the coffers of Berlin they therefore created Continental Films, a German production company based in Paris, funded by UFA and Tobis and directed by a former head of production at UFA, Alfred Greven. During the

Occupation period the Continental would enjoy the collaboration, willing or otherwise, of some of the best known French actors, writers and directors remaining in France and produce thirty films, the quality of which would reflect the Continental's privileged status in the allocation of increasingly scarce materials.<sup>8</sup>

The precedence given to the economic potential of French films as a source of funds in the domestic market and as an export in occupied Europe thus ensured the absence of German actors/directors and of a nazi slant in the output of both the Continental and of the indigenous production companies which started up again in the occupied zone in the course of 1941. French audiences flocked to the reopened cinemas to find — apart from some notable absences — familiar faces playing in remarkably similar films to those of the pre-war period.

If there was no 'cinema of the Occupation' in an ideological sense, can one speak of a 'cinema of Vichy'? Jeancolas maintains that, with the exception of a short list of 'films datés... dont on peut dire qu'ils sont, explicitement, de Vichy'<sup>9</sup> one cannot. With reference to a film begun in 1939, released in 1941 and which was an apparent purveyor of Pétainiste themes, he writes:

Si l'on croit à la spécificité idéologique du cinéma de Vichy, faut-il considérer que cette *Empreinte* pense Daladier ou qu'elle pense Pétain? Faux problème. *L'Empreinte du dieu* pense conservateur, travail-famille-patrie, comme on le pensait chez les bien-pensants avant, pendant et après l'an 40.<sup>10</sup>

He goes on to explain that if the scenario, which was in fact written before Pétain came to power, 'charrie tous les tics de la Révolution nationale' it is because:

la Révolution nationale avait pris naissance dans les consciences de la droite nationaliste avant la défaite, qu'elle courait, souterraine, depuis les années 34 ou 35, et qu'elle avait commencé à s'épanouir en 38—39.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, the central concepts of Pétainisme were not only very much present in a certain current of French thought in the 1930s but also permeated the cinema of that period. Perhaps the most perfect illustration of a *retour à la terre* is provided in 1937, in Pagnol's beautifully pastoral REGAIN, while one can assume that the obsession with promoting a rise in the birth-rate underlying the 'conclusion nataliste'<sup>12</sup> of L'EMPREINTE DU DIEU also played a part in the warm and uncensorious welcome given to Danielle Darrieux's illegitimate baby in LE CLUB DES FEMMES of 1936. (It is hard to imagine the favourite *ingénue* of other national cinemas of the period playing a *fille-mère* without tragic consequences.)

And if 1938 produced QUAI DES BRUMES, the archetypal poetic-realist tale of an outcast deserting the army to come to a bad end in the doom-laden mists of pre-war days, it also saw the release of Léon Mathot's LE REVOLTE, an adaptation of a popular novel which gives an up-beat account of a young rebel saved from his anti-social impulses by a spell in the navy under the beneficial influence of ship's captain Pierre Renoir, to whom he pays homage in the memorable line 'S'il y avait plus de chefs comme vous, il y aurait moins de voyous comme moi' — which is nothing if not *du Pétainisme avant la lettre*.<sup>13</sup>

I would therefore agree to a certain extent with Jeancolas' assertion that

le cinéma de l'Etat français est un fleuve large et lent  
qui prend sa source dans le cinéma de la Troisième  
République et se jette dans celui de la Quatrième. Il ne  
connaît ni rupture ni discontinuité.<sup>14</sup>

in as much as the films of fiction pre- and post-1940 reflect a continuity of thought in certain sections of society. This persistence in mental structures is moreover complemented in the perpetuation, albeit in a modified form, of some of the social patterns discussed in Part One. The predominance of elderly males in both the cinema

and the society of the Third Republic, for example, is consecrated under Vichy in the symbolic figure of Pétain as head of state.

And yet... If there was little fundamental change in the social and mental structures underlying the cinema of 1938 and that of 1942, the rhetorical style of Vichy, was, as suggested in the discussion of methodology above, very different from that of the Third Republic and I would argue that its influence extends beyond those 'films datés' on Jeancolas' short list of films 'explicitement de Vichy' to leave its mark on a larger proportion of cinema production during the Occupation. I will try to demonstrate this in the following chapters partly by looking at elements common both to films 'explicitement de Vichy' and to other films of the period, but mostly by examining the representations of women, young men and father-figures in a selection of both the better-known and the more obscure films of the Occupation in order to detect any variations in the patterns established in the films of the 1930s which may indicate a greater degree of evolution between the two periods than that suggested by Jeancolas.

The above in no way means to imply that the cinema of the Occupation consists of a homogeneous mass of films validating explicitly or otherwise the ideology of Vichy. The most important works on the cinema of the period all refer to a diversity of trends either emerging in conjunction with political developments or co-existing throughout the period. Thus, Jeancolas stipulates that 'le cinéma de fiction de la Révolution nationale' was over by November 1942, having only lasted 'les trente mois où le pouvoir du Maréchal a pu faire illusion',<sup>15</sup> while Bertin-Maghit detects the emergence of an 'esprit frondeur' in certain films from 1942 onwards:

A partir du retour de Laval, alors que le gouvernement multiplie ses commandes de moyens métrages de

propagande, quelques films proposent donc une vision du monde qui veut rendre acceptables de nouvelles réalités sociales ...<sup>16</sup>

In the parallels they draw between social developments and cinematic trends, Jeancolas and Bertin-Maghit are both referring to the more blatant examples of ideology influencing film, in the first case, films which overtly conveyed Pétainiste themes, in the second, films such as *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *PONTCARRAL*, *COLONEL D'EMPIRE* which quickly acquired a reputation as works of 'resistance', their 'message' of revolt cleverly disguised in a non-contemporary setting so that the German censor would not spot it. As regards the validity of the claims made for these films, the debate on directorial intent and audience reception is one which will not be engaged in here. One of the aims of the analysis of the representation of women, young men and father-figures undertaken in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine will however be to detect changing attitudes to the status quo, as demonstrated, for example, in the values attributed to father-figures or in the desires embodied in female characters.

Chapter Five will prepare the ground for this investigation of the cinema of the Occupation as a site of both continuity and subtle change by comparing a late 1930s film with one from 1941 in order to identify some of the modifications undergone in the areas investigated in Part One in terms of both theme and style. It will then attempt to interpret these changes in the light of Vichy ideology as represented both in the pronouncements of Pétain and in another film of the early 1940s, one of Jeancolas's 'films datés', which was a manifest illustration of the new orthodoxy.

## INTRODUCTION Part II : NOTES

1. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: feminism, film theory, psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 8.
2. Yves Chalas, *Vichy et l'Imaginaire Totalitaire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1985) p. 31.
3. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente: le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) pp. 296—298.
4. Jeancolas, p. 296.
5. Jeancolas, p.297.
6. see Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma sous l'Occupation*, (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1989) p. 21 and Jeancolas, pp. 314—315.
7. Overt attacks on Jews, communists and free-masons were confined to the documentaries which accompanied the main film as a replacement for the pre-war second feature, with the notorious exception of three 'shorts' from a French production company which combined German documentary footage with fictional sequences played by French actors. LES CORRUPTEURS was shown as an accompaniment to the Decoin feature film LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON and was in part responsible for the anti-semitic reputation of the latter, which created problems for its director at the Liberation, while the slightly longer 'shorts' LE PERIL JUIF and FORCES OCCULTES were distributed as main features. see Bertin-Maghit, pp. 136—143; Jeancolas, pp. 342—360; Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son Cinéma* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1981) pp. 35—39.
8. For a more detailed account of the German appropriation of the French cinema industry and the history of Continental films see: Jeancolas, pp. 311—312; Bertin-Maghit, pp 21—25; Siclier, pp 41—65.
9. Jeancolas, p. 326 This short list includes LA FILLE DU PUISATIER and LA NUIT MERVEILLEUSE.
10. Jeancolas, pp. 320—321.
11. Jeancolas, p. 321.
12. Jeancolas, p. 321.
13. It is a pleasing coincidence that Siclier devotes a short chapter in *La France de Pétain et son Cinéma* to the actor who played Pimaï, the eponymous hero of LE REVOLTE, under the title of 'Réné Dary: le nouveau Gabin, régénéré par la "révolution nationale"' (pp. 107—116).

14. Jeancolas, p. 298. I would however qualify the latter point with the proviso brought by Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit in his more recent work, *Le Cinéma sous l'Occupation*, in which, while fundamentally supporting Jeancolas' view, he points out that if certain 'valeurs fascisantes précèdent, au cinéma, la venue du régime, elles étaient noyées, à cette époque, dans un ensemble de 1 300 films. A partir de juin 1940, elles occupent une place surdéterminante.' (p. 146).
15. Jeancolas, p. 327.
16. Bertin-Maghit, p. 145.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

**From the 1930s to the cinema of the Occupation :**

**The integration of the outsider in LES DISPARUS**

**DE SAINT AGIL and L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL**



The first film produced in occupied France was *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, an adaptation of a novel by Pierre Véry shot in 1941 for Continental Films by Christian-Jaque. In order to examine the development of 1930s themes in films of the Occupation, this chapter will compare this early example of Occupation cinema with *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL*, a 1938 film also directed by Christian-Jaque and adapted from a Véry novel. The resulting degree of continuity between the two works should serve as a background against which to highlight any thematic or stylistic changes which may then be interpreted as specific to a certain era.

The two works have in common not just their author but also their genre: both are *films policiers*. *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* recounts the strange goings-on in a boys' boarding school, where the nocturnal sighting of a cloaked man, the subsequent disappearance of three students, Beaume, Sorgue and Macroy, and the mysterious death of the art master, Lemel, create an atmosphere of distrust and unease. Suspicion is in particular directed towards the foreign master of modern languages, Walter, whose taciturn manner frightens pupils and arouses the xenophobic instincts of the staff. Overcoming his mistrust, Beaume, who had in fact absconded to look for his friends, accepts Walter's help in solving the mystery and leads the other boys in a raid on the den of a gang of counterfeiters where Sorgue is imprisoned. The two *disparus* then return to the school to denounce the headmaster as the brains behind the gang and the murderer of his counterfeiting colleague, Lemel. The nocturnal comings and goings thus explained, the final mystery is solved when Macroy returns to the school, having been caught attempting to stowaway on a ship bound for America.

L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL is set in a remote village in Haute Savoie, to which the local grandee, the baron, has just returned after travelling the world in search of a mate. Catherine, the childlike daughter of Cornusse, the local globemaker and storyteller, rejects the marriage proposal of the prosaic schoolmaster and offers herself to the more romantic baron, despite the rumours of leprosy which have led to his social ostracisation. Fear begins to grip the village when the priest is assaulted by an intruder intent on stealing a diamond from the Christmas nativity scene and intensifies when the stone is finally stolen during the midnight mass by someone disguised as Father Christmas, who is later found dead in the snow. The body is returned to the home of Cornusse, who usually does the round of the village children on Christmas Eve and so is believed to be the victim. However, a stranger is discovered under the disguise, the baron is found bound and gagged and Cornusse emerges from his bed. The baron maintains he had replaced the drunken Cornusse as Father Christmas only to be assaulted and stripped of the costume, while Cornusse insists that he completed his round. Both are suspected of the crimes. Ensuing investigations reveal that the baron's version of events is correct and that his leprosy is a fiction, designed to maintain his privacy. The real villain is caught leaving the village with the ring, Catherine and the baron are reunited and Cornusse, restored, reputation intact, to his role as Father Christmas, brings a belated present to a little cripple boy who had maintained his faith in Santa Claus.

Despite the dissimilar settings, both films follow a similar pattern: mysterious events occur in an isolated location giving rise to an atmosphere of claustrophobia and hysteria which enhances a xenophobic tendency latent in the community. Against this backdrop of mistrust and suspicion is played out a conflict familiar from 1930s

cinema, that of the dreams and desires of youth emerging in opposition to a mundane or else frightening and potentially corrupt patriarchal society. In both cases the integration of the 'foreigner' into the community plays a constituent part in the resolution of the conflict and the banishment of the atmosphere of unease. The distinctive manner in which these salient points are inscribed in each film demonstrates the extent to which each work is revelatory of the dominant concerns of its period.

The prologue to *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* reads:

On voulait simplement fournir au spectateur une  
occasion de se souvenir de son enfance qui rêvait  
d'aventures merveilleuses.

a nostalgic sentiment which fits in with Siclier's definition of poetic realism as a literary expression of 'la fin d'une société prête à sombrer avec ses illusions perdues.'<sup>1</sup> The conflict between childhood dreams and adult reality which lies at the heart of the film is thus firmly inscribed in the context of the lost idyll central to the archetypal poetic-realist film *QUAI DES BRUMES* (1938) and to other works of the late 1930s.

The 'aventure merveilleuse' dreamed of by the schoolboys Sorgue, Beaume and Macroy in *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* is again typical of the 1930s, a dream shared by Nelly and Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, that of escape to America from the daily reality of the *pension*. To this end they form a secret society which holds nocturnal meetings in the science classroom to discuss how to achieve their goal. The practical leader, Beaume, who believes in proper planning and group action is in conflict with the impatient Macroy, who wishes to strike off on his own and both are presented in contrast to the imaginative Sorgue, a Lange-like figure who is writing

a novel about the three boys adventures in America, thereby substituting fantasy realisation of the dream for practical action. It is through Sorgue that a theme central both to *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* and to *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, the theme of the transformation of reality by the creative imagination, is introduced, just as it is he who initiates the conflict with the adult world when he spots a cloaked figure roaming the school corridors at night, from which moment his fantasy world is infiltrated by sinister elements over which he has no control.

This colonisation of a child's imagination by evil forces, like the oppressive nature of incarceration in a *pensionnat* which serves as the background to dreams of escape, is given visual representation in the text through the use of techniques borrowed from German Expressionism, a stylistic device brought to French cinema in the early 1930s by German technicians fleeing Hitler's Germany and which became one of the hallmarks of poetic realism.

Thus, just as the claustrophobic atmosphere of the boarding school is suggested by long shadows cast on the wall in the form of prison bars, so the descent from dream into nightmare is foretold in the opening credits, which, in typical *film noir* fashion, roll over the shadowy forms of the three boys, advancing slowly across an eerie background to the accompaniment of solemn music. This sets the tone for the rest of the film, in which shadows and silhouettes convey a sense of brooding menace, a device used to particular effect in the nocturnal apparitions of the cloaked figure.

Sorgue's association of the intruder with the hero of an H.G. Wells novel used in an English dictation class and his subsequent denunciation of 'l'homme invisible' prowling the *pensionnat* leads to his own disappearance, which, when closely

followed by that of Macroy, plunges the school into an atmosphere of supernatural mystery more usually found in the pages of Wells or Poe, which is then exacerbated by the sudden death of Lemel. At this point in the film a striking low-angle shot in which the camera turns on its axis to frame the faces of each of the teaching staff in turn, provides a stylistic link between the patriarchal order of the *pensionnat*, the members of which are rendered sinister through the use of expressionistic backlighting, and the source of unease and disruption, 'l'homme invisible'. It also constitutes a fortunate conjunction of form and content, in that the stylised eeriness of the faces aptly reflects the bizarre characters of the schoolmasters.

In the event, the accomplices of the cloaked figure turn out to be not the xenophobic Donadieu, nor the insomniac Planet, nor indeed the repressed homosexual Mazeau, but rather the dipsomaniac Lemel and the criminal mastermind of the counterfeit gang, the deceptively 'normal' headmaster.

In its championing of the cause of youth against age, the film proves itself a typical product of the 1930s thrice over. Firstly, the schoolmasters, who are shown to possess not just odd characters but also a distinct lack of understanding for their charges, constitute in themselves a condemnation of a repressive educational regime against which the pupils rebel when the entire school breaks out of the dormitories to free their comrade imprisoned by the counterfeiters. This moment of liberation is clearly in the anarchic tradition established by the banned Vigo film on a similar theme, *ZERO DE CONDUITE*, as is attested to in the fact that *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* was awarded the Jean Vigo prize.

Secondly, the revelation that the chief villain is in fact the head of the patriarchal order in the film is consistent with the notable tendency of poetic-realist

films to locate villainous tendencies in apparently respectable, upstanding pillars of the bourgeois community.

Thirdly, the other two villains, Michel Simon's Lemel and Robert Le Vigan's 'homme invisible' are stock characters of the poetic-realist school, both sharing certain traits with the figures portrayed by the same actors in *QUAI DES BRUMES*. Lemel epitomises the tortured, corrupt artist whose inability to fulfil his talent has driven him onto a path of criminal activity. In an ironic twist typical of the frustrated aspirations of these doomed artists he uses the money he makes from his production of false banknotes to buy genuine engravings by Dürer, for which he is killed by his accomplice. This inherently tragic character recalls that other 1938 Simon incarnation, Zabel, whose existential alienation arising from the gulf between his emotions and his sex appeal ('C'est une chose affreuse que d'être amoureux comme Roméo quand on a comme moi une tête comme Barbe-Bleue') turns him into psychopathic parcel of contradictions who can attempt to bludgeon a romantic rival to death to the strains of his favourite religious music.

In his self-destructive alcoholism, Lemel also evokes the suicidal artist of *QUAI DES BRUMES*, Krauss, as indeed does Le Vigan's cloaked incarnation of gratuitous violence, with the difference that here the destructive tendencies are directed towards others. Whereas Krauss' artistic vision had seen death everywhere, Le Vigan's visionary character in *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* looks at objects and sees their destructive potential, as he explains to Lemel in a piece of dialogue similar in tone to that in which Krauss describes the drowned man behind the swimmer:

Je suis un homme simple et j'aime les objets simples et amusants. Par exemple, un canif, une boîte d'allumettes. Avec un canif on peut aiguiser un crayon, avec une boîte d'allumettes on peut allumer un feu.

Avec un canif on peut aussi égorger quelqu'un, avec  
une boîte d'allumettes on peut incendier une maison,  
une forêt...

LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL is thus a typical product of 1930s cinema in terms of both style and content, dealing as it does with a theme central to the emblematic films of the period — the impossibility of realising the dreams and potential of youth in a corrupt patriarchal structure — in a manner which employs what could almost be termed the clichés of poetic realism — the use of expressionistic techniques to evoke an atmosphere of claustrophobia and brooding menace, and the central role allotted to (self)/destructive characters whose hyperbolic embodiment of evil and/or *angst* appears to function as a melodramatic symbol of endemic despair and decay. What is however unusual in the film is that the atmosphere of claustrophobia and mutual mistrust, rather than remaining at the level of a general *malaise*, is expressly linked in the text to the political situation facing France in 1938.

At the moment following the death of Lemel and the disappearance of the three pupils, when the hysteria gripping the school has reached its height and the boys in the dining room are whispering about vampires and wishing to go home, the conversation at the masters' table runs as follows:

Donadieu : Vraiment, l'atmosphère devient irrespirable.  
A mon avis, ça va éclater, ça va éclater comme l'orage.  
Planet : Quoi?  
Donadieu : La guerre.

This exchange is but one expression of Donadieu's obsessive fear of war and dislike of foreigners, which is established in the first scene depicting (poor) relations between staff, where Donadieu enjoins Lemel and Planet to desist in their exchange of insults in the following terms: 'Vous n'allez pas vous battre, vous battre entre Français, à un moment où la guerre nous menace et l'étranger est à notre porte.' His

hostility is focused on M. Walter, the recently appointed modern languages teacher, whose passage at that point evokes the following comments from Lemel and Donadieu:

D : Ce M. Walter n'a pas une tête très sympathique.  
L : Il a même une face de faux témoin. Et puis, c'est une brute. Il fait peur aux enfants.

the irony of which is made clear in the following scene, where Lemel bawls out a pupil unfortunate enough to have stepped on his toe and Walter intervenes on behalf of the terrified child, telling his colleague, 'Ce n'est pas bon de crier auprès des enfants. C'est fragile, les enfants, c'est sensible. Quand on crie on les impressionne.'

Such xenophobic behaviour is an obvious example of what Jung called 'shadow projection', which, as he explains in the following paragraph, is one of the factors in the build-up to war:

Obviously, the problem of the shadow plays a great role in all political conflicts. If people observe their own unconscious tendencies in other people, this is called a 'projection'. Political agitation is full of such projections, just as much as the backyard gossip of little groups and individuals.<sup>2</sup>

The attribution of such behaviour to an obviously ridiculous character and the immediate demonstration of its lack of foundation may be viewed as an expression of the desire for peace which was still widespread in the wake of the Munich appeasement.

It is interesting to note that the vilified 'foreigner' is at no time designated as German. Indeed, the film gives contradictory indications of his nationality. While the extra-filmic text — the name, the persona, the spectator's knowledge of Eric von Stroheim, and the fact he had recently appeared as a German officer in two French films about the First World War, *LA GRANDE ILLUSION* (Renoir, 1937) and



MARTHE RICHARD AU SERVICE DE LA FRANCE (Bernard, 1937), — strongly suggests Teutonic origins, in the film itself Walter is shown teaching English, speaks French with a strong anglo-american accent and has a passe-partout name which provides no clues at all.<sup>3</sup>

This reluctance to point the finger clearly in the direction of the neighbours *outré-Rhin* can be attributed to a sudden interest on the part of the Chautemps administration in the propaganda possibilities of the seventh art intervening in the months separating the shooting of LES DISPARUS from that of MARTHE RICHARD and LA GRANDE ILLUSION. In October 1937 a government circular announced that, among other categories, ‘films susceptibles de froisser les sentiments nationaux des peuples étrangers’ would be refused a visa, while ‘films de guerre ou d’espionnage’ would obtain one only in exceptional circumstances.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the characterisation of Walter as an anglophone can be viewed as part of a general cinematographic trend from 1938 onwards to toe the diplomatic line of the day,<sup>5</sup> a trend most noticeable in newsreels, which, in an effort to counter the anglophobia endemic in the French consciousness,<sup>6</sup> produced among other things a special colour report on the visit of the British royal couple to France in July 1938,<sup>7</sup> but also visible in feature films, most notably in Marcel Herbie’s ENTENTE CORDIALE, a propaganda vehicle designed to endear the English to their cross-channel neighbours with an evocation of Paris-loving Prince Bertie’s attempts to engineer an anglo-french agreement in the years preceding the First World War.

Given the sheer tedium of L’Herbier’s lacklustre propaganda effort, it is likely that the less dogmatic and infinitely more amusing DISPARUS DE ST AGIL was more effective in the promotion of international understanding in its depiction of the

gradual integration of the foreigner Walter into the school community. A taciturn and mysterious character who inspires fear and mistrust in his pupils in spite of his humanitarian intentions, he is 'set up' to arouse in the spectator suspicions which are only partly countered by the obvious injustice of the schoolmasters' xenophobic outbursts. The spectator therefore undergoes the same learning process as Beaume, who overcomes his initial distrust of Walter and accepts his help in his enquiry into the fate of his missing comrades. Walter's contribution, while putting Beaume on the right track, is not actually instrumental in ascertaining Sorgue's whereabouts or securing his release. The question of confidence, which is made a central issue in the text, is therefore of symbolic rather than practical importance and it is indeed the full acceptance of Walter as a sympathetic figure, rather than the resolution of the mystery or the realisation of the boys' American dream, which becomes the focal point of the narrative.

Because of this shift in narrative focus, *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* differs from the main canon of poetic-realist films in that it has a happy end. Like Gabin in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and *PEPE LE MOKO*, Beaume, Sorgues and Macroy miss the boat to far-away places, as is underlined in the final sequence which sees the return to the school of Macroy, who had been discovered stowing away on a transatlantic steamer, but whereas the two classic films end in tears with a fatally wounded Gabin sprawled in the street or sliding down a gate, the cosy dénouement of *LES DISPARUS* has Macroy returning to the bosom of Beaume, Sorgue and their new-found friend Walter. Moreover, if a remark made earlier by Beaume on the foolishness of his friends' attempting to reach America 'sans une connaissance parfaite de l'anglais' is not to be regarded as completely fortuitous, the implication

would appear to be that the befriending of Walter, the English master, is not a divergence from the American project, but rather a means of achieving it.

LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL thus displays the stylistic features and deals with some of the themes associated with poetic realism, but far from constituting, to quote Siclier again, 'l'expression littéraire de la fin d'une société prête à sombrer avec ses illusions perdues' and immolating one more anarchic hero on the altar of his impossible dreams, it offers a reconstructed conservative image of a status quo which not only can be rendered acceptable by the elimination of a few bad apples, but in which dreams can come true through education and international understanding.

This inherently optimistic view of society which, being at odds with that presented in the emblematic films of the period, is evidently an expression of the *Weltanschauung* of the original author rather than a manifestation of the ambient *Zeitgeist*, explains why the work of Pierre Véry should be considered suitable for cinematic adaptation in the very different climate of Vichy France, under a regime which lost no time in demonstrating its general abhorrence of all things poetic-realist by banning *QUAI DES BRUMES*. In *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* the dominant themes of *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* (sinister happenings in a closed community, youthful aspirations vs oppressive social order, integration of foreigner into hostile society) recur in a manner which reflects the preoccupations and conditions of the new era.

As noted above, both works fall into the category of *films policiers* and as such respond to the generic demands of a limited number of suspects in a confined space which in itself presupposes the creation of the claustrophobic atmosphere typical of both the cinema of the late 1930s and, as we shall see, that of the Occupation. It

is the transformation of reality through the creative imagination within this self-contained world that produces the whimsical tone which is the definitive feature of both films. If however this fundamental sense of distance from reality is the stamp set by Véry on these adaptations of his work, both the specific form it takes and the way it is conveyed in cinematic terms sets each film firmly in its period.

In *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* the dominant tone is that of German expressionism, both visually in the use of shadows and back-lighting to create an atmosphere of brooding menace, and metaphorically in the evocation of the darker side of human desire and imagination which hinted at a pessimistic view of human destiny at odds with the positive ending. The change in atmosphere in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* is almost literally the difference between night and day, the shadowy confines of school corridors being replaced by the open snows of a remote Savoy village, while the Gothic horror of the invisible men, ghosts and vampires prowling the *pensionnat* in the imagination of its inhabitants, is superseded by fairy tales of Chinese princesses, knights on horseback and Father Christmas.

A sense of isolation, of being cut-off from the rest of the world, is conveyed not by shadowy bars on walls, but by ongoing reports of the whereabouts of the policemen despatched to investigate the murder but unable to reach the village in the snow. The circling motion suggested in 'Partis du nord ils ont gagné le sud pour remonter vers l'est. Ils sont maintenant à l'ouest, cherchant toujours une route praticable mais d'un seul bond ils se sont rapprochés de 2km' is reflected in visual terms when the camera turns 360° on its axis at crucial moments in the film. The resulting impression of geographic distance from contemporary reality enhances the sense of 'otherworldliness' created by the fairy tale aspects of village life and the

overall effect is to situate the action of the film in the 'vase clos' which the American critic of Occupation cinema, Evelyn Ehrlich, judged to be the defining feature of the films of that period, a stylistic reflection of a France cut off from the world and turned in on itself.<sup>8</sup>

The strong emphasis on fairy tale elements in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* point to another tendency generally associated with the cinema of the Occupation, namely the tendency to turn away from contemporary reality. That this 'cinéma d'évasion' came to be considered to be the dominant trend of the period was a consequence of the readiness with which both the new generation of directors, such as Autant-Lara, and those established talents remaining in France, such as Carné and L'Herbier, who had previously favoured contemporary subjects, turned to historical or mythical material, producing a series of 'classic' films — *DOUCE*, *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, and, of course, *LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS* — which did the rounds of post-war Cinéclubs to become synonymous with the Cinema of the Occupation.

More recently critics have sought to relativise the importance of this trend, by pointing out its lack of quantitative substance with respect to overall production of the period. In a chapter entitled 'L'importance relative d'un courant fantastique et légendaire trop vanté' Siclier points out that only ten out of the two hundred and twenty films generally held to constitute the corpus of 'Occupation cinema' 'relevèrent de ce courant' and debunks the commonly expressed idea that this predilection for non-contemporary themes arose from a desire to pass on a coded message of resistance,<sup>9</sup> a notion also dismissed by Jeancolas in his discussion of this 'veine fantastique et poétique'.<sup>10</sup>

Both critics are however dealing specifically with films in which the evasion of contemporary reality took the form of a flight into the realms of myth and fantasy, rather than a simple relocation in time. The number of historical films, such as *DOUCE* or *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*, form a greater percentage of the total production of those years than the 10/220 quoted by Siclier and are equally part of the 'cinéma d'évasion'. Indeed, there is frequently no clear dividing line between the two groups, as films such as *LE BARON FANTOME* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* include both historical and mythical elements. It remains a fact that the films comprising this 'cinéma d'évasion' are not numerically superior to other productions of the period, just as the films which could be classed as poetic-realist form a relatively feeble percentage of the cinematic output of the 1930s, and in this sense the caveat of Siclier and Jeancolas must be borne in mind. Nevertheless, given the long-standing reputation of these films, it seems reasonable to view them as in some way specifically representative of their period just as poetic realism is commonly regarded as emblematic of the 1930s.

Given the strong mythical element which pervades it, *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* can be seen as a precursor of the 'veine fantastique et poétique', which Jeancolas dates as running from *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* (L'Herbier, 1942) to *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* (de Poligny, 1944).<sup>11</sup> However, its mythical content, far from constituting an avoidance of daily life, is in fact a reflection of contemporary political discourses.

The poetic-mythical elements in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* take the form of the transformation of reality through the creative imagination, in this case the imagination of *le père Cornusse*, globe-maker and story-teller extraordinaire, who,

in addition to delighting the local children with tales of far-away places, moonlights as Santa Claus every Christmas Eve, and in that role chastises the children for pranks committed throughout the year before promising toys. He thus represents an essentially benign attitude to child-rearing, which involves stimulation of the imagination to the point where distinctions between reality and fantasy are blurred, and the gentle imposition of a moral order linked, through the Father Christmas figure, to Christianity. This is opposed in the text to the more brusque methods and the bourgeois rationalist ideology favoured by the schoolmaster, Villard, who appears in the first sequence of the film, which opens with a close-up of a classroom clock with the inscription 'Temps perdu ne se rattrape jamais', and then reveals Villard at work, bawling 'petits cancre' at his charges, threatening to impose homework over the Christmas holidays as a punishment for inattention, and finally bribing the children to participate in his planned disruption of the midnight mass with the promise of 'bonbons offerts par la Ligue pour la Défense de la Libre Pensée'.

A conflict between two different types of education, and, by extension, of world-view, therefore lies at the heart of L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, just as it featured strongly in LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL. Cornusse is presented as a sympathetic figure with a real understanding of children's needs in contrast to the severe, militantly rationalist Villard, just as Walter was shown to demonstrate a benevolent attitude to his pupils unlike that of his xenophobic colleagues. Similarly, if in LES DISPARUS Walter's attempt to please the pupils by choosing an H.G. Wells novel for class dictation misfires, leading to Sorgues' disappearance and raising suspicion as to his own part in the strange goings-on, so in L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, the beneficial effect of Cornusse's tales upon the young, and

finally the honesty of the man himself, are increasingly called into question.

Firstly, blame for the *impasse* in which his daughter Catherine finds herself, no longer a child but unable to accede to adult life in a world for which her father's tales have left her ill-prepared, and which is giving even Cornusse cause for concern, is laid directly at Cornusse's door, as the following exchange with Villard makes clear:

V : Vous avez des ennuis, Cornusse?

C : Ah, oui, la santé de Catherine. Ce n'est pas qu'elle soit malade, mais elle est de plus en plus dans la lune. Elle ne mange pas. Elle ne boit pas.

V : C'est ces poupées, ces chansons, toutes ces histoires que vous lui racontez. Elle rêve même quand elle est éveillée... Un peu moins de légendes, de féerie, un peu plus de bifteck et du vin rouge. Ce qu'il faut à Catherine pour la ramener sur terre, c'est un enfant qui crie et qui a besoin d'elle.

Secondly, proof of the unfortunate effects of Cornusse's story-telling is given in the example of the baron, returning in a state of financial ruin and despair after years of wandering the world on a vain quest suggested by childhood tales of the Chinese bandit, Fi-Chiu, and his beautiful daughter, whom the baron had determined to marry. He too blames Cornusse for his wasted youth and squandered fortune, telling him:

C'est à cause de vous que je me suis ruiné et que j'ai perdu 10 ans de ma vie. Souvent je vous ai maudit de loin à cause de vos histoires qui avaient troublé mon imagination d'enfant.

Finally, Cornusse's reputation is left in shreds after the strange events of Christmas Eve, when a valuable ring disappears from church after a midnight mass at which the only person in its vicinity was a hooded Father Christmas. Even after the body of a stranger dressed in Cornusse's Santa Claus outfit has been found dead



on the snow, the suspicion persists that Cornusse had stolen the ring to safeguard the future after his death of his more-or-less unmarried daughter.

The title of the film has thus a double meaning, in that Santa is assassinated on two different levels. The literal murder of the fake Father Christmas is in fact of less importance than the threatened demise of the myth of Father Christmas, through the suggestion that the creation of a magical world has a detrimental effect on children, and the doubts that are raised as to the moral character of his human impersonator. That this attack strikes at an article of faith as central to the community as Christianity itself is indicated in Cornusse's surprised protestation: 'Vous n'allez pas me soupçonner? Moi, le Père Noël? Presque le bon Dieu, quoi.'

The full significance of this questioning of both the value of myth and the probity of its patriarchal purveyor, and of the related conflict between poetic mysticism and bourgeois rationality, becomes apparent when placed in the contemporary political context of a society seeking a scapegoat for its humiliating defeat and the discourse of national regeneration employed by Pétain.

In his 1985 study *Vichy et l'imaginaire totalitaire*, Chalas maintains that

La nouvelle voie dans laquelle la France s'engageait sous Vichy prenait l'allure d'une véritable initiation. Un simple programme politique de rechange paraissait ne plus suffire. Pétain frappait à la cloison de la mystique pour tenter de répondre à l'attente des Français. Il proposait une gnose pour résoudre leurs problèmes. Sa Révolution nationale en avait les caractéristiques: connaissance salvifique de la totalité; manichéisme impliquant un combat héroïque contre les tenants du mal dans ce monde; et affliction rédemptrice comme phase intermédiaire entre la chute initiale et la plénitude à venir.<sup>12</sup>

The 'gnose' proposed by Pétain, had, according to Chalas, three main planks, in accordance with the fascination for triadic formulae demonstrated by doctrines intent

on embracing the totality of the human experience (eg. Father, Son, Holy Ghost; *ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*). These were “le ‘chaos’, la ‘souffrance’ et ‘l’oeuvre’”.<sup>13</sup>

As regards the first, Chalas explains that ‘Le mythe du chaos ressort de la condamnation de la société économique par l’idéologie pétainiste...’<sup>14</sup> The moral climate of the III<sup>e</sup> République was held responsible for the débâcle of 1940 in that it had embraced the false values of materialism, individualism and self-gratification at the expense of the more traditional spiritual values of community and self-sacrifice. The religious framework in which Pétain placed the defeat, as expressed in a meeting of the *Conseil des Ministres*, 13 June 1940:

Je suis donc d’avis de ne pas abandonner le sol français  
et d’accepter la souffrance qui sera imposée à la Patrie  
et à ses fils. La renaissance française sera le fruit de  
cette souffrance.<sup>15</sup>

and emphasised in his subsequent public addresses, which were peppered with terms such as *faute, expiation, redressement moral* is indicative of a desire to restore to the French people those archaic, spiritual values which, according to Chalas, are absent from modern, capitalist societies, in which the transcendental needs of wo/man are ignored.<sup>16</sup>

Viewed in this context, the conflict between the magical, mythical world of le père Cornusse and the rationalist materialism expounded by Villard is representative of the contest between the new order and the old, or, in the manicheist terms of Pétainisme, the good and the bad, just as the ‘testing’ of Cornusse and the calling into doubt of the values he represents can be seen as an illustration of the second element in the Pétainiste gnosis, ‘la souffrance’, ‘la souffrance sentie et vécue ni comme un châtement, ni comme un scandale, mais comme un état ou une étape d’une action fondatrice...’,<sup>17</sup> which, as indicated in the statement by Pétain at of 13

June 1940 quoted above, was central to his doctrine from the beginning.

In L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, Cornusse's calvary begins when he is suspected by his fellow villagers of being both a thief and a murderer, intensifies when he is unable to convince them of his innocence, and culminates in a 'mad' scene when, having discovered the stolen ring concealed in his globe shop sign, he begins to doubt his own sanity, suspects his *concitoyens* of conspiring against him and rushes around screaming: 'Ce n'est pas vrai. Je ne suis pas un assassin.' His fears of madness and/or conspiracy appear to be confirmed when he fetches the mayor to show him the ring, only to discover the globe has disappeared.

The globe has in fact been stolen by two boys anxious to fulfil the Christmas wish of their invalid brother, Christian, who, disappointed by Father Christmas' non-appearance, has decided to die to join him in heaven. They are stopped by the true villain of the piece, Ricomet the chemist, who removes the ring, and, when Christian's mother pleads with him to go to Grenoble to get medicine to save her son, seizes the opportunity to escape the village with his loot, a move which proves his undoing as he is caught by the waiting *gendarmes*.

And so, as in LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL, the shepherd turns out to be the wolf, as Ricomet was a member of the town council charged with investigating the affair, and an apparently upstanding pillar of the community. While his guilt can be seen as both a standard device in detective mysteries and part of a French literary tradition of satirizing the self-important, self-seeking bourgeoisie — in his hypocritical response to Christian's mother's grateful outburst of 'Vous êtes un saint homme', 'Ah non, tout simplement un petit pharmacien de seconde classe qui à l'occasion sait faire son devoir', he provides a reminder of Flaubert's Homais — in the specific context

of the discourse outlined above, it constitutes the condemnation of the materialist, morally bankrupt bourgeois order which was the first element in the Pétainiste creed.

This illustration of 'le chaos' and 'la souffrance' is followed by a demonstration of the third element, 'l'oeuvre', which is closely linked with the notion of 'renaissance', the regeneration of the French nation through self-sacrifice and submission to the common good:

Une France nouvelle est née. Cette France, ce sont vos épreuves, vos remords, vos sacrifices qui l'ont faite. Comme vous saurez la faire belle maintenant. (Message de Noël du maréchal Pétain, 25 décembre 1940)<sup>18</sup>

His reputation restored, Cornusse disguises himself once more as Father Christmas and leads a party from the village to the bedside of the sick little cripple, Christian, who had decided to die to go to Santa, if Santa would not come to him. Holding out the globe which Christian had ardently desired as a Christmas present, and intoning the words, 'Tu as accepté de mourir pour ce que tu aimes, alors tu mérites de vivre.', Cornusse tempts the boy to rise from his sickbed and take a few stumbling steps towards him.

This final sequence thus marks the final triumph of the mythico-religious world-view over rationalist materialism. Not only has Cornusse stepped into the breach, saving the boy callously abandoned in his hour of need by the self-seeking Ricomet, but he has also succeeded where medicine failed in making him walk again by calling upon the strength of his faith in a supernatural father-figure, for whom he was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice. If this does not exactly represent the apotheosis of Cornusse — the boy's name is an obvious reference to Christian mythology — his endowment with the thaumaturgic powers historically the preserve of kings does establish him as a channel for spiritual regeneration, a reflection

perhaps of the status aspired to by the head of state, whose paternal addresses to the nation — ‘Ressaisissez-vous. Chassez vos alarmes. Venez à moi avec confiance. Tous unis, nous sortirons de la nuit où nous a plongés l’affreuse aventure.’<sup>19</sup> — have a certain evangelical ring to them.

A similar progression through the three stages of the Pétainiste gnosis defined by Chalas is clearly discernible in the second strand of the film’s plot, the love story between Catherine Cornusse and the baron. As indicated above, both initially appear to be casualties of Cornusse’s fondness for creating a fictional world. The first shot of Catherine in the film, which shows her in her toy-filled bedroom asleep on a chair cuddling a doll in her arms suggests that she has remained in a state of retarded childhood, unwilling to relinquish the magical fantasies fostered by her father for the realities of adult life.

The baron meanwhile, freshly returned from a long absence spent on a wild goose chase after the daughter of Fi-Chiu on which Cornusse’s Chinese fairy-tales had sent him, an experience which has left him not only ruined and embittered, but also a stranger in his native village, chooses, like Catherine, to remain incommunicado by creating a rumour that he suffers from leprosy. His ruse results in the same kind of hysterical reaction against the unknown which underlies the xenophobia depicted in *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL*. Thus, when the local policeman reports to the mayor at the inn: ‘Il paraît que nous avons dans le village un pestiféré. M. Ricomet déclare que le baron, il a la peste. Les gens ont déjà les brûlures, les démangaisons’, the reaction of the belote players at a neighbouring table are a caricature of the casual brutality and inhumanity which are part of the mentality of apparently normal citizens:

- On devrait l'abattre au pistolet.
- Je trompe. Et brûler le cadavre.
- Belote. Et le château aussi.

The love story has therefore the primary narrative function of bringing about both a young girl's passage to adulthood — a classical theme — and the integration of a foreigner into the community, a theme familiar to us from *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL*. The form it takes is, however, once again, a reflection of discourses peculiar to the period of the *Révolution nationale*.

The conflict between the poetic-mythical world-view of Cornusse and the rational materialism of Villard which was evident in their different approach to children is repeated in the debate over the future of Catherine, whom Villard wishes to marry and waken from the state of *rêverie* in which a constant diet of fairy tales has left her. Her refusal to enter the adult world on his terms, to exchange her romantic dreams for his bourgeois plans is evident in the bizarre proof she demands of his love, ignoring completely his prosaic, materialist notions of marital bliss:

C : Jamais vous ne passez devant la maison à cheval.  
 V : A cheval?  
 C : Pourquoi vous ne portez pas d'épée?  
 V : Une épée? Pourquoi faire?  
 C : Pour combattre les ennemis du royaume. Pour me protéger contre des bêtes féroces. Vous m'avez bien dit que vous m'aimiez d'amour.  
 V : Oui, mais je voudrais vous rendre heureuse à ma manière en vous offrant des robes, des choses bonnes à manger, un appartement avec le chauffage central...  
 C : Mais à la promenade, quand nous rencontrerons un homme qui oserait me regarder, est-ce que vous le tuerez?  
 V : Le tuer?  
 C : Ou seriez-vous un homme dans le genre de Barbe-bleue?

and so constitutes a rejection of the rationalist order he represents. Forsaking the offer of a centrally heated flat, she goes instead to the *château*, in search of the more

romantic figure of the baron, and in so doing begins a spiritual journey of suffering, sacrifice and rebirth which illustrates notions central to Pétainiste ideology.

Having found the baron, she provides a fine demonstration of Christian charity and civic duty by offering to replace his servant and shop for him in a village where he himself would be refused bread and milk. Her readiness to brave both leprosy and village prejudice constitutes the self-sacrifice which is a prelude to the process of rebirth. The solemnity of the baron's tone when he asks

B : Catherine Cornusse, savez-vous pourquoi Marie veut s'en aller?

C : Oui.

B : Et vous êtes venue quand même. Bientôt je ferai peur à voir. Moi aussi, j'aurai une tâche noir sur le front. Catherine, vous qui ne craignez pas la lèpre, permettez que je vous embrasse.

designates her sacrifice and his acceptance of it as a quasi-sacred rite, here expressed in secular, fairy-tale form. Like Sleeping Beauty in reverse, she is sent to sleep by her baron's kiss, but only to awaken from this momentary slumber a new girl, who experiences for the first time hunger and thirst. Reaching for some bread, she tells the baron:

C : Je ne m'y reconnais plus. Moi, qui n'avais jamais faim. C'est bon de manger. J'ai soif aussi.

B : Mais ce n'est que de l'eau fraîche.

C : Le pain sec et l'eau fraîche. C'est merveilleux.

The baron has thus succeeded where Villard failed in arousing her from her dreamlike state, not by tempting her with modern conveniences, but in restoring her to an appreciation of the basic essentials in life, a reflection surely of Pétain's *retour à la terre* philosophy.

However, as was the case with her father and with Christian, Catherine's faith has to be tested before her happiness is assured. She and the baron arrange a

post-midnight mass rendez-vous, for which Catherine dresses like a fairy tale princess in one of the magnificent gowns from the castle wardrobes, which sets her apart from the locals at the inn where she awaits her Prince Charming. The baron, meanwhile, having replaced the drunken Cornusse as Father Christmas and been then knocked unconscious by the stranger who steals his costume, is unable to keep his date.

When he fails to appear at the inn, the despairing Catherine is surrounded by dancers who circle around her. The camera alternates between point-of-view shots from the situation of the dancers and that of Catherine, conveying in both cases a disturbing, vertiginous sensation, which links in with the circling imagery described above as one of the contributing factors to the film's claustrophobic atmosphere, and positions Catherine as the victim of the villagers' unthinking cruelty. The reverse shots from her point of view isolate the grinning face of Villard amid the flurry of heads, which, in conjunction with his remarks on seeing her dressed in her princess' dress:

Ils ont la folie de grands airs en cette famille. Le père se déguise en Père Noël, la fille en Sainte Vierge.....Vous êtes réveillée maintenant, vous paraissez encore plus folle. Tout le monde se moque de vous.

establishes that this scene is once again about the issue at the heart of the film, the contest between the rationalist and the mythical way of regarding the world.

The sequence culminates in the news of Father Christmas/Cornusse's supposed demise arriving at the inn, upon which Catherine promptly faints and is carried home. This second descent into the realm of Orpheus proves the final stage in the death/rebirth process. The combined efforts of the local worthies and the regional police force find both Cornusse and the baron alive and well and establish both the



innocence of the former and, in the course of their investigations into his possible complicity in the murder/theft, the freedom from leprosy of the latter. Nothing now stands in the way of Father Christmas making a belated visit to the little boy who never ceased to believe in him, just as the baron is free to keep his forcibly postponed rendezvous with the faithful Catherine.

The parallel between the young girl and the child who both have faith in a *monde merveilleux* is emphasised in the final sequence, which shows both Christian and Catherine getting their heart's desire as the film ends in the realm of fantasy. The camera pans away from the little boy, who has been restored to health and claimed his globe, through a window to the room in which the baron is seen putting the earrings destined for his bride onto Catherine. This movement is accompanied by the voice of Cornusse telling the children a story which effectively turns the occupants of the Savoy village into characters in the Chinese imagination and Catherine into a fairy-tale princess:

- Les petits chinois, ils parlent de quoi?
- De la France et des petits Français. Et puis d'une certaine princesse très belle qui dormait dans son fauteuil. Il y avait longtemps qu'elle était endormie et dans son sommeil elle faisait un rêve, un rêve merveilleux, toujours le même. Elle rêvait du Prince Charmant qui devait un jour venir la réveiller pour lui apporter le bonheur.

This scene invites comparison with a similar scene from an early poetic-realist film of the 1930s, *LA RUE SANS NOM*. As described in Chapter Four, the film also contains a sequence in which a father-figure comforts a sick child with tales of travelling to China, but in this instance, far from being miraculously cured, the child dies in his arms, a reflection of the general failure of the film's working class/socially marginalized fathers not only to inject an element of magic into the unrelenting

drabness of slum life, but indeed to provide any kind of decent future for their children. The contrast with Catherine's ascension into never-never-land could not be more obvious, and indeed exemplifies the move from a cinema which dealt with the social realities of slum clearances to one specializing in wish fulfilment and the construction of castles in Spain.

The dynamics of the father/daughter/younger male trio have also undergone a subtle change. Although the relationship between Catherine and the baron has some of the connotations of love as a form of regression into early childhood familiar from the archetypal films of the 1930s, it differs from the earlier films in that where there was either a mutual regression — as in *QUAI DES BRUMES* — or, more commonly, the male was the subject of the regression just as he was the subject of the film, dramatic interest is now focused on the female. It is Catherine's stunted emotional development and inability to break free from her father's influence which is set up at the beginning of the film as one of the problems to be overcome in the course of the narrative, and the importance of this strand is emphasised at various points in the text. For example, her subsequent progression from childhood to adulthood is highlighted by a quick cut from Cornusse telling some of the villagers 'Elle est encore plus dans la lune. A 18 ans, un miroir, elle ne sait pas à quoi ça sert' to a shot of Catherine applying lipstick in front of a mirror, her hair released from its childish plaits, in preparation for her date with the baron.

The catalyst for this progression is the reappearance of the baron, for whom she experiences a *coup de foudre* which releases her, from her dreamlike state, enabling her to make the transfer of affection from father to lover which is a precondition for adulthood, as is indicated in the following exchange between

Cornusse and Catherine:

- Tu connais cet homme depuis 2 jours. Tu ne peux pas l'aimer tellement.
- Oh, si.
- Plus que moi?
- Autrement.

The progression is however part of a process of regression, as the baron, like the love objects in 1930s films, represents a return to the lost security of childhood. Just as Jean's pronunciation of her name in *QUAI DES BRUMES* takes Nelly back to a time of lost innocence, so the baron recalls for Catherine release from her childish terrors, as she explains in her evocation of his nocturnal rides on his favourite horse:

J'entends encore le bruit de ses sabots. Le soir, je rêvais sous la table. Le père me disait, 'Catherine, va te coucher.' Mais j'avais peur dans ma chambre où il faisait noir. Mais quand j'avais entendu les pas de Sultan qui vous ramenait, j'allais me coucher, je n'avais plus peur.

It is however only an echo, which, like any passing resemblance to themes in *LA RUE SANS NOM*, serves merely to highlight the very different ethos prevailing in the cinema of the early Occupation. Whereas Jean embodied values quite distinct from and indeed opposed to those of the dominant father-figure and absent from the patriarchal society portrayed in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, the distinction between father and lover implied in the transference of affection from one to the other in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* is in fact as false as the indication that Catherine progresses from childhood to adulthood is misleading.

Far from providing a release from the patriarchal regime, her love affair is, on the contrary, a vindication of all that her father stands for, as it provides a concrete realisation of his fairy tale world. The baron is the prince Catherine has been

waiting for since childhood, the suitor who fulfils the conditions she laid down to Villard, as he had indeed passed their house on horseback when she was a child, and he now offers all the trappings of Bluebeard, a large castle filled with portraits of women, albeit it ancestresses rather than former wives, and costumes in which to dress up as a princess.

This lack of an alternative is symptomatic of the 'vase clos' which is the definitive feature of Occupation cinema and it provides the perfect illustration of the essential difference between this and the claustrophobic atmosphere associated with the emblematic films of the pre-war period. In *QUAI DES BRUMES* the dominant tone was one of brooding menace arising from the knowledge that the central love affair was doomed, and with it the ideals it embodied which could not be realised in prevailing social conditions. If these films ended in tears, and the boat sailed without the hero, who was fated from the beginning never to make it to America, they at least had the merit of postulating the existence of an *ailleurs* in some extra-filmic space, and allowing the spectator to mourn its loss.

In *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, on the other hand, the regressive desires of the heroine never come to grief on the rocks of harsh reality, as she never emerges from the world of fantasy which is the dominant mode of the film. This retreat from reality has its counterpart in the progress of the hero, which illustrates the irrelevance of any notion of a geographic *ailleurs*. It also exemplifies the withdrawal from the realm of the physical to that of the spiritual, a second form of rejection of the world which is part and parcel of the concept of *huis-clos* central to the film.

Having travelled the world in vain in search of the princess daughter of the

bandit king of Cornusse's fairy tales, the baron must return to his native village to find the bride he was seeking in Catherine. The explanation he gives of his misguided wanderings to Cornusse:

J'ignorais alors que le vrai Fi-Chiu, l'authentique,  
habitait le département de Savoie et qu'il avait une fille.  
Fi-Chiu, c'était vous, et la princesse Aurore...

along with his *cri de cœur* to Ricomet, 'J'ai voyagé dans presque tous les pays du monde et j'ai appris qu'on est nulle part mieux que chez soi.' sum up the moral of this latter-day pilgrim's tale. Like Dorothy back in Kansas in THE WIZARD OF OZ, he has learned that *le bonheur* is to be found in one's own backyard.

This is in complete accord with Pétainiste ideology, which would see le clocher du village as representing the best of all possible worlds. Similarly, Cornusse's explanation of why he makes globes: 'Ça me permet de voyager, moi qui ne suis jamais sorti du département' does suggest longing for an *ailleurs* through the only means of escape possible in a defeated country, that of a purely mental voyage into the realms of the imagination. This method of making a virtue out of a necessity is apotheosized in the film's final flight into fantasy, in which both Catherine and the baron are granted what was denied to the young protagonists of LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL: the realization of the ideals of their childhood.

The extent to which L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, with its promotion of a return to basic values and its emphasis on the mythico-fantastic with Christian overtones, reflects the values and concerns of the period of the early Occupation can be judged through a brief comparison with a film of such impeccably Pétainiste credentials that its subject was rumoured to have been suggested by Pétain himself,<sup>20</sup> a rumour recounted as fact by Chirat in his entry on the film in his catalogue of

French fiction films 1940—1950.

LA NUIT MERVEILLEUSE was shot in the zone libre in 1940 and is one of the very few films of the Occupation to make direct reference to contemporary events, in this case the *débâcle* and *l'exode*, which are placed in the context of the nativity story. Like L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, the film takes place on Christmas Eve, when a latter day Mary and Joseph, driven from their home in the city by *les événements*, roam the countryside in search of work, shelter and a barn in which to give birth.

Whatever the actual role played by Pétain in the genesis of the film, the influence of Pétainisme on the storyline, which is the perfect illustration of a retour à la terre, is clear, even without the added emphasis of lines of dialogue such as Joseph's vow: 'Je veux travailler la terre. Comme ça, ma femme n'aura jamais faim.' Again, virtue is made of necessity as enforced exile from the town leads to a rediscovery of the basic things in life. It is this notion of spiritual regeneration through a return to first principles<sup>21</sup> that is reflected in Catherine's enthusiastic reaction to the victuals offered her by the baron - 'Le pain, l'eau fraîche. C'est merveilleux.' which is indicative of her spiritual awakening to the simple pleasures in life.

The same theme, overlaid with the rejection of the big wide world and the promotion of Pétainiste family values, is reinforced in LA NUIT MERVEILLEUSE in the reaction of the three 'wise men' — here a wandering soldier and sailor and intellectual — to the scene of domestic bliss in the stable, which inspires the following sentiments:

- Une femme et un gosse, ça doit être mieux que de courir les routes.

- Ah oui, on est allé chercher loin ce qui était tout près de nous.

a conclusion not unlike that reached by the baron in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*.

*L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* is thus clearly a film of the early Occupation, of that period captured in newsreel footage of flag-waving French lining the streets to acclaim their saviour Pétain, in that, like *LA NUIT MERVEILLEUSE*, it provides a cinematic treatment of those discourses otherwise being circulated in speeches and in print by supporters of the new regime. Like the 1940 manifestations of figures of the nativity, Catherine and the baron provide a walking, talking illustration of the following laudatory text from 1941:

Et l'homme voit s'ouvrir la prison de sa solitude; il redevient ce qu'il doit être pour être réellement lui-même: l'homme d'une famille, d'un métier, d'une province, d'un pays, d'une religion. Il reprend conscience de tout ce qu'il trouve dans l'honneur et la sécurité du foyer, dans le coude à coude du travail, dans l'amour du sol natal et la fierté du sang, dans le rayonnement d'une foi partagée.<sup>22</sup>

The central difference between *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* and *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* can be defined in terms of the notion of *vase clos*, in that this covers both the stylistic and thematic developments which allow the later film to convey the ideological elements outlined above. In *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* the extensive use of German expressionist techniques both creates a claustrophobic atmosphere of brooding menace and represents the transformation of childish dreams into Gothic nightmare through the intervention of corrupt patriarchal figures. In *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, the circling movement of the *gendarmes* seeking the village through the snow both emphasises the isolation of the

setting and provides a visual metaphor for the circular progression of the main protagonists and the lack of alternative 'realities' proposed in the diegesis. If, in the 1939 film, the young heroes had in their American dream a fantasy of escape from the patriarchal regime in which they were contained, and the non-fulfilment of this dream could be seen as analogous to the tragic failure of the regressive desires of adult poetic-realist heroes when confronted by the realities of a corrupt, patriarchal society, by 1941 all such conflict has disappeared and Catherine never leaves the realm of fantasy created by her benevolent father.

Similarly, the integration of the foreigner theme common to both films reflects in each case the political climate of the time. The real foreigner who is the target of xenophobia and arouses fears of war in *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* is replaced in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* by a home-grown fairy-tale figure who can remove his 'foreignness' by removing his glove to reveal a hand untouched by leprosy. In the earlier film, the boys' acceptance of the Anglo-Germanic Walter as a confidant can be seen both as a plea for international understanding in the face of prejudice, and, in as much as there is a suggestion that his language teaching skills can help towards the future realization of the boys' American dream, it represents the possibility of breaking away from the enclosed world of the *pensionnat* and, by extension, France. The integration of the baron into Cornusse's fantasy world is, on the other hand, part of a rejection of the external world symbolic of a country turning in on itself.

Both films are representative of their period, in that the doom-laden atmosphere and the lack of confidence in male authority figures expressed in *LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL* can be interpreted as a reflection of the mood of a country



which had lost faith in the ability and/or probity of its leaders as it headed inexorably towards war, while the sense of isolation which is the dominant feature of *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, and is augmented by the retreat first from the rest of the world, then from reality itself into a never-land generated by the fertile imagination of an ageing patriarch, is indicative not only of the political situation of an occupied country cut off from its allies, but also of a change in the media construction of symbols of male authority and of the public attitude to the country's dominant father-figure.

Although the predominance in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* of elements attributable to *l'air du temps* make it very much a film of the early Occupation, the text also contains certain features linking it with works of the 1930s, a fact noted by Siclier, who detects beneath the film's fairy-tale trappings 'un univers esthétique de mythologie d'avant-guerre'.<sup>23</sup> This strand of the film is concentrated in the character of *la mère Michel* who, despite being to a certain extent a constituent part of the fairy-tale atmosphere of the film, in that she is an incarnation of a French nursery rhyme character, is something of a throwback to poetic realism on a philosophical as well as an aesthetic level. The speech she makes to the assembled company following the news of the baron's disease:

Vous confondez, messieurs, la peste avec la lèpre. La peste est redoutable, mais tout le monde est plus ou moins lèpreux... Tout le monde, tous les jours, perd un peu de sa vie. Et ça n'effraie personne. Un petit doigt, un bout d'oreille, une chose aimée, un peu de sa vie, un autre petit doigt, une autre oreille, toute sa vie, et puis voilà.

is reminiscent of the speeches of Le Vigan in his various pre-war guises and so of the existentialist despair which marked poetic-realist films while there is a distinctly

German Expressionist feel to shots of her vampire-like figure disappearing into the distance, the camera lingering on the dramatic contrast of black cloak against white snow.

She therefore strikes a jarring note with the more upbeat, salvationist Pétainiste world-view which informs the flight into fantasy of the happy end, not only in her references to death but also in her association with the themes of sexual perversion and sterility, which contrast sharply with the *heile Welt* image of a 'normal' pair of lovers, and a father surrounded by a crowd of children offered at the end of the film. Thus, she denounces her lover to the Conseil Municipal as follows:

Celui que je désigne n'est pas un homme normal. C'est un monstre. Il griffait Mistou, il se promène la nuit, il porte des bas de femme, il met de l'arsenic dans tous ses médicaments et Dieu seul sait de quoi il est capable.

and is herself evidence of an abnormal state of infertility; a 'mother' without children, her affections are directed towards her cat, Mistou, whom she seeks in vain throughout the film, until it is revealed that the unfortunate animal is in fact sitting stuffed in her cupboard — a macabre twist which is not in the nursery rhyme. A dark-haired, dark-cloaked, prematurely-aged figure redolent of sexual frustration, *la mère Michel* can be seen as the antithesis of the blonde Catherine in her white ball dress, a young girl on the verge of sexual awakening.

With regard to this inscription in the text of the character of *la mère Michel* as a disruptive element, *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* is a Janus-headed film which not only points back to poetic realism, but also looks forward to certain trends in later films of the Occupation, notably the tendency to present a black and white world-view both visually, by using German expressionist techniques in contrast to airy, outdoor or overexposed shots, and metaphorically, by contrasting fairy-tale and

nightmare worlds, a tendency which is present only in embryonic form in L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, where the fairy tale atmosphere associated with Cornusse predominates.

The black cloaked figure of *la mère Michel* is the only visual representation of opposition to Cornusse's snow white world and she is a marginal figure in terms of both diegetic social status and number and length of appearances in the film. Just as she is inscribed in the text through German expressionist type shots which, in LES DISPARUS DE ST AGIL, were used to convey the oppressive, *angst*-inducing nature of the corrupt patriarchal order, so too the negative concepts traditionally associated with corrupt father-figures — death, infertility — are displaced onto this mother figure.

In its positioning of a father-figure on the side of the angels, and proclamation of faith in his vision, L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL is, as subsequent chapters will show, quintessentially a film of the early Occupation. In later films the negative qualities and cinematographic style associated with the character of *la mère Michel* would once again be attributed to a patriarchal order denoted as oppressive and corrupt.

If the positive characterization of the father-figure was a feature of the early Occupation which would not stand the test of time, the predominance of a father/daughter relationship in the text was to be a mark of the most important films of the entire period, while the alteration of the father/daughter/son (rival) triangle familiar from the cinema of the 1930s, through the shift of focus onto the young female at the expense of the young male lead, was, as we shall see, a development typical of the Occupation cinema

## CHAPTER SIX : NOTES

1. Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son Cinéma* (Paris: Veyrier, 1981) p. 156.
2. C.G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (London: Picador, 1978) p. 181.
3. The same confusion obtains in another film of the immediate pre-war, *DERRIERE LA FACADE* (1939), in which von Stroheim and Betty Stockfeld, an actress of Australian origin who made her career in France playing characters of diverse ethnicity, portray a couple of shady and clearly foreign characters. The suggestion of identification with the teutonic von Stroheim contained in the male character being accredited the name 'Eric', is counterbalanced by the fact that the one foreign language word he speaks is in English, and that his companion is designated as 'l'Anglaise'.
4. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente: le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) p. 232.
5. For an account of what he dubs 'le cinéma mobilisé', see Jeancolas, pp. 231—267.
6. A certain reserve towards the English found its expression in the anglophobic discourse which was a persistent if minor feature of pre-1938 French cinema. Examples of English wickedness and depravity which spring to mind are the lesbian good-time girl Elisabeth in the filmic adaptation of Marguerite's *LA GARÇONNE* (de Limur, 1936), and the demonic Lord Oswill in *L'HOMME A L'HISPANO* (Epstein, 1933), while the English aristocracy of *LE VAGABOND BIEN-AIME* (Bernhard, 1936) is portrayed as both morally and financially bankrupt and terminally snobbish and strait-laced.
7. Jeancolas, pp. 239—240.
8. Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) p. 97.
9. Siclier, p. 139.
10. Jeancolas, pp. 327—328.
11. Jeancolas, p. 327.
12. Yves Chalas, *Vichy et l'Imaginaire Totalitaire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1985) p. 46.
13. Chalas, p. 54.
14. Chalas, p. 55.

15. Chalas, p. 58.
16. 'Evolutionnisme, matérialisme et rationalisme n'existent pas par hasard dans nos sociétés... Ils se soutiennent et se complètent, et l'ordre économique ne saurait s'en passer. Ils forment les maillons d'une seule et même chaîne qui enserre le merveilleux, entrave la rêverie humaine et suspend la cérémonie du monde. Ils confortent le processus de désymbolisation et de déculturation qui accompagnent l'établissement de la société économique.' Chalas, p. 66.
17. Chalas, p. 57.
18. Chalas, p. 58.
19. 'Il y a un an, Message du 17 juin 1941', quoted in Chalas, p. 59.
20. Jeancolas, p. 326.
21. The moral implications of the *retour à la terre* philosophy are summed up in Pétain's famous statement 'La terre, elle, ne ment pas.'
22. R. Postal, in *France 1941* (Paris: Alsatia, 1941) quoted in Chalas, p. 62.
23. Siclier, p. 157.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Father/daughter relationships in

LES VISITEURS DU SOIR and LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE

The foregoing analysis of *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* identified a number of developments in the inscription of themes and structures familiar from films of the 1930s which, it was suggested, were characteristic of the cinema of the Occupation. These included a modification in the signification of the central love relationship, which, rather than being an expression of the regressive desires of the male lead, articulates ambient Pétainiste discourses within a framework of mutual salvation. It thereby reflects both the increased element of spirituality within Occupation cinema and its movement away from male-centred texts towards films in which the leading female role is accorded an importance equal to or greater than that of the *jeune premier*.

This chapter will demonstrate that in these respects *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* was indeed premonitory of major trends in Occupation cinema by looking at the inscription of these themes in two archetypal films of the period, Marcel L'Herbier's *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* (1941) and Marcel Carné's *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* (1942), two films which also share a common structural element with *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, namely the predominance of a father/daughter relationship in the text. However, the different manner in which it is treated in the later films is, as we shall see, part of a change in attitude towards father-figures in the course of the first year of the Occupation, a thematic development which has a stylistic corollary in the increased use of various techniques to give visual expression to the Manichean discourse which was present on a mainly verbal level in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* but which would impose itself to a greater extent on the *écriture* of films of the Occupation as the period progressed.

The emblematic status of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* derives in part from the accolades they received at the time of their release. As joint recipients of the newly created grand prix du film d'art français for the 1941/1942 season, they were viewed by contemporary critics as shining examples of high-quality filmmaking in the face of adversity and have since been regarded as epitomising the 'veine fantastique et poétique'<sup>1</sup> generally associated with the cinema of the Occupation.

Certainly, both films are masterpieces of the escapist genre. Anxious to escape the trappings of poetic realism and find a form of expression less likely to displease Vichy,<sup>2</sup> the Carné/Prévert tandem surpassed themselves in producing a film both non-realist and non-contemporary. The opening images of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* — the turning leaves of a gothic-style book upon which is inscribed 'Or donc en ce joli mois de mai 1485 Messire le Diable dépêcha sur terre deux de ses créatures afin de désespérer les humains' — establish that the film is set in a legendary rather than historical past and announce Jules Berry's supernatural intervention. *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, on the other hand, although situated in Jeancolas' contemporain vague qui reste le temps majeur du cinéma de l'Occupation<sup>3</sup> is shot in such a way as to leave the spectator unsure of the boundary between dream and reality.

The fantasy factor, as well as being a striking element of the *mise-en-scène* has an important semantic purpose in each text specific to the social context, which will be considered in the course of this chapter. However, critical obsession with this more obvious similarity between the two films has tended to obscure equally interesting structural parallels in the two plots.

In *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, Denis, a poverty-stricken student, is forced to



work nights at Les Halles to pay his room and board. Tired out because of a white silhouette which he pursues in his dreams each time he falls asleep, Denis dozes off at work, only to be awakened by his 'dream woman' falling over his feet. Unsure if he is asleep or awake, he pursues Irène into a restaurant where she meets the man she believes to be her father, Professor Thales, a magician, who is plotting to marry her off to his assistant before she comes of age and discovers that he, Thales, has squandered her inheritance from her true father. When Irène pretends to be mad to escape matrimony, Thales decides to have her kidnapped and certified instead. In the course of the *nuit fantastique* preceding Irène's coming of age, Denis accompanies her through a series of oneiric adventures involving magic shows at the Louvre, sinister nightclubs, insane asylums and the unexpected appearance of acquaintances from his everyday life. The following day Irène turns up in his room proving she is not a dream and, now she is of age and free of Thales, the two lovers are reunited for ever.

In LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, Gilles and Dominique are sent by the devil to disrupt the ordered world of a medieval castle, whose lord, the baron Hugues, is celebrating the betrothal of his daughter Anne to the knight Renaud. Initially disguised as minstrels, they carry out the devil's work in seducing Anne, and Hugues and Renaud respectively. However, Gilles is caught in his own trap as he falls genuinely in love with Anne. Seeing his plans go awry, the devil appears at the castle, reveals the secret love affair and has the lovers imprisoned. While the devil tries to win Anne for himself, Dominique provokes a duel between Hugues and Renaud, then leads the victorious Hugues to his doom. Having failed to make them renounce their love, the devil finally offers Anne Gilles' freedom if she will be his.

In a final show of defiance, Anne reneges on her part of the bargain, and the force of love proves stronger than the devil, who in a fit of anger turns the lovers to stone. But in the silence of death their heart can be heard beating...

The narrative motor in both films consists therefore of a young girl's refusal to accept the suitor selected by her father, who represents a continuation of the status quo. In this movement of rebellion she is supported by her chosen lover, who, as an outsider, represents an alternative to the dominant regime. This constitutes a significant change in the development of the father/daughter theme from that inscribed in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, which had shown a daughter devoted to her father, to whom her suitor is the spiritual heir and in which the lovers' union represented a validation of the father's world-view and hence a continuation of the existing patriarchal order. As such it marks a return to the 1930s tendency to portray both individual father-figures and the patriarchal order in a negative light, a trend which continued in the emblematic films of the Occupation.

In both *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, the negative qualities of perversity, morbidity and sterility which in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* had been displaced onto *la mère Michel* are reattributed to the patriarchal regime into which the heroine is expected to marry, and the proposed marriage is presented as being synonymous with death. In *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* this impression of gloom and doom is conveyed in both the dialogue and the *mise-en-scène*, in the use of German expressionist shots to convey the menacing nature of the patriarchal order. Irène's announcement at dinner with her father and fiancé — 'Je me marierai en noir. Je porterai le deuil de mes printemps morts-nés' equates marriage with the death of youth, while the song she sings in her bedroom:

Mon père m'a donné un mari  
Mais quel homme, quel petit homme...

suggests the impotence of her intended, an impression reinforced in the fiancé's name, Cadet, which implies that he is merely an ineffectual chip off his master's block, a reproduction in miniature of Thales himself.

The funereal atmosphere associated with Thales is, however, most strongly conveyed by the use of German expressionist techniques, notably in the sequence in which Denis follows Irène into the restaurant to join her father and fiancé. His pleasant dreamlike pursuit of the white silhouette through Les Halles comes to an abrupt halt when he enters the restaurant. A reverse shot frames him in shadow next to the shadows of bars cast by the door, which swings shut with a cavernous thud as he steps forward. The shadows cast to his right by the restaurant's sign, recalling its name, *Au Grandpère Tranquille*, indicate that Denis has entered the sinister world of a patriarchal regime, the moribund nature of which is further indicated by the aged, undertaker-like waiters creeping through the restaurant and a ghostly dinner party uttering strange sounds from the tomb. Played backwards on an editing table, these sounds become distinguishable as: 'Mes chers amis, la raison qui nous amène ici est de celles qui ne s'expriment pas. Ce banquier a son secret. Notre jeunesse morte.' which reiterates the notion of youth sacrificed to age, and so, together with the references to finance and secrets, provides a hidden reference to one of the main plot lines, Thales' secret plans to marry off/dispose of Irène in order to hide his embezzlement of her inheritance.

Denis' 'outsider' status in this bourgeois world of tailcoats and evening dresses is indicated by his costume, the dungarees and jersey of a manual worker. Irène tells him 'Ne soyez pas gêné par votre accoutrement. Vous êtes en tenue de travail et eux

aussi' and so not only underlines his lack of belonging but also draws an implicitly unfavourable comparison between the honest toil of the labourer and the lack of productivity of financiers and the upper middle class to which they belong.

The world of Thales is also shown as cruel and macabre through his association with nocturnal festivities at the Louvre, where he performs a magic show for the *beau monde* which involves putting Irène into a sarcophagus and running swords through it. Denis, having learned that Irène will be abducted in the course of the act, appeals to those whom he terms 'fantômes cruels, spectres de spectateurs' to stop the show in the following terms:

- Vous voulez qu'il assassine avec votre complicité cette petite?
- Oui
- Il vous faut alors une victime?
- Oui.

Maliciousness disguised as entertainment and the ever-present threat of death are also salient features of the enclosed world of the castle into which Gilles and Dominique enter at the beginning of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*. Arriving over the drawbridge they encounter first the castle executioner and then a man in despair over the loss of his dancing bear who complains 'Ils l'ont tué avec une flèche... pour s'amuser.' The tone of taking pleasure in pain is set by the masters of the castle, in particular Anne's fiancé Renaud, who finds the deformed dwarves who perform at the banquet amusing and dismisses the troubadour's song, which pleases Anne, with the comment:

L'amour, toujours l'amour... autrefois on chantait la guerre, le plaisir de se battre, de tuer...

Gilles the troubadour, the artistic outsider, thus provides an alternative to the oppressive regime of bloodsports, the jousting and hunting which are to the taste of

baron Hugues and future son-in-law Renaud, but horrify Anne, for whom the possessive love of Renaud is a form of death, as is indicated in the following exchange with Gilles:

A : [Renaud] aussi m'a dit: "Je vous aime, Anne..." Avec le même regard dur et la même voix qu'il a pour dire: "J'aime mes chiens... J'aime la chasse... J'aime tuer tout ce qui vole... tout ce qui court... Je vous aime, Anne, et vous serez à moi pour toujours..." Est-ce possible, Gilles, qu'un être puisse appartenir entièrement à un autre être?

G : Certains appellent cela l'amour.

A : Alors, l'amour, c'est comme la mort? On n'existe plus... tout est fini...

Whereas in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* Thales is father/diabolic magician in one, the paternal role of Baron Hugues in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* is doubled in the figure of the devil, who is also established as a father-figure in that he refers to Dominique as one of his daughters. Like Hugues/Renaud, he is associated with devastation and death — he tells Anne: '...les maladies, la guerre avec ses beaux plaisirs, la peste, la famine, la misère, le meurtre, la jalousie, la haine, c'est moi, toujours moi! Et la mort, c'est encore moi.'

The theme of youth sacrificed to age, in the recurring Prévert theme of father-figures harbouring licentious desires for daughters, also occurs in both parts of the paternal dyad, in the pairings of Hugues/Dominique and the devil/Anne respectively. The illicit, quasi-incestuous nature of the older males' desires is made explicit firstly in Renaud's reproach to Hugues about his conduct with Dominique:

R : ...vous êtes toujours près d'elle, accroché à sa robe, aux petits soins. Oh! Bien sûr, avec un bon sourire de père, mais votre regard trahit votre désir!

H : Misérable!

R : Ce qui est misérable et ce qui prête à rire, c'est de quémander l'amour quand on a passé l'âge de plaire aux femmes.

and secondly in Gilles comments to the devil, when, released from prison but deprived of his memory, the sight of Anne and his diabolic rival together produces the following exchange:

G : Votre fille, sans doute?

D : Non, ce n'est pas ma fille...

G : Ah, je comprends. Le monde est mal fait. La jeunesse devrait vivre avec la jeunesse.

In both films the daughters rebel against this destructive and exploitative patriarchal regime; Irène explains her feigned madness at the prenuptial dinner in terms of '...ce soir j'ai eu comme un besoin de révolte' while Anne defies first her father by literally screaming her love for Gilles from the rooftops, then the devil by refusing to be his after he has released Gilles. And in each case the women in their revolt incarnate a specific value in accordance with the director/scriptwriter's world-view.

In *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* Anne represents a life-force in contrast to a patriarchal order devoted to death. Her association with flowers and water — the love scenes with Gilles take place by a fountain in a flower-covered meadow — suggest fertility and unity with nature as opposed to the sterile destruction of nature in the hunt, while her little speech to Gilles:

Un oiseau... un fruit...une bête...le soleil..., les arbres  
de ces bois...Et nous-même qui ne savons pas d'où  
nous venons, où nous allons. N'est-ce pas merveilleux  
tout cela?

is reminiscent of Catherine's 'le pain, l'eau fraîche, c'est merveilleux' speech in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, and, as in the earlier film, extols the notion of a return to the simple things in life.

Thus, the Pétainiste theme of a *retour à la terre*, symbolising the rediscovery

of basic values — ‘La terre, elle, ne ment pas’ — dovetails neatly with Prévertien themes from the 1930s: firstly, woman = flowers = nature as opposed to the alienating world of patriarchal capitalism (Françoise with her bouquet vs François the sandblaster in *LE JOUR SE LEVE*) and consequently woman as the site of authenticity. Just as Nelly convinced a cynical Jean of the possibility of true love in *QUAI DES BRUMES* so Anne is to restore the power to live and love to a bedeviled Gilles, as his plea to her makes clear:

G : Anne, si simple, si jeune, si fraîche et si vivante...  
protégez-moi, apprenez-moi à vivre. Avant de vous  
connaître, j’ai toujours fait semblant... mon cœur était  
glacé...

If Prévert simply bowed to prevailing conditions by recycling the personal preoccupations expressed in his poetic-realist films under the cover of a legendary setting, Marcel L’Herbier was encouraged by the state of national crisis to indulge his taste for the type of patriotic symbolism evident in his first film *ROSE FRANCE* (1919), a deeply worthy piece produced under the aegis of the *haut-commissariat à la Propagande* and set in WWI France, which had as its theme a woman, FRANCine’s, pious devotion to *la FRANCe meurtrie* symbolised by the eponymous rose. While *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* is saved from the crassness of the earlier film by its lighthearted tone, interesting cinematography and the Henri Jeanson script, echoes nevertheless persist in the signification imposed on the central female character. Forsaking obscure flower imagery in favour of national icons, L’Herbier has the heroine become an incarnation of none other than Marianne aka la République Française, courtesy of the special effects which, in Denis’ dream, transform the static image of Marianne on a calendar on his wall into Micheline Presle’s Irène.<sup>4</sup>

The use of Anne and Irène as vehicles for their creators abstract ideals is mirrored in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* at the level of plot development, in that one possible reading of the film would view it as a psychodrama in which Irène is a projection of Denis' psyche. Indeed, a film in which a large part of the diegesis apparently consists of a main protagonist's dream positively invites a psychoanalytical interpretation.

At the beginning of the film Denis is clearly undergoing a personal and professional crisis, in that he is hen-pecked by his overbearing harpy of a mistress, stolen from by his friend Boris, forced for financial reasons to work at Les Halles, a milieu in which as an intellectual he is clearly out of place and left exhausted by vivid dreams of a woman in white, all of which stress is having a negative effect on his work for the *aggrégation*.

In Jungian terms this could be seen as a crisis of individuation, and the dream woman in white as an anima figure, that personification of the female part of the male psyche who acts as a guide to the world of the subconscious. Irène, who is characterised as elusive and unpredictable, her behaviour throughout the film bearing out her statement, 'Je suis une étrangère, une inconnue, une énigme.', conforms to the 'anima type' described by Jung in the following statement:

There are certain types of women who seem to be made by nature to attract anima projections, indeed one could speak almost of a definite 'anima type'. The so-called 'sphinx-like' character is an indispensable part of their equipment, also an equivocalness, an intriguing elusiveness — not an indefiniteness that offers nothing but an indefiniteness that seems full of promises.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the role Denis assumes in his 'dream', that of the dashing hero who rescues the maiden in distress from forces that threaten to destroy her — in the



Louvre sequences he melodramatically announces, 'Je suis l'ami de la dernière heure, je suis le bâton dans la roue, je suis le trouble crime.' — is also suggestive of an anima projection, in as much as, according to Jung:

One of the more important aspects of the myth of the typical hero is his capacity to save or protect beautiful women from terrible danger. This is one way in which myth or dreams refer to the 'anima'...<sup>6</sup>

In his role as hero Denis insists on accompanying Irène to her engagement as assistant in the magic show at the Louvre, saves her from Thales' henchmen who attempt to kidnap her in the course of the show, rescues her from the asylum where, despite his efforts, she is confined, attempts to solve the mystery surrounding her origins and finally confronts her father at a nightclub he owns. In the process he overcomes the character deficiencies, in particular his crippling timidity with women, which were evident at the beginning of the film, finding the courage to stand up to both Boris the thief and Nina the shrewish mistress, not only breaking with the latter but giving her a *paire de claques*. In saving Irène he thus saves himself, a process described in Jungian terms as follows:

The rescue can go two ways, with the prince freeing the maiden and her liberating him. Then the ego frees the anima and the anima saves the ego.<sup>7</sup>

In as much as the plot of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* charts the personal growth of the hero, it could be viewed as a male-centred text comparable to the 'son' films of the 1930s analysed in Part One. There are however a number of differences. Firstly, with the notable exception of his powerful dramatic performance in Chenal's *LE DERNIER TOURNANT*, Fernand Gravey was essentially a lightweight *jeune premier* who lacked Gabin's ability to dominate a film, a weakness compounded by the role of Denis, a relatively feeble character compared to the headstrong Irène, who

plays a more active part in determining the outcome of the film than her on the whole rather passive thirties counterparts. Secondly, this shift in dramatic focus towards the female is also visible in the theme of mutual salvation, a concept absent from the majority of 'son'-centred narratives of the thirties, which tended to concentrate on the development of the hero, reducing the female role to that of a *figurant* in the central male drama.

A notable exception to this tendency was of course the character of Nelly in QUAI DES BRUMES, who, if she was not on an equal footing with the male hero, whose arrival in Le Havre and subsequent death marked the beginning and ending of the film, did at least undergo a process of growth which was accorded some dramatic interest. Nelly differs however from Irène and from Anne both in the signification of her character — she functions on one level as a representation of Jean's regressive desire, but has no obvious social referent in the way Irène is equated with Marianne/France and Anne evokes ambient *retour à la terre* discourses — and in as much as the love relationship which justifies her diegetic presence neither carries the same connotations nor takes place in the same context as that of the later films.

In LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE and LES VISITEURS DU SOIR emphasis is placed firmly on the spiritual dimension and love is presented as an arduous testing process in which good must win out over evil in order to bring about a happy end and the relationships evolve in what can be loosely described as an altered state of reality.

The events of *la nuit fantastique* appear to emanate from Denis' subconscious, in that they follow the logic of a dream, but it is a dream which oscillates between fairy tale and nightmare as Denis fights on the side of the angels (Irène) against the forces of evil (Thales & Co), a conflict which is inscribed at a stylistic level in the

use of dark lighting, expressionist-type shots and themes from Hollywood horror films in sequences involving Thales and his cohorts while scenes featuring Irène tend to be lighter in terms of both cinematography and the kind of fantasy world which is evoked.

Thus, the expressionist features of the scene in the restaurant described above recur in the asylum sequence, when Denis rescues Irène against a background of long shadows and bars projected on the walls, while the abduction attempt which he foils in the Louvre involves Thales' henchmen disguised as mummies emerging from sarcophagi in the tradition of 1930s horror movies and the nightclub in which Denis and Irène run Thales to earth is populated with wax figures. Irène on the other hand is associated with more pleasant fantasies — the idealized woman in white veils floating across a dream landscape — and fairy tales; confined in an ambulance on the way to the asylum she distracts the 'nurse' (who is in fact Denis' mistress, Nina, working for Thales) by telling her the tale of Tom Thumb while discarding items of clothing to leave a trail *à la* Hansel and Gretel for Denis to follow. Later, failing to find a taxi, Denis takes Irène on the handlebars of his bike and they appear to soar through the air as if on a magic carpet.

Just as the central theme in *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* had been a calling into question and subsequent validation of the fantasy world of le père Cornusse, so *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* is largely concerned with Denis' attempts to protect his idyll with Irène from being infiltrated by the forces of darkness which in this instance are associated with the father-figure Thales, but also Nina and Boris who have been hired to kidnap Irène. Nina's presence is a realisation of her jealous threat to Denis: 'Je vais m'y glisser, moi, dans ton rêve', and so represents the

malevolent forces of physical reality working against the dream, while Thales, with his plans to dispose of Irène, threatens to destroy the dream completely. Denis' reproach to him on learning of his kidnap plans — 'Qui vous a permis de transformer mon rêve en cauchemar?' — prefigures his plaintive cry when he awakes in his room to find he has lost Irène 'C'est maintenant que le rêve commence. Enfin, le cauchemar.'

Denis does succeed in defending his idyll against both Nina and Thales by standing up to them as described above. The *paire de claques* silences Nina, while Thales, bearded in his den by an unusually confident Denis who shoots him with what turns out to be a joke pistol, is abruptly transformed from the sinister patriarch of their initial encounter into a clown who blesses Denis' proposed marriage with Irène before disappearing Alice-in-Wonderland-like through a hole in the wall.

But despite this promising change in mode from the expressionist to the whimsical, Denis still has one more test to undergo before he can reclaim Irène and ascend with her into the realm of fantasy in a happy end not dissimilar to that of *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*. Like Catherine in the earlier film, he must undergo a symbolic death/rebirth process and prove his worthiness by a demonstration of devotion to his ideal.

Throughout the film Denis had shown absolute faith both in his dream world and in Irène herself. That for him the ideal realm takes precedence over concrete reality is illustrated in his dismissal of Nina, to whom he makes it clear that he would rather spend nights asleep communing with his dream woman than engaged in physical pleasures with her. Similarly, his devotion to Irène, whom he follows around like a faithful puppy, knows no bounds. When, conscious of the impression her

bizarre behaviour at the prenuptial dinner must have made, Irène remarks to Denis: 'Evidemment, vous me prenez pour une démente', his reply: 'Je vous prends comme il vous plaira d'être, avec ou sans raison', is indicative of his unquestioning loyalty to her cause.

After the vanishing act, Thales still has one more trick up his sleeve and sends Boris through to administer a narcotic to the drinks of the jubilant couple. When the two succumb to the sleeping draught, Nina's remark: 'C'est pas une tournée, c'est une hécatombe', evokes death in both a symbolic and potentially real sense, in that Thales' plans for the inert bodies are never specified. However, the following scene shows Denis waking up in the spot in Les Halles where Irène had fallen over his feet, suggesting that the events of the night had indeed been a dream.

Refusing to forget Irène, Denis revisits the scenes of his nocturnal adventures in search of her. Just as he despairs of ever finding her, this final act of faith is rewarded by his waking to find Irène in his room. The ringing of his alarm clocks marks the hour of her twenty-first birthday and hence her freedom to join her lover. Denis has succeeded in responding to what is presented as the call of destiny (he had told a friend, 'Je n'ai pas choisi mon rêve, c'est lui qui m'a choisi') and has saved his ideal woman/Marianne from the clutches of a corrupt father. In a final blurring of the borders between dream and reality, the figures of the lovers are superimposed on and appear to float upwards into the image of Marianne on the wall, an ascent into the realm of fantasy which is accompanied by a prayer from the couple, 'Amour, donnez-nous notre rêve quotidien.'

This apotheosis of both the power of love and of the persons of faithful lovers, is also the conclusion arrived at in LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, at the end of a

similar sequence of events involving love as a process of mutual liberation and a test of loyalty and perseverance. As indicated above, Gilles, as an advocate of love rather than war, is the catalyst which sparks Anne's rebellion, while Anne, 'si jeune, si fraîche et si vivante', is to restore Gilles to life and to sincerity after his sham existence as the Devil's envoy. That this is to be a trying experience, particularly for Anne, is indicated in a chorus sung by the dwarves who dash around the castle '...Plus elle vous aimera/Plus elle souffrira...' Just as Denis retains his faith in Irène despite her feigned madness, Anne remains true to her love for Gilles despite a number of subterfuges designed to undermine it.

The first test comes from Gilles himself, who, doubting the reality of love and despairing of the possibility of escaping from the devil, denies to Anne his love for her, which risks plunging her into despair. As Gilles thereby appears to be fulfilling the devil's purpose, doubts are raised in the mind of the spectator as to Gilles' true nature, particularly as the words he had used to woo Anne are repeated with evident insincerity in Dominique's seduction of Renaud and Hugues. However, Anne's continuing faith in Gilles is justified when he admits his love for her, and this ability to see beyond words and appearances enables her to come through the second trial unscathed, by recognising that the devil, who comes to her room in the form of Gilles, is an imposter.

The ultimate test takes place on the spiritual dimension, which is of equal importance here as in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*. The first foray into an altered state of consciousness in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* occurs at the ball following the feast, when the sound of Dominique's mandolin is the signal for the dancers to freeze and the supernatural seduction of Anne and Renaud, who, alone with the troubadours,

move as in a dream, to commence. Although created by the devil's enchantment, that this dream time is also one of potential liberation is suggested in the last lines of dialogue before time is frozen, which are spoken by Anne and Renaud in reference to their forthcoming union:

A : Aurai-je au moins le droit de rêver?  
R : Le moins possible, Anne. Je vous en saurai gré...  
Les rêves sont les choses nuisibles et inutiles. Moi, je  
ne rêve jamais.

The altered state of reality can thus be a site of opposition if it can be reclaimed from the devil, and much of the rest of the film is devoted to this struggle between good and evil, or, as it is put in the song with which Gilles charms Anne, 'démons et merveilles.'

Whereas in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* the conflict between good and evil was expressed at a stylistic level in the use of both dream sequences and expressionist style scenes, Carné bathes his film in a uniform mediterranean light (location shooting took place in the countryside around Nice), no doubt judging it wiser to avoid shots which could recall poetic realism and so arouse the wrath of critics on the extreme right.<sup>8</sup> His 'démons et merveilles' are therefore characterised through symbolic special effects and in the dialogue. The devil is presented as a conjurer (not unlike Thales; indeed, Saturnin Fabre and Jules Berry could be interchangeable in the two roles) whose diabolic nature is suggested in his games with flames and his transformation of flowers in a vase into snakes. Anne's alliance with the fairies is indicated in a story she tells the devil:

A: Je pense à une chanson que me chantait ma  
nourrice...Elle disait que c'étaient les fées qui avaient  
chanté cette chanson autour de mon berceau...  
"Quand les cœurs des deux amants  
Battront en même temps

La licorne apparaîtra  
Et le diable s'en ira  
Dans la nuit des temps....”

a story which of course prefigures the final victory of good over evil at the end of the film.

Just as Denis was eventually forced to stand up to Thales, who threatened to turn his dream into a nightmare, so Anne and Gilles are unable to escape the devil even in the spiritual dimension. While their bodies languish in chains, their spirits escape the dungeon in which they have been incarcerated and return in memory to the fountain at which they had first confessed their love, a testimony to the superiority of the spiritual over the physical world as in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*. However the devil pops up in their idyll and pollutes the clear water of the fountain by turning it into a mirror in which they watch Hugues killing Renaud, a reaffirmation of the power of war and death over love.

In order to deliver Gilles once and for all, Anne agrees to the devil's bargain that, if she gives herself to him, he will let Gilles go, 'libre, insouciant, sans souvenirs...'. Anne's reply: 'Il ne peut m'oublier', indicates the last trial the lovers must undergo. After Gilles has emerged from the dungeon and fails to recognise her, Anne tells the devil her promise was a lie and returns to the fountain where she finds Gilles. In the course of a partial repetition of the first scene by the fountain, Gilles remembers Anne, thus confounding the devil, and the lovers embrace. In a final gesture of anger, the devil turns the two to stone, remarking 'Voilà bien le silence que j'aime...le silence de mort.' Even as the forces of destruction appear to have won, the sound of a beating heart breaks the silence and grows louder on the soundtrack until it drowns out the voice of the frustrated devil who can only repeat



‘...Leur coeur qui bat... qui bat...qui bat...’ The fairies’ prophesy is thus fulfilled and, while their petrified bodies locked in an embrace form an eternal monument to the power of love, Anne and Gilles, like Denis and Irène are united forever on some spiritual plane.

How then should this new inscription of the central love relationship as a testing process in which ‘good’ represented by the daughter figure must win out over the ‘evil’ patriarchal order be interpreted in relation to the social context of the Occupation? As noted above, the corrupt father-figures of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* are not a new departure, but represent a continuation of the tendency in (a certain strand of) 1930s cinema to associate the patriarchal regime with sterility and the sacrifice of youth to age, and as such constitute a reversal of the positive portrayal of the patriarch in *L’ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*. The change in attitude towards father-figures who could be associated with the dominant Pétainiste regime will be discussed in Chapter Nine, which deals specifically with the inscription of the patriarchal order in the cinema of the Occupation. For the moment, this reversion to the 1930s negative depiction of the patriarchal order can be explained in terms of the individual artist’s world-view.

The rumour which spread after the war identifying Berry’s devil with variously Hitler or Vichy is dismissed by both Siclier (‘Jules Berry en Hitler, c’est vraiment du délire!’)<sup>9</sup> and Jeancolas<sup>10</sup> and it certainly ignores Berry’s previous incarnation in Prévert’s pantheon of patriarchal villains, all of whom testify to the fact that the devil owes more to Prévert’s distaste for the bourgeois ruling order in general rather than to a plot to pillory one particular manifestation of that phenomenon. Conversely, one could argue for a sub-textual identification of the order represented

by Thales with the forces of occupation and collaboration, in that the restaurant, nightclub and soirée at the Louvre evoke the world of good food, entertainment and social galas which were the preserve of Germans and a tout-Paris not too concerned about the company it kept, rather than reflecting the daily reality of a rationed populace forced to abide by the curfew.<sup>11</sup>

Given L'Herbier's intended identification of Irène with Marianne, the film could be interpreted on a symbolic level as showing the salvation of a disembodied ahistorical ideal of French nationhood from the sullied hands of the regime currently in power. In vaunting the notion of 'les valeurs françaises' L'Herbier is contributing to a certain hyperpatriotic trend in the cinema of the Occupation epitomised in the work of Sacha Guitry, who, in a scene set in the Palais de Tokyo in his 1943 film *DONNE-MOI TES YEUX*, showed off a series of masterpieces all painted in 1871 ('voilà ce que faisaient les génies à l'heure où l'on perdait la guerre'), followed by a selection of contemporary works contributed by the artists themselves as proof that *le génie français* not only survived but positively flourished in times of adversity.

In view of the negative values attributed to the patriarchal regime in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, L'Herbier could be construed as taking a more critical stance to the Occupying powers than Guitry (whose ability to accommodate himself to adversity earned him a stay in prison at the Liberation).<sup>12</sup> However, the final ascension into an ill-defined spiritual realm suggests that L'Herbier's patriotism can also accommodate the status quo, in that it consists of the internalization of an eternal ideal of France rather than taking action to free the geographical entity from the occupant.

This retreat from the physical to the spiritual is of course best illustrated in the forays into the various dimensions of the mind in which the lovers battle against

destructive forces in both films. The return to this basic notion of good vs. evil, can, like the tests of faith undergone by the lovers, be interpreted as a reflection of emotions aroused by the trauma of defeat and Occupation. Not only were ordinary people confronted with the essential issues of life/death, guilt/innocence etc., on a daily basis, but Pétain's repeated insistence on notions of fault and expiation encouraged a return to primal religious concepts. However, the desire for simple answers to complicated questions must have been frustrated by the sheer complexity of rights and wrongs and the changing faces of heroes and villains throughout the phoney war and the Occupation.<sup>13</sup>

It is perhaps this ambiguity which is reflected in the ambiguous behaviour of the film's hero/ines : Irène's madness, meant as an act of resistance, but which in fact plays into Thales' hand, in that it furthers his plans to have her certified, Gilles' questionable sincerity in love which may be a ploy of the devil. The final justification of the simple, unquestioning faith demonstrated by Denis and Anne can no doubt be explained as wish-fulfilment on the part of a population desperate to believe in something. The universal nature of the positive value defended in both films — Love — avoids becoming embroiled in specifics.

On the other hand, given the physical paralysis besetting those who wished to defend France, in terms of the difficulty of not just identifying the enemy but also of acting against it in a situation where one dead German meant the death of numerous hostages, one could also interpret the conflict between good and evil — Thales and the devil attempting to colonise the subconscious of Denis and Anne/Gilles — in terms of Sartre's comment — 'Puisque le venin nazi se glissait jusque dans notre pensée, chaque pensée juste était une conquête....'<sup>14</sup> as an evocation of the moral

resistance which perhaps played a role in a larger number of lives of non-collaborationist Frenchwo/men than active resistance which remained the prerogative of a minority.

Similarly, the importance of memory, emphasised at the end of both *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* — Gilles remembering Anne by the fountain — and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* — Denis remembering his ‘dream woman’ as if she were real and searching for her through Paris — can also be explained in terms of contemporary preoccupations. Describing the predicament of families separated by events, one half in Paris, the other in the *zone libre*, or else with a son in some prisoner of war camp, Sartre writes:

Paris était peuplé d’absents et ce n’est peut-être pas un des aspects les moins marquants de notre situation, ce culte du souvenir que nous avons pratiqué pendant quatre ans et qui s’adressait ainsi, à travers nos amis lointains, à une douceur de vivre, à une fierté de vivre disparues.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the shift in emphasis from the physical to the spiritual dimension suggests various tendencies in the mentality of the inhabitants of occupied France in the early 1940s — the importance of memory in face of the physical absence of loved ones, a flight into the realm of universal ideals from the confusion of practical politics, aspirations towards moral resistance in the absence of any practical possibility of active resistance. In such a context it is difficult not to view Gilles and Anne, in situations of ever greater physical restraint — held in chains, petrified in stone — but still defying the devil, as exemplifying the type of moral integrity described in the following passage:

...le choix que chacun faisait de lui-même était authentique puisqu’il se faisait en présence de la mort, puisqu’il aurait toujours pu s’exprimer sous la forme

“Plutôt la mort que...” Et je ne parle pas ici de cette élite que furent les vrais Résistants, mais de tous les Français qui, à toute heure de du jour et de la nuit, pendant quatre ans, ont dit non.<sup>16</sup>

and illustrating Sartre's paradoxical phrase 'Jamais nous n'étions plus libres que sous l'Occupation allemande'.<sup>17</sup>

If the Prévertian and Sartrean concepts of authenticity thus coincide, so too do their notions of liberty. The difficulty of reconciling the desire for freedom with the necessity for commitment within a love relationship is a constant theme in the work of Prévert, manifesting itself in, for example, the dilemma of Jean in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, torn between his longing to sail to America and his desire to remain with Nelly. In *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* it is expressed in Anne's fear of being 'owned' by Renaud, and as such also functions as a means of denouncing the proprietorial attitudes of the ruling class. The issue is resolved in Gilles' forsaking the freedom of forgetfulness — the devil releases the amnesiac from his dungeon with the words 'Vous êtes libre... tout ce qu'il y a de plus libre' — by choosing to recommit himself to Anne and become a monument to love. The depiction of pure liberty as a state of empty exile and long-term — in this case eternal — commitment as desirable is a new departure for Prévert and echoes Sartre's notion of freedom consisting of the freedom to choose one's commitment, rather than existing in a vacuum.

While it may be oversimplifying matters to establish a simple equation between le diable of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and Hitler/Vichy, in which the petrified lovers become 'une métaphore sur l'immortalité de la nation française dont le coeur continuait de battre sous la chape de l'occupant'<sup>18</sup> — if only because Carné/Prévert were not *aficionados* of the brand of ponderous patriotic symbolism favoured by L'Herbier, and indeed Carné makes no claim for any such intentions in

his autobiography — it does seem reasonable to suggest, along with Bertin-Maghit, that the film reflects the same attitude of moral resistance that permeates *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and that the last scene is 'révélatrice de cette évolution'.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, although the devil is one of Prévert's stock characters who owes much to his 1930s predecessors, as indeed is Anne, whose association with nature and flowers places her in a long line of Prévertian female characters stretching from Françoise with her bouquet in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* ('...t'as l'air d'un petit arbre...') to Garance ('...un nom de fleur...') in *LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS*, and who, like these other creations (except the ambiguous Françoise) symbolises liberty and authenticity in the face of a corrupt patriarchal order, the negative and positive values which these figures incarnate reflect ambient social concerns. *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* displays the same sub-textual trends as *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, a film which, by virtue of its oneiric recreation of certain facets of the Occupation as well as its blatant symbolism, is more obviously of its period.

The father/daughter figures are therefore signifiers of value rather than symbols of one specific thing; they denote as good or bad a range of behaviours and attitudes which not only undergo superficial variations throughout the work of one author in accordance with changing times but are also fundamentally different from the work of one director to the next. This can be demonstrated by comparing the two films analysed above, which convey an attitude of opposition to the status quo, with a Jean Dréville film of the same year, *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES*, which promotes the ideas of the dominant regime.

Like *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES* revolves around a daughter's rebellion against

her father and everything he stands for. The father in this case is Isidore Lechat, an unscrupulous financial wheeler-dealer, who has acquired a Louis XV *château* with a vast 'domaine' on the backs of those he has cheated and ruined, and who, like Thales and the devil, is associated in the film with moral corruption, death and sterility.

Whereas Tafard, that not dissimilar character in *CES MESSIEURS DE LA SANTE*, was presented in a positive light for acting as a law unto himself, the negative effects of his immoral activities never being shown, Lechat is depicted from the beginning of the film as a negative character. The first scene shows him impervious to the pleading of a banker he is about to ruin by an unjust but perfectly legal move. The dialogue that passes between them:

B : C'est un crime

L : C'est mon droit

along with the banker's parting cry as he goes off to commit suicide — 'C'est une execution', underline the discrepancy between legality and morality, suggesting that not only Lechat, but the order which legitimises his act, stands accused.

The destructive behaviour he displays in his professional life, where he enjoys a godlike power of life and death over his victims, also manifests itself at home on his estate, where he has ordered that all the birds be killed to protect his crops. Other examples of his hubris in wanting to change the laws of nature are given in his planting of experimental new crops and his desire to paint the estate's elm trees blue and red for the *14 Juillet*, while the sterility of the world he seeks to create is indicated in his eviction of a farmworker whose wife is pregnant ('Monsieur ne veut pas d'enfants ici. Ça abîme les pelouses, ça salit les allées.')

His own daughter, Germaine, is, like Anne in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, associated with nature and so is denoted as a force of opposition to the patriarchal

regime. In the scenes in which she appears she is frequently framed with flowers and the moment of her revolt is marked by her running away from the stifling atmosphere of the family dinner table ('J'étouffe dans cette maison où chaque jour, chaque heure se compte par une injustice, un malheur.') to her lover through the grounds of the estate. In an oneiric sequence which combines the element of nature and the exteriorization of mental states so important in the films discussed above, the trees whisper to her as she runs through the darkness:

Voleuse. Voleuse. Pas une place où tu poses le pied qui n'a pas été volée. L'argent, votre sale argent. Va-t-en d'ici, voleuse.

Like Anne and Irène, she then defies her father by refusing to marry the husband he proposes for her, in this case the son of the impoverished marquis de Porcellet, who is in debt to Lechat and therefore obliged to agree to a marriage uniting the two families, thereby allowing the financier to fulfil his ambition of joining the aristocracy. Germaine denies him this final satisfaction by running off with her lover, the young scientist employed by Lechat to develop a new form of agriculture.

Despite the obvious thematic and structural similarities between on the one hand, *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES*, on the other *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, the ideological content of the first is at variance with that of the other two films.

The Dréville film begins by insisting on its literary antecedents with a caption reminding spectators of the play on which it is based ('Le chef d'oeuvre d'Octave Mirbeau fut créé à la Comédie Française le 20 avril 1903'), a shot of the original manuscript and some silent footage of Mirbeau, taken from a 1917 home movie by



Sacha Guitry entitled *CEUX DE CHEZ NOUS*, which consisted of shots of his father's famous artistic and literary friends. This unusual prologue signals the film's earnest intent to place the spectator in the presence of *les valeurs françaises*, a pretention which it shares with Guitry's own *DONNE-MOI TES YEUX*, referred to above, and, to a more limited extent, *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*.

However, whereas L'Herbier conceives of a non-specific, apolitical notion of Frenchness which exists in some eternal realm beyond the grasp of a corrupt patriarchy which is equally unidentifiable with any specific party or regime, *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES* concentrates on the vilification of Lechat as the personification of what was perceived in Pétainiste terms as the decadence of a Third Republic 'complètement pervertie par les tares de l'économisme.'<sup>20</sup> which led to the fall of France:

La France, parce qu'elle ne donnait plus la primauté à l'humain, n'était plus que l'ombre d'elle-même pour le régime de Vichy. Par le matérialisme dont participaient autant la droite que la gauche, elle s'était transformée en un rassemblement d'hommes dépourvus d'âme et de vie.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between the film and contemporary political discourse is best illustrated by the scene in which Lechat attempts to buy from the ruined marquis de Porcellet not just his son, and therefore his name, but also his support in forthcoming elections in which he, Lechat, intends to stand on an anticlerical ticket which is anathema to the conservative catholicism of the aristocracy. This difference in outlook is elaborated on in the following exchange:

L : Les programmes... une fois élu, les programmes changent.  
P : Et tant pis si le pays en crève. Ce genre de compromission n'est pas d'usage dans notre monde, Monsieur.

L : Mais la noblesse est morte, Monsieur.

P : Laissez-moi vous dire, Monsieur, que je suis fier, moi, d'appartenir à cette noblesse, de ne m'être jamais soumis à cette démagogie abominable qui a remplacé par le seul culte de l'argent, le culte de l'honneur, de la patrie, de la foi, de la pitié...

which echoes the Pétainiste condemnation of the self-serving, materialistic politicians of the Third Republic who had managed to make of “le peuple de France”, ‘une foule guidée par “les mauvais bergers du profit et de la déchristianisation sociale”’,<sup>22</sup> while presenting as positive values religious faith and the notion of service to the fatherland as opposed to rampant individualism, both of which were recurrent themes in the Maréchal’s speeches. (That the film was based on a play written almost 40 years before Vichy is not, I think, an objection to this Pétainiste interpretation in as much as, as has already been noted, the Maréchal, far from inventing a new ideology, simply put his name to a set of ideas which were common currency in the conservative right long before 1940.)

The ease with which the same dramatic structure can convey divergent discourses suggests that what defines Occupation cinema is a matter of form as much as of content, namely the emphasis on the rebellious daughter/corrupt father-figure pair, to the detriment of the ‘son’ figure who loses to a greater or lesser extent the prominent place he had occupied in 1930s films. If the role and signification of the father-figure remains constant in the two periods, in as much as the negative qualities attributed to the patriarchal order are as strong a feature of the emblematic films of the Occupation as of the archetypal works of the 1930s, those of the daughter undergo a certain alteration. On a formal level, she has become the prime source of opposition to the patriarchal order and has therefore to a certain extent usurped the role of the young male in films of the 1930s, while on a semantic level her symbolism, rather

than being closely wedded to the Oedipal drama of a central young male character, is more diffuse, reflecting ambient social discourses.

The second formal departure from the films of the 1930s consists of the use of stylistic devices to both inscribe at a visual level in the text the Manichean world-view which permeates these films, and to convey the sense of 'otherworldliness' which has its thematic corollary in the idealism of the central love relationship, an idealism which dictates one of the most striking differences between on the one hand, *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, and on the other, pre-war realist works by the same writer/directors such as *LE BONHEUR* and *QUAI DES BRUMES*, namely, the happy end.

## CHAPTER SEVEN : NOTES

1. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente; le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) p. 327.
2. In his memoirs, Carné describes the genesis of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* as follows:

Jacques [Prévert] me demanda quel film j'entendais faire... J'avouai ne pas en avoir la moindre idée... Afin d'éviter dans la mesure du possible la censure de Vichy, il pensait que nous aurions intérêt à nous réfugier dans le passé: nous pourrions ainsi jouir d'une plus grande liberté... Marcel Carné, *La Vie à Belles Dents* (Paris: Vuarnet, 1979), p. 189.

3. Jeancolas, pp. 321—322.
4. The following passage from L'Herbier's autobiography makes it clear that this symbolism was a result of directorial intent:

La représentation de cette jeune silhouette blanche et de ses voiles flottant au vent demanda à René Moulaert une série de dessins approximatifs qui de plus en plus rapprochaient cette apparition de l'apparence de la Semeuse, disons de Marianne et disons, finalement, de la République. Marcel L'Herbier, *la Tête qui Tourne* (Paris: Belfond, 1979) pp. 284—285.

5. C.G. Jung, *Aspects of the Feminine* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986) p.51.
6. C.G. Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (London: Picador, 1978) p. 115.
7. Ann and Barry Ulanov, *The Witch and the Clown — Two Archetypes of Human Sexuality* (Illinois: Chiron Publications, 1987), p. 181.
8. Jeancolas gives an account of the vehement attacks to which Carné was subjected by collaborationist critics, the most virulent of whom was Lucien Rebatet, who wrote:

Carné, qui ne manque pas de dons, a été le type du talent enjuivé, à l'exemple de Pabst dans l'Allemagne d'après-guerre. Il a été, en France, le représentant accompli de cet esthétisme marxiste qui est partout un des fruits de la prolifération des Juifs [...] Les faubourgs lépreux et brumeux qui lui servent de cadre n'exhalent que des sentiments sordides, de fielleuses revendications... 'les Tribus du cinéma et du théâtre'

quoted in Jeancolas pp. 306—307.

9. Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son cinéma* (Paris: Veyrier, 1981) p. 144.
10. see Jeancolas, p. 328.
11. The extent to which *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* offers a distorted reflection of life in occupied Paris emerges when the film is compared with a contemporary account of day to day experiences such as that given by Jean-Paul Sartre. The empty decor in which nocturnal adventures of the hero/in/es take place evokes an atmosphere similar to that conveyed in Sartre's description of a deserted Paris:

...beaucoup d'entre nous ont aimé la tranquillité bourgeoise, le charme suranné que cette capitale exsangue prenait au clair de lune; mais leur plaisir même était teinté d'amertume: quoi de plus amer que de se promener dans sa rue, autour de *son* église, de *sa* mairie, et d'y goûter la même joie mélancolique qu'à visiter le Colisée ou le Parthénon sous la lune?  
Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Paris sous l'Occupation' in *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949) p. 25

while certain sequences such as the sinister evening entertainment at the Louvre and the nightclub populated by wax dummies could almost be seen as an illustration of the following passage:

Ainsi de Paris; ce n'était plus qu'un étalage factice. Tout était creux et vide: le Louvre sans tableaux, la Chambre sans députés, le Sénat sans sénateurs, le lycée Montaigne sans lycéens. L'existence artificielle que les allemands y entretenaient encore, les représentations théâtrales, les courses, les fêtes misérables et lugubres se proposaient seulement à montrer à l'univers que la France était sauve puisque Paris vivait encore. Sartre, p. 27.

12. For those members of the upper-class intelligentsia who, like Guitry and indeed L'Herbier, evolved in the milieu of the patriotic right, it was perfectly possible and indeed common to reconcile the apparently divergent positions of patriot and collaborator, in as much as a distaste for the German Occupation Forces could in some cases be tempered by an admiration for Nazi fascist ideology, which appealed to the anti-semitic, anti-socialist views endemic in those circles. This was not the case with Guitry, a *vraie bête du théâtre*, whose ostentatious lifestyle and relations with Germans during the Occupation, which earned him his stay in Drancy at the Liberation, seem to have stemmed from a pathological need to perform and present a certain

image of France on and off the stage and screen, rather than from any underlying anti-semitism. Indeed, he used his status as French cultural icon to have Jewish friends and acquaintances released from German captivity.

With L'Herbier, the reverse seems to have been the case; his autobiography trumpets his refusal to socialize with the Occupant while reiterating his horror at the influx of Slavs and Jews, 'tous les Rabinovitch, les Lucachevitch, les Deutschmeister et autres conquérants en "gneff" en "kruck, en "sky"', who were omnipresent in French film production in the 1930s and whom L'Herbier, employing (in 1979) *Pétainiste* tones, reproaches with being interested uniquely in profit and not in transmitting eternal French values. Hence his proclaimed joy at the 'libération artistique' which was for the L'Herbier the salient feature of life under a régime which, whatever else it did, reformed the film industry, introducing proper structures for the financing and production of films and at the same time barring Jews and freemasons, the fate of whom does not seem to have been a cause of undue concern for the director of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*...

See Dominique Desanti, *Sacha Guitry : 50 ans de spectacle*, (Paris: Grasset, 1982) pp. 245—318, L'Herbier, pp. 204, 243—289, Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le cinéma français sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1989) pp. 72—73, 151—152, 230—235.

13. Throughout the pre-war and Occupation periods, activists at each end of the political spectrum were confronted with a series of dilemmas. The complexity of the allegiances owed by pacifist socialists confronted with the rise of fascism, communists faced with the Hitler—Stalin pact, and patriotic members of the Leagues forced to choose between admiration for fascism and hatred of Germans, accounts for the diversity of bedfellows in the resistance. Meanwhile, ordinary apolitical Frenchwo/men who accepted unquestioningly the criminalization and subsequent revalidation (or vice versa) of Blum, Pétain and de Gaulle were faced with the complexities of patriotism, collaboration and survival on a personal level, in that, in a situation where the bulk of French produce was sent to Germany, working for oneself and one's fellow citizen's automatically entailed helping the enemy. It is to this dilemma among the many thrown up by the period that Sartre was referring when he wrote:

Chacun de nos actes était ambigu: nous ne savions jamais si nous devions tout à fait nous blâmer ou tout à fait nous approuver. Un venin subtil empoisonnait les meilleures entreprises. Sartre, p.37.

14. Sartre, p. 11.
15. Sartre, p. 38.
16. Sartre, p. 11.
17. Ibid.

18. Jeancolas, p. 328.
19. Bertin-Maghit, p. 145.
20. Yves Chalas, *Vichy et l'Imaginaire Totalitaire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1985) p. 53.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

'Pas de place pour les femmes' :

A Woman's Place in REMORQUES, LUMIERE D'ETE,

LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS, DOUCE

and LE CIEL EST A VOUS



Chapters Six and Seven showed that the role of the female in Occupation cinema had increased in importance in comparison with 1930s cinema as a result of certain formal and thematic developments. The 'daughter' figures of the Occupation played a more active part in opposing the status quo than the majority of their pre-war sisters, and enjoyed a greater share of dramatic interest in their role as lover, in that the relationship marked a new beginning for the female as much as for the male participant, upon whom interest had been centred in the pre-war period. This new and more equal role could, it was suggested, be interpreted in terms of the Jungian concept of the anima, in as much as the process of mutual liberation undergone by the participants in the love affairs of Occupation cinema is reminiscent of Jung's description of anima manifestations in myth (hero saves maiden who helps hero).

This chapter will conclude the analysis of the position of women in Occupation cinema by focusing on a selection of films featuring rebellious daughters and/or anima figures in order firstly, to substantiate the contention that these were indeed recurring features in a range of Occupation films and secondly, to determine the extent to which these new inscriptions of *jeunes premières* could be considered a true departure from the function of female characters in the films of the 1930s.

Attention will be directed in particular towards the question of space allocated to women within the diegesis. In its investigation of the female role in films of the 1930s, Chapter Two looked at the dichotomous positions — sweetheart/whore, public/private sphere — available to women within patriarchy as inscribed in various filmic texts. These positions were shown to be mutually exclusive, movement between the two being the reserve of the patriarchs who set the system in place. Any attempt

on the part of the female to leave her place as object of male desire and transgress these boundaries — i.e. to become a desiring subject in patriarchy — results in punishment and/or banishment from the diegesis.

Is then the greater prominence of the female role in films of the Occupation accompanied by a greater freedom of movement, or are the rebellious daughters/anima incarnations subject to the same constraints as their prewar counterparts? Does the movement away from a male-centred narrative in which the female love interest functions as a symbol of the hero's regressive desires signify the possibility of subjectivity on the part of the young woman, or does she continue to be nothing more than a representation of male aspirations?

The attempt to answer these questions will begin with an examination of the function and position of female characters in two films by Jean Grémillon,<sup>1</sup> *REMORQUES* (1939/41), and *LUMIERE D'ETE* (1942), the first of which scrapes into the category of 'Occupation cinema' by the skin of its teeth. Although its date of release was November 1941, most of *REMORQUES* was shot before the outbreak of war in 1939. It was the last film made by Jean Gabin and Michèle Morgan before their departure for the United States, as well as the first collaboration between Grémillon and Prévert. Its unusual position of being neither 1930s fish nor Occupation fowl, both the tail end of one tradition — the poetic realism of *QUAI DES BRUMES* and the Gabin myth — and the start of the next (*LUMIERE D'ETE* and similar Occupation films) is one of the most interesting aspects of *REMORQUES*, in that the influences of both periods are clearly visible in the text. The reason for its inclusion here however lies in the clarity with which it demonstrates the gender-related division of space imposed by patriarchy as outlined

above.

The film revolves around the professional and personal difficulties of the captain of a salvage vessel, Laurent (Gabin). It begins with the wedding of one of the crew, attended by Captain Laurent and his wife Yvonne (Madeleine Renaud), being interrupted by a call out to a ship in distress. The captain of the ship in question, the *Myrva*, is an unscrupulous rogue, detested by both his crew and his wife Catherine (Morgan), all of whom take to the lifeboat and are duly picked up by Laurent, who takes the stricken vessel under tow. When in sight of port, the other captain cuts the rope in order to avoid paying the salvage premium, which loss of revenue earns Laurent a reprimand from his boss. The telling-off is accepted with typical Gabin grace, his rage in this instance expressed in threats to resign, which are eagerly seized on by Yvonne, whose lonely life spent waiting for Laurent to return from sea has driven her to despair, intensified by a heart condition which makes her afraid of dying alone. Unaware of his wife's illness and alienated by her demands, Laurent turns to Catherine, who has left her husband and installed herself in a hotel. The affair causes him to neglect his professional and marital duties; he misses an S.O.S and arrives late at his wife's deathbed. No sooner is Yvonne dead than another S.O.S arrives. Alone now — Catherine having decided to leave — Laurent walks through the darkness and rain to the harbour, his lonely journey accompanied on the sound track by a piece of Christian liturgy, the *prière aux agonisants* set to music.

The heroizing nature of these final images explains to a certain extent the tendency in classical criticism to view *REMORQUES* as the final instalment in the Gabin myth, an approach exemplified by Henri Agel, who describes the film as 'la tragédie d'un homme sain, intègre et innocent que le destin va prendre au piège.'<sup>2</sup> It

is however more profitable, as well as a more exact interpretation of the text, to see the unhappy end — which affects Yvonne rather more severely than Laurent, a fact the androcentric Agel interpretation ignores — not as the manifestation of an ineluctable fate à la Prévert but as the logical consequence of problems inherent in the differing access to the public and private spheres according to gender in patriarchal society, and an outcome in which Laurent, far from being the hapless victim, colludes through his efforts to maintain the status quo.

The unusual plural in the title REMORQUES is in itself an indication of the film's dual emphasis on the professional and private realms of activity of Laurent. The link is made explicit by the captain of the Myrva speaking of his wife, at that point ensconced on the salvage ship taking the Myrva to port. Looking at the tow rope — the *remorque* — linking the two ships he says:

Elle veut partir. Elle veut me quitter. Or, où est-elle maintenant? Pas loin d'ici. Là. Les liens conjugaux, c'est solide.

This remark, together with his comment to a Catherine forcibly restored to him by Laurent — 'Comme ça, tu auras compris quelque chose, c'est que tous les deux, on est lié pour la vie, toute la vie, tous les deux...', with its evocation of marriage as a form of imprisonment also signals the importance in this film of a theme which preoccupied both Prévert and Grémillon i.e. 'le problème de la liberté des êtres au-delà des attaches du mariage...'<sup>3</sup> While Prévert tended to treat questions of freedom, love, commitment as metaphysical problems, Grémillon, in a series of increasingly woman-centred films running from L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR (1939) to L'AMOUR D'UNE FEMME (1952) dealt with these issues in more sociological terms, looking in particular at the dilemmas facing women within a system which

forces them to choose between love/marriage and a career thus denying them the male prerogative of moving between the personal and public spheres. It is this sociological aspect which predominates in *REMORQUES*, in which Grémillon provides an illustration of the process by which the Laurents' marriage, established, in contrast to that of the other couple, as happy in the opening sequence, disintegrates to the point where it too is a form of imprisonment from which the only exit, for Yvonne at least, is death.

The problem facing Yvonne in marriage is two-fold; on the one hand, the loneliness and boredom of a life spent waiting for Laurent to come back from sea; on the other, his refusal to acknowledge her plight. The wedding ball at the beginning of the film is the only sequence in which Yvonne is seen outwith the marital home. Her seclusion is subsequently underlined in both visual terms and in the dialogue. After Laurent has been called out to an S.O.S., she returns home accompanied by the new bride, Marie, whose husband has also gone to sea. A scene in the bedroom in which she tells the younger woman of her sadness and desire to start afresh concludes with an unusual tracking shot backwards through the window into the stormy night, which effectively fixes her in Rapunzel-like isolation. Her dissatisfaction at this arrangement, which protects her from the dangers and problems of Laurent's work, but also deprives her of the distractions and sense of fulfilment work brings, is expressed in the increasing volume of complaints she addresses to Laurent, such as 'Tu as de la chance d'avoir des ennuis. Ca t'occupe. Moi, je n'ai pas d'ennuis, mais je m'ennuie, je m'ennuie à mourir.'

Laurent however never listens, dismissing Yvonne's attempts to discuss their marital difficulties — 'Pourquoi ne sommes-nous plus heureux comme au premier

jour?’ — with misogynist generalisations — ‘Pourquoi? C’est toujours les femmes pour poser les questions pareilles. Je suis très heureux avec toi.’ — which deny the reality of Yvonne’s experience by looking at the issue through the blinkers of a male perspective. The frustration which Yvonne cannot therefore externalize finds its only means of expression in the heart condition which kills her.

Although the illness is referred to in the diegesis as congenital, there are numerous sub-textual indications that it is in fact a symptom of Yvonne’s marital condition, functioning both on a semantic level as metaphor for the suffocating nature of her restricted existence, which literally bores her to death, and, on a psychological level, as a ploy subconsciously used by Yvonne in a final attempt to persuade Laurent to give up the sea. Both these ideas are conveyed in her plea to Laurent who steadfastly refuses to resign from his company and start a new life:

Si j’étais malade, André, vraiment malade. Si je te disais, j’ai besoin d’air, j’étouffe, ouvre la fenêtre, j’ai besoin de respirer, tu resteras comme ça... ... à me répéter ‘Non, Yvonne, ce n’est pas possible. La fenêtre doit rester fermée’?

The strongest indication of the link between Yvonne’s illness and her lack of fulfilment in marriage occurs in the bedroom scene with Marie referred to above. Yvonne is looking at herself with her wedding dress held up against her in the mirror and reminiscing about the shortlived happiness of her wedding day, Laurent having left for 6 months at sea a few days after the ceremony, when her heart condition first manifests itself in momentary faintness. The dialogue immediately preceding her *malaise* — commenting on the similarity between her dress and Marie’s despite the change in fashion, she muses ‘Qu’est-ce qui ressemble le plus à une mariée? C’est une autre mariée’ — suggests that the unhappy situation in which she finds herself,

far from being exceptional, is a form of sociologically determined *condition féminine*, repeated in successive generations.

Like her pleas for Laurent to give up the sea, Yvonne's existential angst is ignored both by her husband, from whom she conceals her illness, and by her doctor, whose patronising dismissal of her fears:

Une petite femme comme vous, si simple, si équilibrée,  
vous vous mettez les idées dans la tête. Vous êtes  
comme tous les malades. Vous ne savez pas ce que  
vous avez, alors vous rêvez, et évidemment vous rêvez  
le pire.

epitomises, in its demand that Yvonne conform to the image of the uncomplicated, well-balanced little wife, the patriarchal refusal to acknowledge hysterical manifestations of female intolerance of the role allotted to them within the system. Her voice suppressed and her life literally not worth living, Yvonne's death, far from being a blow from some inexorable fate pursuing Gabin from film to film, is simply the logical outcome of an untenable situation.

As a male within patriarchy, Laurent is both victim and enforcer of a system which wrecks his life, but which, having internalised its norms, he perpetuates in his behaviour and attitudes to women. In a scene on the balcony of their house in which Laurent vehemently rejects Yvonne's demands that he resign, both parties are framed behind the vertical bars of a window, implying that the marriage has become a form of imprisonment for Laurent, wearied by his wife's demands, as well as Yvonne, but from which he, unlike her, can and does escape. This is also demonstrated in the balcony scene which ends with his fleeing onto his boat.

The alacrity with which he leaves testifies to his fear of being trapped within the female realm of inactivity. That this is how he perceives Yvonne's plans for the

future is expressed at various points in the dialogue, notably in his description of Yvonne's dream house on the coast as 'un bateau qui ne bouge pas' and in his response when Yvonne mentions Marie's hope that her husband will give up the sea:

Qu'est-ce que vous voulez qu'il fasse, du tricot? C'est drôle ça, vous êtes toutes les mêmes. Ce que vous voulez, c'est qu'on reste au coin du feu avec un bon petit tas de pantoufles.

which generalisation about female behaviour again relocates the conflict in the Laurent marriage from the personal onto the sexuo-political level. The threatened immobilization clashes with the extreme mobility by which Laurent is defined in the film, as he is shown not only in a variety of locations in the course of his personal and professional activities, but also moving between these locations, driving his car, mounting steps etc.

Laurent reflects the rigid segregation of female and male into spheres of private immobility and professional activity respectively not only by fleeing the former, rejected as unworthy of a man, but also by excluding females from the latter, as demonstrated in his treatment of Catherine, who intrudes into his professional world when the Cyclone picks her up in a lifeboat. Laurent gives short shrift to her emotional problems, telling her:

Ecoutez, mon petit, gardez vos histoires pour vous. Ça ne me regarde pas. Tout le monde a ses petits emmerdements. Il n'y a qu'à les laisser glisser. On les laisse à terre. C'est comme les femmes. On ne ferait pas mal de les laisser à terre.

and promptly restoring her to her jubilant husband.

In her analysis of gender dynamics in REMORQUES, Sellier makes a connection between the 'peur du féminin' expressed here and that which impregnated many 1930s films.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, the all-male group with Gabin at the centre as object



of admiration, together with his position of power within the group and powerlessness outwith it (vis-à-vis the company who own the Cyclone) conforms to the pattern identified by Vincendeau<sup>5</sup> as central to the Gabin films of the 1930s as discussed in Chapter Three. Moreover, the speech quoted above articulates a regressive desire for escape from the complexities of adult existence, suggesting that the masculine environment aboard the Cyclone provides a haven analogous to that furnished in Panama's baraque in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, evoking as it does Panama's warning to Jean:

Je te préviens, c'est pas la peine de m'attrister avec le brouillard, les malheurs et les ennuis. Ici il n'y a pas de brouillard... le temps est au beau fixe...les aiguilles sont clouées..

These factors betray the film's 1939 genesis — in particular in terms of the Gabin myth — as well as Prévert's hand, also visible in the characterization of Catherine, who erupts into Laurent's work environment just as Nelly appears to Jean *chez* Panama. However, I would argue that Catherine, despite her links with Nelly and other 1930s Prévertian heroines, is closer in terms of function and characterization to her counterpart in *LUMIERE D'ETE*, the second Prévert/Grémillon collaboration, as well as to the main female characters in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and other films of the Occupation.

Both the style and timing of Catherine's arrival in Laurent's life suggest that she is an anima figure. Firstly, Laurent saves her from the sea, a role underlined in Catherine's admiring remark 'C'est merveilleux d'être sauveteur.' This conforms to the prince rescuing the maiden pattern already noted as indicative of an anima manifestation in the foregoing analysis of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*. Secondly, she appears at a moment when Laurent, like Denis in the later film, is on the verge of a

personal and professional crisis, his marriage is in difficulties and his livelihood and status threatened, as his employers threaten to sell the Cyclone and disband the crew.

Moreover, there is an intrinsic link between the failure of Laurent's marriage and the emergence of an anima figure, who takes on the role of femme fatale, leading Laurent away from his professional and marital commitments; both are symptomatic of a refusal to acknowledge the feminine, in sociological terms in the first instance, in personal developmental terms in the second. In her *Introduction to Jungian Psychology* Frieda Fordham writes:

If a man has not realised that he possesses the anima image within himself, he will tend to project it onto women he meets and, especially if his feeling side is underdeveloped, he is easily fascinated. Sometimes circumstances contrive to push him literally into the arms of the fascinator, and if he is really possessed, he will throw over everything, even ruin his career for her sake... ...Men tend to depreciate female qualities, so that it is particularly difficult for them to accept these as also being elements in their own personality. It is only however by developing this side of themselves that they can become relatively immune to the more destructive elements of the anima influence.<sup>6</sup>

Laurent's depreciation of female sensitivities is evident in the misogynist generalisations quoted above, while his unwillingness to confront his own or consider anyone else's feelings is demonstrated in his dismissal of Yvonne's question 'André, est-ce que tu m'aimes encore?' with an irritated 'C'est fou ce que tu peux être compliquée'.

The distinction between the female ability and need to express emotional conflict, behaviour denoted as 'compliquée' i.e. hysterical in the dialogue, and male repression of the same, is a theme which runs through the film from the opening wedding sequence. Yvonne's explanation to Jean of why she feels sad at weddings:

‘Vous autres, les hommes, vous ne pouvez pas comprendre ces choses-là... .. Qu’on puisse se sentir tellement heureuse et puis en même temps avoir envie de pleurer’, links the personal to the political, in that the male suppression of the feminine, which is being excused here on an individual level, is the very factor which on the social dimension is causing Yvonne’s distress; her sub-conscious awareness of the unhappiness which awaits women in the role allotted to them in marriage, overshadows the ostensible gaiety of the event itself, and so the contradictions in this patriarchal institution, from which she is the first to suffer, but is unable to articulate are expressed in her moods.

Whereas Yvonne, a realistic embodiment of the obedient wife who has internalized patriarchal norms, colludes in preserving the fiction of a fundamental difference in male and female on which patriarchy is based, Catherine, in her role as anima, forces Jean to confront his ‘female’ side by recognising his own conflicting emotions, in this instance his desire for Catherine. His *amour fou* blows apart his compartmentalized existence in which women have a clearly defined place, and so enters into contradiction with his desired self-image as a model of integrity. leading a simple, straightforward life. Thus, his denial of his own desire and attempt to resituate himself on the ‘simple’ masculine side of the sexual divide — ‘Je n’aime pas ces jeux-là. Je suis un homme simple, moi’ — is demolished by Catherine’s tirade: ‘Non, ceux qui sont simples ne font pas tant de bruit pour cacher ce qu’ils pensent. Ils n’ont pas honte de leurs plaisirs, de leurs désirs.’

Laurent’s inability to come to terms with these internal contradictions results in the progressive loss of everything that mattered in his life. As he falls increasingly under the spell of his anima projection, he neglects firstly his professional obligations,

his disappearance with Catherine allowing his rival, a Dutch-owned salvage ship, to answer an S.O.S in his place, and secondly, his obligations to Yvonne. He is in Catherine's hotel room when Yvonne has her final heart attack and only just arrives home in time to say his final farewell.

Ironically, his failure to acknowledge the female side ultimately reduces Laurent to a state of paralysis and isolation analogous to that suffered by Yvonne. The transformation in his character is discussed by his crew as follows:

— C'est pas naturel. Il reste là à regarder le plafond ou le plancher pendant des heures. Il allume une cigarette qu'il ne fume même pas. Je lui demande s'il veut quelque chose à manger. Il ne me répond même pas.  
— Il s'emmerde.

Thus Laurent's earlier mobility is replaced by immobility, while his 'emmerdement' matches Yvonne's 'ennui'. Moreover, when he arrives at the Cyclone at the end of his walk through the dark, rainy streets after Yvonne's death and is told it is the rival Dutch ship which is in distress, his reply — which is also the last line of dialogue in the film — 'Qu'est-ce que vous voulez que ça me fasse, le hollandais?' echoes an earlier outburst of Yvonne's — 'Qu'est-ce que tu veux que ça me fasse, ton métier, le bateau, la mer et le reste?' indicating that he too will lead a life of emptiness and despair.

This 'feminization' of Laurent suggests an alternative to the traditional interpretation of the final walk through the dark accompanied by the liturgy as a paean to the heroic nature of man's struggle against malevolent fate — a reading of the film which the above should have demonstrated is a fallacy in every spelling of the word. In the context of the film's demonstration that there are no winners in patriarchy, it makes more sense to regard this unusual and moving final sequence in

melodramatic rather than tragic terms, as a displacement onto the body of the text — i.e. elements of the *mise-en-scène*, in this case the soundtrack — of the contradictions which the film cannot contain, a *mise-en-abyme* of the hysterical process by which the tensions that Yvonne could not articulate were displaced onto her body and expressed in her sickness.

Grémillon's portrayal of the two central female characters in REMORQUES echoes the pattern of patriarchal dichotomies referred to above in that Yvonne and Catherine, wife and mistress, reality and fantasy, differ from each other both in characterization and in the space they occupy in the film. Whereas Yvonne provides a solid, believable portrait of *Mme Tout-le-monde*, Catherine remains an elusive figure, who, despite Prévert's efforts to endow her with a past *à la* Nelly, never acquires the credibility of earlier Prévertian female characters. While Yvonne is cocooned in a marital home cluttered with ten years worth of souvenirs, Catherine is associated with open spaces, empty houses and hotel rooms, signifiers of freedom, transit and impermanence. Her silent stroll with Laurent over a vast expanse of empty beach, a strange oneiric sequence, the 'otherworldliness' of which is underlined by music on the soundtrack, contrasts with the confining nature of the Laurent's marriage and represents a departure from reality into the world of the anima,

...the world of reverie, a place of dreaming and drifting  
in an enchanted time where everything slows down and  
we are swept in and out of desire... ....We consent to  
a kind of muteness and destiny.<sup>7</sup>

However, as one would expect from a *cinéaste* whose refusal to conform to the whore/sweetheart pattern categorization of women is exemplified in his undermining of these stereotypes in a previous film, L'ETRANGE M. VICTOR, the situation is less clear cut than the above list of contrasts would suggest, in that there

are clear indications of a certain equivalence between the two women, both in the physical resemblance of the actresses chosen for the parts — both Morgan and Renaud are blonde with fine features — and in the text itself. The empty house which Laurent takes Catherine to visit after their walk on the beach is *la maison sur la côte* which Yvonne has repeatedly spoken of as her dream home, symbol of her hopes for a new life. The implication of interchangeability is reinforced in Catherine's remark 'C'est joli, une chambre toute blanche avec de grandes fenêtres qui donnent sur la mer.', which is a repetition of Yvonne's earlier description of her ideal bedroom.

The replacement of one woman by the other points to a fundamental similarity in their position vis-à-vis Laurent. If Yvonne is excluded from Laurent's life, locked in a domestic world of inactivity in which he refuses to linger, so Catherine too realises that there is no place for her with Laurent, as her marginal existence is untenable and, as she tells him, '...tu as une vie ici où je ne pourrais pas compter.' Her sudden departure is foretold in the scene in which she and Laurent visit the empty house, in which she states, 'Les femmes comme moi, c'est fait pour disparaître, n'est-ce pas?', a remark which could refer either to her inherent lack of being as anything other than a psychic projection, or to her position as a mistress, with no recognised place within society.

In this second instance REMORQUES effectively demonstrates that a woman's lot within patriarchy is not a happy one on either side of the wife/mistress divide, the former being confined to a suffocatingly narrow space, the latter denied a place. The disappearance of both Yvonne and Catherine before the end of the film is symptomatic of a diegetic society where there is, to borrow Sellier's choice of heading for her chapter on REMORQUES, 'pas de place pour les femmes'.<sup>8</sup>

I would argue further that Sellier's phrase can be applied to the society depicted in Occupation cinema in general, in that, as the rest of this chapter will show, *REMORQUES* is paradigmatic in its demonstration of the function of female characters and the space allotted to them despite its non-conformity with other aspects of Occupation cinema, a non-conformity which can be attributed to the film's hybrid status.

Thus, the presence of Gabin trailing in his wake the Gabin myth accounts for the predominantly male-centred narrative which focuses on Laurent's 'tragic destiny' and for the consequent sketchiness of the part of Catherine, who fails to transcend her function as a manifestation of Laurent's *malaise* and become a credible character in her own right. This lack of prominence for a female character is in marked contrast to typical Occupation narratives, even those which are structurally male-centred, as for example *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, where the anima figure Irène is no more or less 'real' than any other character in the film.

If the predominance of the male psyche as source of the narrative is typical of the 1930s, the nature of the projection reflects the fantasies of the Occupation, in that evocations of childhood as indications of regressive desires have been replaced by the 'otherworldliness' of the anima manifestation. This movement from symbols of a personal or sociological past to timelessness is accompanied by the lack of a geographic *ailleurs* which distinguishes *REMORQUES* from earlier Gabin films in which the notion of escape to another location, be it the South America of *QUAI DES BRUMES*, or the more specifically Popular Front ideal of Easter in the country in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* was a prominent feature. In forsaking the idea of an *ailleurs* to concentrate upon different spheres within a given society, *REMORQUES* prefigures

the generalized depiction in films of the Occupation of a closed society in which any mobility consists of movement between its compartments rather than outwith its bounds, a factor which, together with the absence of any evocations of the past or indeed the future, creates the physical and temporal *vase-clos* which is one of the defining features of Occupation cinema, as demonstrated in, for example, the second Prévert/Grémillon collaboration, *LUMIERE D'ETE*.

*LUMIERE D'ETE* takes place in an isolated location in the South of France, in a community consisting of the occupants of the local *auberge* and *château*, and workers from a nearby construction site. The film begins with a young *Parisienne*, Michèle, walking along a dusty road towards the Ange Gardien, the hotel where she has been told to wait for her lover, the artist Roland. She is given a lift by Patrice, local aristocrat and lover of Cri-Cri, the *patronne* of the Ange Gardien. When Roland finally appears several days later, he is in despair at a rejection of his work and breaks with Michèle. Shaken, she attempts to walk out on him but her path leads through an area where blasting is being carried out, and her life is saved by Julien, an engineer working on the dam, who had fallen in love with her. Michèle returns to the hotel and Patrice, who is also in love with her, contrives to have her move to his country house by employing Roland to decorate his hall. During a masked ball at his home, Patrice tells Cri-Cri he intends to marry Michèle, while Michèle and Julien confess their love for each other. The amorous tangles are resolved when the car carrying the two original couples back to the Ange Gardien crashes. Roland dies from his injuries and Patrice falls over a precipice after an unsuccessful attempt to shoot Julien. Michèle and Julien head off to new horizons.

*LUMIERE D'ETE* marks a progression from *REMORQUES* in that while it



reworks within a closed environment the same basic themes central to the work of Prévert and Grémillon — the problems of liberty and commitment within relationships, which may either imprison or offer the possibility of development — it loses those elements of the earlier film which linked it most strongly with 1930s cinema — the (poetic) realist setting, and, more importantly, Gabin and all his presence brought with it in terms of a male-centred narrative with a tragic conclusion, replacing it with features more typical of the Occupation, a mythico-symbolic setting and a female-centred narrative in which the love relationship is one of mutual liberation rather than self-destruction.

Although LUMIERE D'ETE is, like REMORQUES, given a contemporary setting, its atmosphere is closer to that of the mythico-historical VISITEURS DU SOIR, Prévert's previous project, in terms of both location and characters. LUMIERE D'ETE and LES VISITEURS DU SOIR were both shot in the South of France; as its title implies, the former is bathed in the same mediterranean light which illuminated Trauner's white castle, its continuous sunshine a radical departure from the storms and fog engulfing the Northern port settings of REMORQUES and QUAI DES BRUMES. Similarly, the social types depicted in LUMIERE D'ETE — the aristocrat in his castle, the ex-dancer in her hotel — are closer to the feudal nobility of LES VISITEURS DU SOIR than to the seamen and their wives who form a community in REMORQUES, in that they too lead inactive lives in their own private worlds. (It will be argued that the construction site and its inhabitants, who appear to constitute a 'realistic' work element, have no more than a symbolic function in the film.)

Despite superficial differences between the two films — in LES VISITEURS

DU SOIR, there are six players in the *jeu de l'amour*, in LUMIERE D'ETE only five, while the three dimensions of diegetic reality, memory and enchantment through which the lovers pursue each other in the first film are replaced in the second by three sites, which, despite their concrete presence, have a largely symbolic function — the fundamental structure is the same. Gilles and Michèle are outsiders who arrive in a closed world accompanied by a corrupt/bankrupt partner, whom they will exchange in the course of the narrative for a new partner with more life-enhancing qualities. A new couple will then be formed in some extra-diegetic space.

Whereas Gilles journeys through various spiritual planes, Michèle navigates between Cri-Cri's hotel, Patrice's castle and Julien's construction site, which, like squares on a *jeu d'oie* board, promise either entrapment or the possibility of progression. The first site at which Michèle arrives, the oddly named Ange Gardien hotel, is effectively a transposition into more symbolic terms of the marital home in which Yvonne is trapped in REMORQUES and as such represents one of the snares awaiting women in patriarchy: the empty life which ensues when a career is sacrificed for a man, and that man's presence decreases with his waning interest.

Just as Yvonne is left alone with the souvenirs of a dead marriage — in the bedroom scene she tells Marie, 'on ne devrait rien garder, rien accrocher aux murs...', so Cri-Cri — like Yvonne, played by Madeleine Renaud — has only the faded tokens of a dead love to cling to when Patrice, for whom she had given up a career as a dancer and a life in Paris, makes his visits to the Ange Gardien increasingly rare. Patrice's comment when she shows him her sad array of letters, photos and faded flowers — 'C'est un vrai musée' is indicative of the sterile nature of a relationship fossilised in mementoes. Just as Yvonne strove to maintain the

fiction of an unchanging love, telling André at the wedding 'Tout à l'heure, je t'ai regardé. J'ai pensé que depuis 10 ans rien n'a changé. C'est comme au premier jour.' so Cri-Cri forces Patrice to relive in memory the beginning of their affair. The sequence in which the remembered sounds of the ballet at which they met are externalised onto the sound track establishes in its over-determination the perversity of this attempt to breathe life into a thing long dead.

The sequence had begun with Cri-Cri demanding reassurances of Patrice's affection and eventually retaliating to his mechanical responses of 'yes, Cri-cri, no Cri-cri, of course, Cri-cri' with a frustrated cry of 'Cri-cri, Cri-cri, on dirait que tu jettes du pain aux oiseaux.' This reference to Cri-cri as one of her caged birds, which are present in this scene both visually and chirping away on the soundtrack, underlines the objectification of Cri-cri, who has relinquished her identity as *Mlle Christine Guérande, premier sujet du théâtre national de l'Opéra* to become Patrice's plaything. This point is hammered home by a series of visual metaphors throughout the film, notably in Cri-cri's first appearance where she is framed with a bird in her hand, establishing from the outset her status as bird in a gilded cage, and above all in the architecture of the Ange Gardien, a strange edifice apparently constructed of glass set in wooden frames, whose lateral bars, behind which its inhabitants are repeatedly framed, make it appear a huge bird cage perched high on its rock.

In this bird cage Cri-cri must sit and wait for Patrice to appear, as he has forbidden her to take the initiative of coming to him. Although Michèle's greater mobility and independence is established at the beginning of the film - she is initially seen walking towards the hotel, and this journey along a road will be repeated twice in the film, whereas Cri-cri is only ever seen at locations, the hotel or the castle;

moreover it is made clear that Michèle has a profession — the possibility that she too will become locked in a state of passive dependence is indicated in the parallels that are drawn between the two women.

In the course of their first conversation, Michèle states that although it was not her idea to come to such an isolated place she finds it attractive. The disillusioned response of the older woman:

Oui, c'est exactement ce que j'ai dit quand je suis arrivée ici. En quatre ans j'ai changé d'avis. Des pierres, toujours des pierres, et du vent, du soleil, la neige en hiver... ah oui, c'est sauvage.

evokes the danger of Michèle repeating the same cycle of passion followed by disenchantment, just as it is suggested in REMORQUES that the lot of the newly wed Marie will be no happier than that of Yvonne. The conversation is interrupted by Michèle jumping up when the phone rings in the hope it may be Roland, who has told her to meet him there. Her eagerness, and then disappointment when her hopes are dashed, mirror Cri-Cri's joy at the arrival of Patrice, and sadness when he refuses to stay. In the absence of their respective men, the two then lunch together.

Thus begins the first phase of the film, in which Michèle plays Cri-cri's waiting game, as is emphasised visually in shots of her motionless stance on the hotel balcony, framed against its wooden bars, and verbally in the mocking remark of the bartender — 'Soeur Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir?', a quotation from the Bluebeard fairy-tale which refers both to Michèle's present predicament at the Ange Gardien and to the next trap which awaits her, that of Bluebeard's castle.

The danger represented by Patrice's desire for Michèle is indicated at the opening of the film, when he picks her up on the road and drives her to the hotel, thus symbolically transforming her state of independent mobility to one of passive

dependence. When Roland eventually arrives at the hotel, drunk and depressed at the failure of his ballet, Patrice takes advantage of his spiritual and pecuniary bankruptcy to lure him — and hence Michèle — to his castle with the offer of work. Having reduced Roland to a state of ‘feminine’ dependency — Patrice picks up the hotel tab, despite Roland’s coy protests — he then proceeds to destroy him by encouraging him to drink. It is these destructive tendencies which define Patrice, particularly in his love relationships which are associated with murderous instincts. The bond which binds him to Cri-cri consists of their shared knowledge of his murder of his first wife, which was disguised as a shooting accident, while his passion for Michèle is expressed in the desire to shoot everyone in sight, so that they can be alone in the world, a jealous fantasy provoked by the sight of Julien speaking to Michèle.

If Cri-cri was very much a Grémillon creation, bearing a strong resemblance to the Madeleine Renaud character in L’ETRANGE M. VICTOR — by virtue of the caged bird symbolism — as well as in REMORQUES, Patrice has obvious antecedents in the Prévertien pantheon of villains. If his addiction to gratuitous violence in place of love recalls Renaud in LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, this perversion of the male sexual urge from a life force into a murderous impulse links him most clearly with Zabel, who jealously killed his ward’s boyfriend in QUAI DES BRUMES. Patrice’s confession to Michèle:

Vous êtes si fraîche, si jeune. La jeunesse, la fraîcheur,  
les choses les plus précieuses du monde. J’en ai toujours  
été privé.

establishes that he, like Zabel, is a Bluebeard character, in that he seeks a kind of spiritual rejuvenation through the appropriation of a young girl who possesses the youth and freshness he lacks.

While Zabel's designation as a Bluebeard-type was in part a function of the discrepancy in age between himself and Nelly, Patrice enters the category of corrupt father-figures in the sociological sense of class rather than age. His claims on Michèle's affections, which are couched in similar terms to those of Julien, are discredited while those of the engineer are validated because of the discrepancy in the functions the two men fulfil in society, the parasitic aristocrat simply owning land, while the engineer transforms the landscape for the sake of others. This fundamental dichotomy between possessing — designated as a type of stagnation — and actively developing is expressed in the contrast between the unhealthy relationship in which Cri-cri is caught and which threatens Michèle while she remains at the castle, and that ultimately attained by Michèle and Julien.

Like a bird in captivity, Michèle loses her shine at Patrice's castle. Roland's comment: 'Avant tu riais aux éclats. Maintenant tu ne ris presque plus.' indicates that she is in danger of undergoing the same objectification process as Cri-cri and becoming a soulless marionette like the automatons with which Patrice amuses himself. Alerted by a jealous Cri-cri, Julien goes to the castle to ask Michèle, (who, sitting idly in the sun, recalls Cri-cri, previously shown lying idly on her sofa) 'Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici. Ce n'est pas votre place.' only to be given the despairing reply 'Ma place. Je crois que maintenant je n'ai pas de place nulle part.' At this point it would seem that her shock at breaking with Roland mingled with a forlorn desire to cling to him have left her paralysed.

It is eventually Roland himself who convinces her to leave and in this respect fulfils his dramatic function as the motor which drives the plot along. He is established as a driving force in that he — and only he — is twice seen in the film

driving motor vehicles. It is he who sets events in motion by sending Michèle to the Ange Gardien, he who instigates Michèle's three walks along the dusty road - her arrival, her aborted attempt to leave after the break up and her trip to borrow money from Cri-cri to leave the castle — and he who provokes the car accident which provides the final resolution after Michèle has been persuaded by Patrice to stay. In his association with movement and in his disinterested desire to free Michèle, he is placed in positive contrast to Patrice. However, the two occasions on which he drives motor vehicles both end in a crash, which along with his compulsive drinking, is indicative of his suicidal tendencies. He therefore fails to provide a positive alternative to Patrice, in that his self-destructive impulses are merely the *revers de la médaille* of Patrice's murderous instincts. As indicated above it is Julien who represents the possibility of a positive outcome in that he, and the construction site with which he is linked, symbolise a series of positive values which are polar opposites to the negative elements associated with the hotel, the castle and their inhabitants.

As the third symbolic locus in the film, the construction site encompasses not just the dam works themselves, but a wider area in which blasting takes place and which is traversed by the roads along which Michèle walks on her three journeys. It therefore contrasts with the hotel and the castle in that it occupies a less restricted space and symbolises movement and change rather than immobility and stagnation, both in its association with journeys and in its function of destroying the existing face of the landscape to create something new.

Moreover the aim of the building project, the creation of a dam which will bring water to a barren region (cf Cri-cri: 'Les pierres, toujours les pierres') and so

give it life, is a concrete expression of the metaphor used to designate Michèle's life-enhancing quality which Patrice wishes to appropriate (she is described by Roland as 'Une fille merveilleuse, toute droite, toute simple, l'eau fraîche'. As such it is an antidote to the notion of sterile aridity associated with Patrice and Cri-cri's dead love — the dried faded flowers among Cri-cri's mementos — and with Patrice himself, as in Cri-cri's warning to Julien of the dangers awaiting Michèle at the castle:

Là-bas à Cabrières elle n'en a pas pour longtemps pour  
conserver sa fraîcheur... [Patrice] a une telle secheresse  
de coeur...ah oui, il est capable de tout...

In her association with water and flowers (at the beginning of the film she is given sunflowers), Michèle is of course a typical Prévertian heroine of the type most recently incarnated by Anne in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*. Her relationship with Julien is also of the same mould as that between Anne and Gilles, both in the setting in which it is conducted — the exchange of vows of affection take place beside a fountain — and more importantly, in the mode of its development, which follows the pattern familiar from the films analysed in the preceding chapter, namely that of mutual salvation taking place in an altered state of reality.

A number of elements combine to produce the sensation of unreality which pervades the first meeting between the lovers. Cri-cri is laying out Tarot cards, enunciating their meaning — 'la nuit, les voyageurs' — when the face of Julien, a traveller in the night, appears at the window. Mistaking him for the long-awaited Roland, she shows him to Michèle's room. The unorthodox nature of his sudden arrival, which appears to be almost provoked as much as predicted by the cards, lends an aura of destiny to their meeting, just as the role of Cri-cri, the *bonne fée* who conjures up the prince and then unites him with the maiden, explains the name l'Ange



Gardien.

The sense of strangeness is reinforced in the bedroom scene itself, by music on the soundtrack when Julien opens the door and by his failure to find a light switch, which allows a semi-awake Michèle to kiss him, mistaking him in the darkness for Roland, and is reiterated in his later account of events in terms of a dream:

la fenêtre était entr'ouverte, la nuit était fraîche, il y avait des fleurs dans la chambre et elle seule dans son grand lit... comme un rêve, tu sais... on ne sait pas trop où on est mais c'est rudement agréable.

The music in this sequence is similar to that in one of the earliest scenes in the film, where Michèle, having stepped off the bus, begins her walk to the Ange Gardien. The music together with the mist — dust from blasting activity? — which obscures the realistic background, indicates the mythic nature of her journey, while the sign she passes — 'Attention aux mines. Danger de mort.' prefigures her next journey along the road, after the break up with Roland, in which she wanders into the blasting area and is saved by Julien, who drags her into the shelter of a huge pipe. Sellier describes this rescue and the connotations invited by its *mise-en-scène* as follows:

...l'arrachant à la mort, il la met au monde une deuxième fois. Le magnifique plan des deux jeunes gens lovés dans l'énorme conduite d'eau qui ouvre son orifice circulaire sur la lumière éblouissante du ciel connote cette nouvelle naissance après la nuit du fondu au noir et le chaos des explosions de mine; ils sont seuls face au ciel, prêts à s'élancer hors de la matrice originelle dans le vaste monde.<sup>9</sup>

The relationship thus follows a death-rebirth scenario analogous to that located in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL*, which in psychoanalytical terms is symbolic of personal development, in contra-distinction to

the stagnation which defines the Cri-cri/Patrice liaison. If in this respect Julien's rescue of Michèle augurs well, he is less of an ideal lover than Gilles or the baron in that his conception of love is one of possession, its proximity to the imprisoning tendencies of Patrice and Cri-cri indicated in Julien's identification with Cri-cri's jealousy, when he is sent by her to the castle to demand of Michèle that she leave, a display of possessiveness which explains his failure to dislodge her at this point.

The mutual salvation aspect of their relationship comes into play when Michèle converts Julien to the concept of relationships based on respect for the other's freedom, in the course of their conversation about a caged cicada — an obvious echo of the caged bird symbolism and hence the plight of dependent women — which one of Julien's colleagues keeps as a mascot:

M : Comment? Il est dans une cage et il porte bonheur?  
 Il n'est pas rancunier. Vous devriez le libérer.  
 J : Il n'est pas à moi.  
 M : Mais qu'est-ce que ça peut faire? Personne n'est à personne.

The way is then clear for the formation of a new healthy couple which breaks with the destructive cycle demonstrated in the Cri-cri/ Patrice model of perversity, which the initial Michèle/Roland and potential Michèle/Patrice pairings had threatened to duplicate, a resolution similar to that of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, in which Anne and Gilles form an ideal couple in distinction to the Dominique/Gilles, Dominique/Hugues, Anne/the devil formations designated as unnatural in the text.

This resolution is effected in the penultimate sequence of *LUMIERE D'ETE*, which underlines the socio-political dimension of the film. On the way home from the masked ball a car crash propels Cri-cri/Manon, Patrice/Des Grieux, Roland/Hamlet and Michèle, dressed significantly in contemporary dress, into the world of gigantic

modern machinery on the construction site. Roland succumbs to his injuries and Patrice falls over a precipice while retreating from the workers who witnessed his attempt to kill Julien, leaving Cri-cri prostrate on the ground. The incongruity of their costumes amongst the machinery constitutes a violent clash between old and new, suggesting that the defeat/elimination of the morally bankrupt, unproductive characters is to be seen in terms of a sweeping away of a corrupt old order by the unified force of the workers, in whom hope for the future resides. A bridge is thus formed between the personal and the political, in that the role Julien plays in saving Michèle, who, by virtue of her association with nature, stands for eternal values, from Patrice, reflects the proposed role of the workers in building a new society after destroying the old.

In this reading of the film there emerges a pattern analogous to that of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, where Denis, an intellectual associated with the world of work through his night shifts at LES HALLES, rescues Irène (who as Marianne represents *la France éternelle*) from her corrupt father. The concept of renaissance symbolised at the personal level in Julien saving Michèle from the explosion can thus be seen as a metaphor for the national renaissance which was one of the main planks of Vichy ideology, described by Chalas under the heading 'le mythe de l'œuvre'<sup>10</sup> in terms of a regeneration which would break with the individualist spirit of the past and restore a sense of collectivity.

On a more practical level, Michèle's choice of Julien, who is not a worker in the strict sense of the word but an engineer, is reminiscent of Geneviève's departure with the scientist in *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES*. The prominence accorded to these young technocrats, unusual in a cinema more interested in

proletarian or upper middle-class/aristocratic milieux, may reflect the alliance in Vichy between the old guard and a young managerial class of graduates from the écoles polytechniques, brought in to 'secouer l'archaïsme des structures économiques et politiques de la France'.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, this rejection of the old order in political terms is mirrored in cinematic terms by the elimination of elements associated with 1930s cinema. The characters which are discarded at the end of the film, in addition to being thirties 'types' — caged wife/mistress (cf. Madeleine in *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR*), suicidal painter, corrupt father-figure — are played by leading actors of that period, Renaud, Brasseur and Paul Bernard, whereas the survivors are inscriptions more specific to the Occupation — anima figure, insipid young man — and are played by the newcomers Madeleine Robinson (Michèle) and Georges Marchal (Julien). Moreover, the aristocratic milieu in which the doomed characters evolve is evocative of Renoir's 1939 masterpiece, *LA REGLE DU JEU*, from which the automatons and the masked ball, symbols of a decadent class on the verge of collapse, are borrowed.

However, just as this rejection of the old cinematic order is not as clear cut as it may appear, in that the recognisably 1930s characters are privileged over the profoundly uninspiring Occupation figures in terms of casting and script, so there are factors in the text opposing any interpretation which overemphasises the influence of the ambient socio-political discourses. Whereas in the clearly Pétainiste *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES* the corrupt order was personified in the figure of a jumped-up petit-bourgeois, to whom the true aristocracy provided a positive contrast, in *LUMIERE D'ÉTÉ* the landed aristocrat, viewed in Vichy as the representative of good old-fashioned values, is shown as an irredeemably corrupt

homicidal maniac.

Moreover, the ambiguous inscription in the text of the world of work militates against a straightforward acceptance of the 'moral' suggested by the film's *dénouement*. At one point in the film a long sequence showing the movement of men and machines on the construction site dissolves into the first scene of the masked ball sequence. The remarkably similar construction of the two shots linked by the dissolve, which have matching areas of light and darkness, together with the lack of any narrative justification for the long building site sequence, makes it evident that the function of these shots is to draw a comparison between the two worlds, that of the workers toiling away and that of the aristocrats dancing. Following the logic of the film's ostensible discourse, the workers should emerge favourably from this comparison. However, a number of METROPOLIS-like shots, showing workers moving silently along one after the other, accompanied on the soundtrack by jarring music, are indicative of the dehumanizing nature of repetitive tasks, suggesting that the labourers, like the aristocrats, are automatons devoid of an inner life, simply going through the motions.

This fleeting insight into the real nature of unskilled labour is not necessarily a product of directorial intent. Although the rejection of Prévert's Manichean/Marxist world-view with the refusal to divide society into *les bons* and *les pourris* is consistent with Grémillon's more humanist approach, the *cinéaste* may have been more concerned with the aesthetics of the working environment, work as a mechanical ballet in which workers play a role similar to that of the pylons and elevators which are lovingly framed in towering immobility or vertical movement, than with making a social point. Nevertheless, this inscription of the

workers *en masse* as cogs in a machine contrasts sharply with the individualist ethic implied in the heroizing final shots, which frame Julien and Michèle against a misty background, thereby cutting them off from the reality of the construction site behind and signalling a return to the realm of myth.

A more coherent reading of the film emerges then if the element of dam construction — destroying and rebuilding to enhance fertility — is seen as a Romantic projection onto nature of the theme of personal development within a relationship which, as the idealizing final images remind us, is at the centre of the film, rather than looking at the relationship as a metaphor for social change. If Prévert's communist leanings and affection for the working classes produced a filmic discourse compatible with the Pétainiste anti-individualist ideas of a return to collectivism, then this fortuitous coincidence did not survive beyond these final images, which, by isolating the couple from the working community, indicate Prévert's ultimate preference for the mythico-poetic rather than the political dimension.

The shots framing the couple against a misty background are followed by the rather unlikely image of the two setting off on foot through what appears to be a vast barren wilderness. In thus dispatching the idealized couple from diegetic reality into some other undefined place the ending of *LUMIERE D'ETE* is analogous to that of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and would appear to testify to a general inability in Occupation cinema to depict a non-mythical, geographical or socio-political *ailleurs*.

In this context Michèle's reply to Julien when he tells her her place is not at the castle — 'Je crois que maintenant je n'ai pas de place nulle part' proves prescient. There is no place within the diegetic reality for a couple embodying the ideal of a

liberating rather than enslaving relationship, a point which is made with vigour in two historical dramas of the period, *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* (de Baroncelli, 1941) and *DOUCE* (Autant-Lara, 1943), which can be compared to *REMORQUES* in terms of their portrayal of the fate of women within rigid patriarchal structures and to *LUMIERE D'ETE* in their creation of a closed society within whose bounds the film's action takes place.

*LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* is based on Jean Giraudoux' adaptation of the Balzac novella. The eponymous duchess, Antoinette de Langeais, is a young aristocrat married to a husband she detests and from whom she lives separately. She finds consolation for an unhappy personal life in her public role as queen of Parisian society, where her host of unrequited lovers have earned her a reputation as a flirt. At a ball she meets the général de Montriveau and falls in love. Warnings of her coquetterie lead Montriveau to doubt her sincerity and he is easily taken in by a comrade's ruse, which drives Antoinette publicly to humiliate herself in order to prove her love, then disappear from society. Too late, Montriveau learns the truth and traces Antoinette to a Spanish convent, where she dies in his arms.

The structure of the film is similar to that of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* in that events are set in motion by the appearance of an outsider in a closed society, who tries to 'rescue' a young woman forced by her family to marry one of the less appealing members of their class. Montriveau is characterised as a 'fauve', an 'ennemi du monde', whose brilliant military career in the Orient has kept him far from Parisian society, while the loveless nature of Antoinette's marriage, thrust upon her by a family which, she states, 'm'a sacrifiée à ses intérêts', is conveyed in the terms of her reproaches to a husband who 'en un

mois a fait d'une jeune fille une vieille femme' and to whom she complains 'votre dûreté a déseché pour toujours le coeur qui s'offrait à vous.' Thus, the association of cruelty, sterility and sacrifice of youth with the patriarchal order established in the Carné and L'Herbier films is here placed in the historical context of a *mariage de raison*.

It is however to REMORQUES that LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS bears a greater resemblance in its depiction of the confinement of a woman within a certain sphere, within whose bounds her lover refuses to be contained. As in REMORQUES, the inability of the couple to coincide spatially results in the woman's death, which is denoted as a manifestation of a tragic fate, but which closer examination reveals to be directly attributable to the limitations imposed by patriarchal society on a woman's activity. Dramatic action in LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS revolves around Antoinette's initial attachment to and subsequent attempt to escape from her place in society. This place is defined geographically as Paris — the Paris of the *beau monde* — as opposed to the various *ailleurs* — Mediterranean countries, *la campagne* — proposed but never visited in the course of the film, and spiritually as a realm of *paraître* as opposed to *être*, i.e. a world where Antoinette is identified with her persona of *coquette/reine de Paris* and cannot display the sincerity Montriveau demands of her.

The opening sequence of the film, the ball at which the lovers meet, situates Antoinette in her place as queen of Parisian society and object of general admiration. She enters the *salon* by descending a staircase surrounded by a bevy of beautiful young women. Her elaborate dress and hairstyle, together with her central position in the shot, indicates that she is the 'star'. The overall resemblance of the shot to a



Busby Berkeley production number establishes Antoinette as a 'spectacle', an impression reinforced by the first remark addressed to her by one of the young women among whom she sits, 'Comme je t'admire'.

Antoinette's initial complicity in this role is suggested in a comment made by Ronquerolles before her arrival at the ball: 'La duchesse de Langeais aime faire ses entrées quand sa cour est complète.' However, her position as object of society's gaze, a gaze which defines her as a *coquette*, proves as inescapable as it is fatal to her love affair with Montriveau. A cut from their initial encounter in a hothouse leading off from the *salon* to a group of aristocrats who comment upon their conversation shows that the spectator's impression of a private *tête-à-tête* was mistaken and that the pair were the object of scrutiny.

This pattern, which is repeated throughout the film, is one of a series of elements which relentlessly situate what should be a private affair in the public domain. That their affair is destined to become, like Antoinette herself, a *divertissement* is indicated in a conversation between Ronquerolles and Marsay, the two aristocrats who represent the eyes and voice of Paris. Before the lovers have met, Marsay asks '...Paris n'a t-il pas besoin d'une histoire d'amour?... Ces deux-là peuvent nous la donner.' The relationship is literally transformed into a sideshow when Marsay and Ronquerolles take up the props momentarily laid down by street musicians and broadcast the progress Montriveau has made in the best 'Roll up! Roll up! tradition, a scene which is merely an amplification of the running commentary the two give at salons and balls.

This commentary has the effect of transforming even the private encounters of the lovers at Antoinette's home into a performance, in that, through their

recognition of the various stages of courtship they, among others, have experienced with Antoinette, Ronquerolles and Marsay underline the fact that what is in this case a relationship based on sincere desire is being conducted in a manner identical to earlier flirts. The impression of charade is reinforced by the manner in which successive scenes charting the development of the relationship follow each other in the text, as if they were set pieces in a ritualistic display. Throughout this first part of the film, Antoinette appears unable to find an original authentic mode of expression for her love. Locked into a cycle of repetition, she reproduces either her own earlier insincere performance or the words of others which she tries to make her own. In response to Montriveau's taunt, 'Les grisettes du Palais-Royal ont plus de coeur et d'innocence que vous', she observes how a *grisette* greets her lover and then naively repeats her words to Montriveau.

The implied contrast between the insincerity of the beau monde, which Montriveau criticises repeatedly in the film, and the sincerity of the *petites gens* recalls the common tendency in 1930s cinema to designate the bourgeoisie a corrupt order and the *petits métiers*, that romanticised version of the working class, the site of authenticity. The similar positive/negative division drawn in films such as *L'ENTRAINEUSE* between Paris, on the one hand, and the countryside — particularly around the Mediterranean — also prevails here, where the geographical capital is conflated with its aristocratic society and designated an environment where love cannot flourish. The impossibility of reconciling a love affair with her position in the monde is made clear in Antoinette's complaint to her uncle, the vidame de Pamiers, of the disruption her liaison is causing: 'Les femmes me jalourent et m'espionnent. Mes amis s'écartent...', while Pamiers response: 'Oui, rien n'a jamais

poussé à l'ombre de l'amour', indicates that within the confines of Parisian society love is as sterile an affair as Antoinette's loveless marriage.

And yet when Montriveau proposes an escape from Paris — 'Allons où le soleil nous attend, en Italie, en Espagne' Antoinette's response of 'Au Portugal!', far from indicating acquiescence in his desire to transfer their relationship to a more natural environment, is a cue for a song, a Portuguese melody *à la mode*. She thereby retreats from the possibility of a relationship into the realm of performance, both in her rendition of 'Le Fleuve du Tage', and in her response itself, which had been predicted in the preceding scene by Ronquerolles:

Chacun de nous a eu le quatrième mois sa prime  
musicale... Cela m'étonnerait fort si elle ne t'offrait pas  
un de ces soir le Fleuve du Tage.

and so designated as part of the ritual by which she keeps suitors at bay.

This refusal to leave Paris and prove the sincerity of her love is self-defeating. And yet Antoinette's apparently perverse behaviour is given perfectly understandable grounds in the text. In her first encounter with Montriveau, she explains her attachment to le monde as follows:

Je l'aime parce que je lui dois le meilleur de mes amis.  
Nous femmes, nous n'avons pas le loisir de trouver nos  
amis dans un métier, dans une guerre. Nous attendons  
que le monde nous les apporte...

When, in the 'Fleuve du Tage' scene, he accuses her of using Paris as a defense against him and asks what secret keeps her from him, she replies:

Celui de toutes les femmes. Serai-je aimée toujours?  
Une femme vieillie, je le deviendrai, c'est notre lot.  
Mais une femme qui a connu le bonheur et s'éveille sur  
le néant, voilà ce que je ne serai jamais.

These concerns echo those voiced in REMORQUES, where Yvonne's suffering and

subsequent death was a result on the one hand, of a patriarchal society which confined its female members in the enforced passivity of the domestic sphere, excluding them from the *camaraderie* of the (all-male) working environment, on the other, of the loss of her husband's love. Thus, despite the hundred and more years which separate the societies depicted in the two films, and the different production periods of the films themselves, the factors behind the downfall of the female characters prove to be the same.

Moreover, in *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* as in *REMORQUES*, the suffering of the female lead at the hands of a callous male is presented as an individual example of a fate common to innumerable women. The lines spoken by Antoinette in the film as quoted above are an abridged version of the original Giraudoux script, in which the passage is as follows:

Celui de toutes les femmes. Celui de ma cousine  
Caroline que son fiancé a trompée. Celui de Mme de  
Bauséant que son amant abandonne... Serai-je aimée  
toujours?<sup>12</sup>

The sub-plot of cousin Caroline abandoned by her fiancée referred to above is retained in the final film, where it has a function similar to the sub-plot of the newly weds in *REMORQUES* but in reverse, in that whereas the fate of Yvonne is presented as indicative of that awaiting Marie in the earlier film, here the jilting of Caroline and her subsequent entry into a convent foreshadows the fate of Antoinette, who, forsaken by Montriveau, will flee to the same convent. The story of the two women is then universalized in that the eventual search for Antoinette brings to light reports of the mysterious appearance of young women *secrètes et solitaires* in various provinces of France and countries of Europe, who, it is implied, are also casualties of love.

Just as in REMORQUES, Yvonne's abandonment is in part the result of the demands of Laurent's professional activity, which, as it is constructed in patriarchal society, proves incompatible with domesticity, so in LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS Antoinette is sacrificed in the name of Montriveau's career. When she finally decides to relinquish her place in society and writes to Montriveau asking to be taken to the countryside, her note is substituted by Ronquerolles, anxious to break up a liaison he fears is diverting his comrade from the business of military strategy, for one giving a rendezvous with a prostitute. Furious at what he perceives to be a mockery of his love, Montriveau insults Antoinette at a ball. She then makes the ultimate sacrifice and drops the mask of the coquette by declaring her love for him in front of *le tout-Paris*, announcing 'L'occasion se présente ce soir de montrer ce que fait une vraie femme devant un vrai amour.'

In publicly declaring her desire, Antoinette is breaking the fundamental taboo of patriarchal society, and the remainder of the film is devoted to her retribution. This final show of authenticity is both incompatible with life in Parisian society and comes too late to win Montriveau, who believes her gesture to be one more charade. Her departure from the ball at the end of this scene marks the beginning of the second part of the film, which charts the progressive disappearance of Antoinette first from society and then from Paris/the diegetic space. Before leaving what is effectively her last ball, she announces her intention to withdraw from the *monde* unless Montriveau returns to her. Her plea to him at this point:

...pensez qu'à partir de ce moment c'est moi qui attends, moi qui souffre... Tous les jours vous me trouverez chez moi, Armand, à chaque heure, je ne sortirai pas...

indicates an extreme self-imposed form of the passivity and confinement associated

with Yvonne and Cri-cri.

If in the Grémillon films the lovers' appearances in the lovelorn females' sphere are merely infrequent, in this second part of *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* they are non-existent. Montriveau's absence from the space occupied by Antoinette is indicated in her complaint to Pamiers:

Il est invisible. Invisible partout où je voyais son image  
chaque jour et chaque heure... On l'a effacé pour moi du  
monde.

and this absence is accompanied by a series of empty gestures which underline Antoinette's inability to fill her space with Montriveau's presence. Thus, she sends her empty coach to wait outside his hôtel in order to convince him of her sincerity by a public display which compromises her virtue. It is however a charade and therefore merely a reversal of her earlier pretence not to care for him and as such emphasises the impossibility of reconciling her desire with her place in society. Similarly, she sends him letters which are neither answered nor returned — she tells Pamier, 'Il y a un coin de néant à Paris où elles tombent au rebut'. When she visits his empty rooms, she finds her letters unopened and learns from his valet that he is fighting a duel because of her coach. She rushes to the Champs de Mars, only to overhear the following conversation:

Ronquerolles : Il s'enrichit, le tableau de ta duchesse.  
Montriveau : Ma duchesse? Il y a eu une duchesse?  
C'est curieux! Ma mémoire n'en a plus trace.

Thus, Antoinette, like her letters, has been consigned to the néant occupied by women who have loved and lost and so has fallen victim to precisely the fate she feared. She suffers the agony of waiting for ten days before sending Montriveau an ultimatum, and then, when he fails to appear, disappears. Ronquerolles then reveals

his subterfuge and it is the turn of Montriveau, having missed the appointed hour, to comb Paris in search of Antoinette.

The suggestion of a certain equivalence in their positions in the supervening searches of the one for the other within Paris is reinforced by the *mise-en-scène* of their final meeting. Montriveau traces Antoinette to a Majorcan convent and is allowed a brief interview through a *grille*. In the shot/reverse shot filming of their conversation, each is placed in turn behind the bars which separate them, a stylistic device similar to that used to film Laurent and Yvonne in REMORQUES, and which indicates here as there that each party is imprisoned in their respective suffering.

However... the disappearance of Antoinette is analogous not so much to Montriveau's absence from his mistress' space in this film as to the eradication from the text of the female subject of desire in films such as L'ENTRAINEUSE, LE BONHEUR and PRIX DE BEAUTE. Antoinette's disappearance into the night after Montriveau fails to turn up marks her exit as an integral figure from the diegesis. It is followed by a fragmentation of the character as the physical beauty which is the object of male desire is split off from the voice which enunciates her own female desire. When Montriveau realises the duchess has vanished from Paris, he sits in the Palais-Royal gardens and conjures her up in memory. Images of her beautiful, silent face appear on the screen in a series of dissolves. In the next sequence, which shows the search for Antoinette, Montriveau announces to his comrades — without obvious justification or explanation — 'C'est à sa voix que je la reconnâtrai un jour.' And indeed, when he tracks her down to the convent, only her voice remains; although 1940s realism did not extend to cosmetic disfigurement, the dialogue insists upon the fact that Antoinette's suffering has rendered her unrecognisably haggard.

Like the 1930s female-centred films discussed in Chapter Two, *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* thus demonstrates the punishment of the female who dares to declare her desire through the twin mechanisms of fetishization (building up the physical beauty of the object) and voyeurism (demystification and punishment). Its ending most closely resembles that of *LE BONHEUR*, in which the 'real' Clara is last shown as a hysterical mess slumped in an armchair, while the ideal image of Clara is restored in the imaginary space of a cinema screen. Here an analogous process operates in reverse order, with the restoration of the beautiful object Antoinette in the imaginary space of memory, followed by the demystification and punishment of the 'real' Antoinette through her suffering, disfigurement and subsequent death.

One thing however distinguishes *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* from its 1930s counterparts and that is the increasingly repressive nature of the text. In *L'ENTRAINEUSE*, the fate of Suzy, like that of Antoinette, was foreshadowed in that of another female character at the beginning of the film and she, like Antoinette, was banished from the diegesis at the end of it. But in the intervening period she lived out her desire in a rural, mediterranean *ailleurs*. Antoinette on the other hand is punished for the mere expression of desire, as her note requesting to be taken to the country is suppressed and exchanged for one which separates her from her lover for ever.

For her there is no *ailleurs*, either in the country or in the Mediterranean. Just as she relegated Montriveau's suggestion of a trip to Spain to the realm of performance with 'Le Fleuve du Tage', so Spain, and other European countries, are relegated to the world of artifice in the filmic text, in that they are represented as



illustrations in a book, the pages of which are turned as Ronquerolles recounts the story of the single women who appear all over Europe. He ends with an illustration of the Carmelite convent in Majorca where Antoinette has taken refuge. Far from constituting a retreat into nature, it is therefore positioned in the text under the same signifier of 'artifice' as Paris and so provides no alternative space.

This repressive atmosphere is intensified by the fact that the film begins and ends with references to death. In the opening ball scene Ronquerolles greets the arriving guests with predictions of the time and manner of their death, prompting Marsay's remark: 'Ta soeur a tort de te poster à sa porte pour coller des étiquettes de mort sur le crâne de ses plus solides invités!'. His ominous remark about Antoinette 'Qui avant six mois...' foreshadows her death in Montriveau's arms in the final scene, which again elicits comment from Marsay: 'Voici ce que l'amour a apporté à cette âme charmante: un mariage avec la mort.' The overall effect is to suggest an ineluctable fate of which Antoinette is the tragic victim.

However, as in *REMRQUES*, closer examination of the text reveals this mysterious 'fate' to be a function of both the patriarchal system and its individual representatives. Ronquerolles is not only the interpreter but also the instigator of Antoinette's destiny, in that it is he who causes the lovers' fatal split by substituting Antoinette's note in order to protect Montriveau's career. The act which prevents her accession to the realm of 'authenticity' and ultimately destroys her is therefore motivated by the same concern which lay behind Antoinette's initial attachment to her place in *le monde*: the obsessive exclusion of women from the world of work, which leaves them with society as the only theatre in which they can perform.

Moreover, despite Montriveau's status as outsider to society and hapless

victim of its defender Ronquerolles' machinations, there are indications that his 'love' for Antoinette is simply another form of oppression. Infuriated by Antoinette's refusal to furnish physical proof of her love in the 'Fleuve du Tage' scene, he bursts into her bedroom announcing 'Je suis un époux qui vient réclamer ce qu'on lui a promis.', adding a seductive 'Tant de fois, en plein bal, j'ai souhaité te presser contre moi, te tuer devant tous.' His impetuous demands provoke Antoinette's remark 'Les soldats de Napoléon me semblent confondre les femmes et les villes.' Thus, his love, like that of Renaud in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, is expressed through warlike desires to conquer and kill, and so he fails to provide the alternative non-violent, egalitarian relationship model furnished in the Carné film by Gilles.

Antoinette's reference to Montriveau as one of Napoleon's troops is one of a number of similar comments which introduce a political dimension to Montriveau's outsider status. A former officer of Napoleon he now serves Louis XVIII and moves in monarchist circles. Apart from suggesting a certain willingness on the part of the military to serve any regime, a theme not without its contemporary application, the implication would appear to be that there is no fundamental change from one regime to the next, as the former soldier of Napoleon proves as tyrannical an 'époux' as the monarchist Duc de Langeais.

That the oppression of women in patriarchy is also to be taken as a metaphor for the relationship between the person-in-the-street and the ruling classes is indicated in the sequence following Montriveau's attempt at rape, when he is confronted in his walk through the streets by couples singing 'Le Fleuve du Tage'. His irate attempts to silence them are met with resistance from the surrounding crowds, whose cries of 'C'est un bourgeois qui veut baïllonner sa femme.', 'Et la liberté, Monsieur,

qu'est-ce que vous en faites?' position them firmly on the side of Antoinette.

And so far from offering an escape, an affair with Montriveau would merely constitute a move from the frying pan into the fire. As love is presented as both the only release from an empty existence available to Antoinette and simultaneously as a form of subjugation, it is clear that for Antoinette death is the only way out. The sense of *huis-clos* arising from her distinct lack of options is both intensified and given a contemporary significance by the political allusion, which adds a temporal dimension to the hitherto spatial notion of confinement, suggesting that the changing form of successive regimes does not alter their fundamentally oppressive nature.

The previous chapter's discussion of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* established that the representation of the patriarchal order as moribund, sterile and corrupt remained constant in the emblematic films of the 1930s and of the Occupation. Like the political dimension of *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* discussed above, this could be interpreted as a reflection of a general perception that for the wo/man on the *Porte de Lilas* omnibus, little had in fact changed.

There is moreover a certain similarity between the apparently opposing endings of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR/LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* on the one hand and *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* on the other, the former showing the eternal union of the lovers in some ideal realm, the latter the separation of the lovers through death, in that both represent a form of sublimation. Antoinette's love is designated a divine mission by Pamiers, who tells her 'Sous ta vie la plus frivole, tu m'as toujours semblée désignée pour un devoir. L'amour est encore la plus grande mission que Dieu ait confiée aux hommes', and this theme is taken up in the final death

scene, when Antoinette tells Montriveau 'De là où je vais, tu seras aimé. Plus qu'on aime d'ici-bas.'

This shift of focus onto the spiritual realm, which marks a departure from the earlier REMORQUES, where Gabin's tragic destiny remained centre stage, is easily explicable in terms of the social context of the physical separation of loved ones through the peripetias of war. In its implication that what is of fundamental importance is not of this world, particularly taken in conjunction with its suggestion that all regimes are equal, it would however appear to promote an attitude of quiescence similar to that of LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE.

Autant-Lara's 1943 film DOUCE provides an interesting comparison to LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS in that it too focuses on the movements of characters, particularly those of the eponymous heroine, within an enclosed society from which an 'outsider' offers an illusory escape. As in LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS, personal developments are given a socio-political significance, but here, to paraphrase a line from the film, the message is one not of resignation but of revolt.

The date superimposed on the pan over rooftops to a half-finished Eiffel Tower at the beginning of DOUCE establishes that the action takes place in 1887 in the 7th arrondissement of Paris. The closed world in the film is that of the aristocratic Bonafés, and the movements within it primarily those of the daughter of the house, Douce, and her governess, Irène, who attempt to swap their respective positions within the social hierarchy. Irène wishes to ascend to the rank of mistress of the house by marrying Douce's father, while Douce wishes to escape the family altogether by running away with the factor of their country estate, Fabien, who is Irène's lover and had been instrumental in securing her post in the Bonafé household.

The film begins on the day Fabien is expected to arrive with revenue from the estate. Rather than appear at the house, he sends a message for Irène to join him at an inn, where he tells her he has booked them a passage to Canada, where they will escape their present servitude and start a new life with the money from the Bonafé estate. Irène, however, prefers to transcend her condition by marrying her master and refuses. Fabien follows her back to the house where she forces him to hand over the money. Aware that Irène has rejected Fabien in favour of her father, Douce convinces the factor to run off with her instead. They pass the night at the inn, where he talks of their future in Canada and she rejects his amorous overtures. The following morning they are visited by Irène, who pleads with Douce to return, the condition for her silence given by a family servant who threatens to reveal Irène's *liaison* with Fabien. In an act of defiance, Douce refuses and then sleeps with Fabien, although she has already decided to return to her family at the end of the day. That evening at the opera she tells Fabien of her decision and attempts to leave, but is caught in the fire that destroys the theatre. Back at the Bonafé household, Irène, her past revealed, is packing her bags when Fabien arrives with news of Douce's death. The two servants are sent off into the snow.

The opening shots of the film, in which the camera tracks backwards from a burning hearth out through the window into the falling snow, marks, like the track out of the window in *REMORQUES*, the opposition upon which the film's action is based; not, in this case, the segregation of men and women into professional and private spheres but the division between the hierarchical world of masters and servants, represented by the Bonafé household, and the free space outside. The former is repeatedly symbolised by fire, from the opening shot of the hearth,

suggesting the cosy, secure aspect of the Bonafé's world, to the flames which ultimately consume Douce after her unsuccessful attempt to escape that world, while the latter is represented by snow, a dominant feature of the — unusually chilly — *ailleurs* of Canada but also of the harsh outside world into which the ex-servants are cast at the end of the film.

The progression from cosy hearth to consuming flames is indicative of the claustrophobic nature of the world of the Bonafés. An impression of enclosure within this world is created through a series of stylistic effects. Irène and Douce are repeatedly filmed through the windows of the house, or behind objects within the house, as in a remarkable shot in which the camera appears to be in the hearth, as the two women are framed behind flickering flames. When Fabien runs along the corridor to Irène's room, the balustrade and columns which traverse the shot imply that he too is a prisoner of the Bonafés and will be unable to wrest any of the objects of his desire, be it Irène or the revenue from the estate, from their grasp.

These spatial divisions are however mere physical representations of the class barrier separating masters from servants which constitutes the real obstacle in the film. The importance of this barrier is indicated in the first sequence, in which a veiled Douce confesses her love for Fabien to a priest, who responds in the following manner:

Est-ce qu'il y a une différence sociale entre vous? Une différence assez grande pour rendre le mariage impossible? (silent acquiescence from Douce) Un domestique. Croyez-moi, cet homme ne peut vous apporter le bonheur. Je ne vous menace pas des bêtes de l'enfer. C'est ici sans tarder que va être votre enfer.

This threat of hellfire, which is recalled visually in the shot of Douce and Irène behind flames and then realised in Douce's fiery end, forms part of the fire

motif running through the film which adds to the *huis-clos* atmosphere, in that it provides a constant reminder of the fate awaiting those who transgress the code of the dominant social order.

That the taboo of inter-class relationships should be enunciated by a priest is not of course fortuitous, for the social order in question is one which bases its hierarchical structure upon a divine order of things. The Bonafés' allegiance to the pre-revolutionary feudal system is made explicit in the following exchange between Irène and Douce's grandmother, the Comtesse de Bonafé:

I : ...alors, je croyais qu'en toute justice, je pourrais prendre ma soirée de liberté...

C : ... égalité, fraternité. Je connais la chanson. Apprenez que je suis trop vieille dame pour être républicaine.

The comtesse's visceral attachment to a strict hierarchical order is also evident in her patronising treatment of the servants and the deserving poor which reinforces social divisions. Thus, she allows Fabien one unwanted ritual meal at the far end of the Bonafé table and, in a masterfully satirical sequence which reveals the total bankruptcy of the theory justifying the hierarchical system (the duty of care incumbent upon those at the top), she visits the poor with an unsolicited *pot-au-feu* and uses up the last of their firewood in heating it.

This rigid hierarchical order, with its barriers and fires which visually dominate the film, is contrasted with the wide open spaces of snowy Canada, which remains part of Fabien's imagination, entering the text only in his verbal evocation of 'un grand pays tout blanc, avec des diligences, des tempêtes de neige, des hommes libres...' It represents for both him and Douce an ideal space in which their respective desires can be realised, a democratic land in which he will no longer be

a servant and she will get her man. The ticket to Canada was however initially intended for Irène and so Douce and she must exchange places if the project Douce announces to the priest at the beginning of the film ('Nous partirons. Je m'enfuirai avec lui.') is to be realised.

This exchange is presented as possible in the strong indication of the two women's interchangeability given at the beginning of the film. The woman who goes to confession in the first scene is veiled and unidentifiable. She leaves behind an umbrella which is returned to the house and recognised by the servant as 'la parapluie de Mademoiselle' The 'Mademoiselle' who then appears at the top of the stairs and to whom the umbrella is handed is Irène. Her dominant position in the shot, together with the submissive behaviour of the servant and her identification through the umbrella with the veiled woman, creates the impression that it is she who is the daughter of the house, an impression which persists as the camera follows her into her elegant bedroom and observes her closing the window through which snow has been blowing into the room and putting away the novel she had been reading. It is only dispelled in the next scene in which she joins Douce and rebukes her for taking the wrong umbrella, thus solving the mystery of the veiled woman's identity and taking up the position of governess in the mind of the spectator.

This identification of Irène with the role of mistress is an externalization of the character's desire which is simultaneously rendered a desirable outcome for the spectator, in that Irène appears, not an usurper, but perfectly suited to the part. The impetus of the film is therefore to restore this initial identification. In her desire to replace Irène as mistress not of the house, but of Fabien, Douce also physically occupies the other woman's space, by 'borrowing' her window to watch for Fabien.



These two straightforward switches of space are unusual in that the movements of the two women within the diegesis follow a fundamentally different course, just as the methods by which they intend to achieve their goals are radically opposed. Irène aims for social ascent through marriage with Douce's father, the comte de Bonafé, which means she must cover up her past liaison with Fabien. The position in which she is first seen, standing at the top of the stairs, represents her desired goal and in the course of the film she is shown going upstairs three times. It is significant that in the first of these three instances she does not walk up, but is carried up beside the comte in the elevator he has had installed for his mother. Douce, on the other hand, is shown in the corresponding motion of going downstairs only once, and this act is less significant than her stance by Irène's window, for her desire is not to move up or down the social hierarchy but to break out of it altogether.

Thus, while Irène was shown to close the window in her bedroom, shutting out the snow and, by extension, Fabien, and so protecting her place in the Bonafé household, Douce dreams of breaking through the glass which separates her from the natural, classless world outside. This is indicated in the following exchange between the two women, when Irène finds Douce at her window:

D : Je suis une petite fille de la rue, moi. Il n'y a  
qu'une vitre qui nous sépare.  
I : C'est beaucoup, une vitre.  
D : Mais ça se casse.

Irène's window is eventually broken, not by Douce trying to get out but by Fabien trying to get in. In the first of a rapid succession of bizarre shots, Fabien appears at the window like a demon. A reverse shot shows Irène silently mouthing 'no', followed by a shot from inside the room framing Fabien at the window with Irène reflected in his dark coat. He then smashes the glass, thereby breaking the

uncanny atmosphere. The overdetermined nature of the sequence, in particular that of the shot uniting by means of the reflection on the same side two characters who are in fact on either side of the glass divide, suggests an eruption of the subconscious into everyday life. As Douce's rebellion against the limitations placed upon her within her hierarchical world is the motor propelling the film, it seems reasonable to suggest that, in smashing the glass which symbolises her confinement, Fabien is functioning as an animus figure, a physical manifestation of the central female protagonist's desires.

This scene is only one instance of Douce's uncontainable desire being displaced onto another part of the text. The same phenomenon occurs in relation to a song which accompanies the various stages of Douce's desire and disillusionment. The melody is first hummed by Irène in order to conceal the presence of Fabien in her room from Douce, who can hear everything through the wall. Douce immediately plays the tune on her mandolin, thereby waking the entire household. This excessive behaviour is both consistent with the pattern whereby she exposes what Irène wishes to suppress (as in breaking the window Irène closed) and analogous to that of the rebellious daughters in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* (Anne screaming her love for Gilles from an open window) and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* (Irène feigning madness).

The melody is then given words — 'Un peu d'amour, un peu d'espoir' when Douce sings it while decorating the Christmas tree Fabien has brought her from the country 'pour sa dernière Noël de petite fille'. The lyrics, and the fact the song is preceded by Douce informing Fabien she is no longer a little girl, indicate that for Douce the passage to adulthood is inextricably linked to her desire for Fabien. When

she leaves home in the night to run off with Fabien, she is again humming the tune and it would appear her desire is about to be realised. However, when she joins him in his room at the inn, the melody is heard on the sound track, a displacement which indicates that her desire cannot be accommodated within the text. And indeed, the next time the song is heard, she has already decided to leave Fabien. This final, full orchestral and vocal version of the melody performed in the café where the two eat before the theatre provides an ironic comment on the destruction Douce's youthful dreams. Her response to the music 'Je n'aime pas cette chanson' signals her loss of hope in the future, and so explains her death in the fire.

Like *la duchesse de Langeais* Douce must die, as death is the only exit from an untenable situation after the lover/outsider has failed to provide any real alternative to an oppressive regime. Douce had overcome Fabien's initial resistance to her plan of running away — '...jamais je n'épouserai une fille de riches. J'aurai toujours l'impression de la servir, même la nuit.' by promising 'Si elle vous aime elle vous servira.' Thus, far from seeking to transcend the master/servant relationship, the couple simply intend by means of a role reversal to reinstate it along the lines of gender rather than class. Canada is thus a country of *hommes libres* in the most literal sense, and so cannot represent an ideal *ailleurs* for the headstrong Douce. That she has overestimated her capacity for submission is suggested in one of her first remarks to Fabien when she joins him at the inn: 'Vous êtes bien autoritaire.'

Fabien's desire to dominate is expressed in terms of the hunt metaphor used to condemn as brutal and undesirable the conduct of the patriarchal figures in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*. His vision of Canada — '...un grand pays tout blanc, avec des diligences, des tempêtes de neige, des hommes libres...' ends with 'et des

renards, des renards partout. Tu dormiras dans la fourrure.’ and so is unacceptable to Douce, who tells him ‘J’aime mieux un renard vivant.’ Her identification with the hunted animal proves to be prescient, for when the couple are about to make love Fabien, like Montriveau in *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*, expresses his desire in bloodthirsty terms, telling Douce:

Tu es toute blanche. Tu as des veines toutes bleues,  
toutes neuves. Tu bats dans mes mains comme une  
petite bête. Je vois ton sang couler à l’intérieur de toi.

Such wooing elicits only a desire to escape from Douce, who responds with ‘Tu as des mains si froides. Laisse-moi.’ ‘Cold’ no longer has the positive connotation of freedom, but is associated with subjugation. When the couple are interrupted by a servant bringing logs for the fire Douce tells Fabien in her most autocratic tones ‘Je suis glacée. Voulez-vous mettre une bûche dans le feu.’ Both the formal address and the movement from cold to heat signal Douce’s desire to retreat to the hierarchical order of the Bonafés and restore a class-based servant/master relationship.

There is however no going back. Fabien points out how unbearable life as a virtual prisoner in the Bonafé household would be after her return. By gratifying her desire, Douce has transgressed the code of her caste and so closed that door firmly behind her. In order to avoid tragedy, the rite of passage to adulthood which her affair represents would have had to give her access to another alternative space in which childish dreams and female desire could be accommodated, but, as her idol Fabien turned out to have feet of clay, and his *ailleurs* to be equally tainted, this was not the case. The flames which finally consume her represent the ultimate revenge of her class, her punishment for openly expressing her desire and by eliminating her from the text provide the only logical ending as she has literally no place to go.

This 'fate' is foretold not only in the priest's hellfire predictions, but also through Irène, who provides an example of the non-fulfilment of childhood dreams associated with blocked horizons at the beginning of the film. In their first scene together she lends Douce a sewing aid doubly symbolic of childhood disappointment in that it is a souvenir of a sea-side resort she had never been to and is a gift she did not want, as she had hoped for a toy boat instead. Douce's unkind remark when offered her thimble. 'Il est un souvenir de quoi, votre dé? Encore une plage où vous n'êtes pas allée?' emphasises the notion of *huis-clos*, while the impossibility of realising childhood dreams in adult life is indicated twice, once in this scene when Irène turns down Douce's offer to lend her a toy boat with the comment 'Merci Douce, mais je ne saurais plus jouer avec un bateau.' and then later, when she knocks over a small boy's jigsaw of a boat on leaving the inn. This occurs at the point when Douce has refused to return home with her and she therefore knows the servant will reveal her liaison with Fabien to the *comte*, and her hopes of becoming the *comtesse de Bonafé* will be dashed.

Thus, the two women undergo a parallel experience in the denial of their desire and in their subsequent banishment from society, Douce into the fire, Irène into the snow. On the one hand, this duplication, like that provided by the female pairs in REMORQUES and LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS, transforms the particular into the universal, indicating patriarchy's general inability to accommodate female desire. On the other hand, Douce's adolescent status, together with the specific references to the non-fulfilment of childhood dreams, suggests that the theme of women's inability to find a place as an integral subject in patriarchy is being conflated with the theme of the hero's inability to progress from the imaginary maternal realm

to the symbolic patriarchal realm which, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, lay at the heart of a number of 1930s films, notably *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *QUAI DES BRUMES*. If in the 1930s the prevailing mood of despair was conveyed in the repeated immolation of a central male protagonist, particularly Gabin, here the film's inflammatory drive is channelled through a female protagonist.

In a letter quoted by Siclier, Autant-Lara made his directorial intent during the Occupation period clear:

Carné, qui a fait de très beaux, TRES BEAUX films, se range plutôt dans les films rassurants: *Les Enfants du Paradis* et *Les Visiteurs du Soir*. Moi — et j'ai recherché cela dans TOUS mes films, je voulais DERANGER. L'ordre établie, merdre! Allumer, à chacun, autant d'incendies que possible, c'est CELA la caractéristique de presque toute ma production.<sup>13</sup>

Autant-Lara's success in producing a *film dérangerant* was such that the most biting satirical scene, that of the *comtesse*'s visit to the poor, was cut by the censor and only restored after the Liberation. The scene ends with the *comtesse* wishing the deserving pauper 'de la patience et la resignation.' When the pauper asks Fabien what she can wish Irène in return, Fabien replies, 'Souhaitez-lui l'impatience et la révolte'. From the first scene in the film, where she announces her intent to defy society and run off with a servant, Douce embodies this revolt.

The increased stature accorded not just to the leading lady, but to the female characters in general, is clearly visible in *DOUCE*, where women are characterized as strong, courageous and dynamic, while the men are cowardly or impotent. Thus, Fabien is scorned for the lack of vision in his modest aim of running off with a small part of the Bonafé wealth by Irène, who aims to acquire it all by marriage and dismisses her former lover with the comment, 'Tu chipais. Tu es tout petit.' She then

denounces his cowardice in leaving Douce to reveal their liaison rather than have his revenge by doing it himself ('Tu es lâche. Tu n'as même pas le courage d'aller raconter toi-même. Tu laisses faire à de petites filles.') Conversely, her willingness to stay and fight even when it appears all will be revealed arouses Fabien's admiration ('Compliments, tu as de l'estomac.')

This distinction between male and female characters also operates in the world of the masters, where it is evident that *la comtesse de Bonafé* rules the roost. She is designated head of the household from her first appearance in the film, which is heralded by the sound of her imperious voice as she arrives home, then postponed as she enters a closed lift which slowly ascends, bringing her face gradually into shot. The importance this spectacular entrance conveys upon her is enhanced by Douce's remark as she arrives at the top of the stairs, 'Messieurs, le roi.' This emphasis on her voice and head contrasts with the treatment of her son the *comte's* first appearance, in which the camera focuses on his legs, one of which is wooden, and stick, thereby implying impotence, an implication which is reiterated verbally in the context of his forthcoming marriage by the *comtesse*, who warns him off using the lift in the following terms:

Si vous vous servez de cette mécanique, vous y  
laisserez votre dernière patte. Et ce n'est pas le  
moment, me semble-t-il.

The first shot of the wooden leg limping along the corridor outside Douce's door is prefaced by a tapping noise on the soundtrack and Douce's comment to Irène

Comme sa jambe tappe fort dès qu'il fait noir. Ça ne  
vous fait pas un peu peur la nuit? Moi, quand j'étais  
petite, j'avais peur de lui à cause de sa jambe.

The strange tapping noise and equally strange shot of disembodied legs,

together with Douce's suggestion of nocturnal fear, which conflicts with the *comte's* characterization as a kind, gentle figure, taken in conjunction with his impotence and later liaison with Irène, indicates that the *comte* is a 'Bluebeard' figure, like Patrice in LUMIERE D'ETE, a decadent aristocrat seeking solace in young women. The incest motif attached to the 1930s Bluebeard figures — and indeed the corrupt patriarchs of LES VISITEURS DU SOIR — recurs here, in that Douce and Irène, as discussed above, are largely interchangeable. In this context Douce's words, 'Ça ne vous fait pas un peu peur la nuit? Moi, quand j'étais petite...' can be understood as a reference to the threat of incest which the Irène/*comte* liaison represents.

The pattern of a central rebellious daughter figure whose incarnation of the typically male virtues of strength and determination is reflected in the courage/power of the women and corresponding timidity/impotence of the men who surround her which pertains in DOUCE is also to be found in another film of 1943, Grémillon's LE CIEL EST A VOUS.

LE CIEL EST A VOUS was Grémillon's third Occupation film after REMORQUES and LUMIERE D'ETE and represents a departure from these previous works, firstly, in that Prévert had no hand in it and secondly, in that the problem of liberty within a relationship as constructed by patriarchal society, which remains the central preoccupation of the film, is treated differently. Whereas REMORQUES, like LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS and DOUCE, had shown the impossibility of an egalitarian relationship within prevailing social structures, while LUMIERE D'ETE had offered the ideal of an egalitarian relationship in the context of a mythico-symbolic setting but stopped short of integrating it into any kind of social reality, LE CIEL EST A VOUS presents through the story of Thérèse and Pierre



Gauthier the model of an egalitarian relationship within contemporary society.

The Gauthiers are small-town garage owners who, along with their children, Jacqueline and Claude, are expropriated to make way for an airfield. The couple take up flying and Thérèse becomes an accomplished pilot. She and Pierre decide she should attempt to beat the woman's non-stop flight record and, ignoring the interests of their children and the hostility of the local community, they put all their resources into constructing a suitable plane. When Thérèse disappears on her record-breaking flight, Pierre returns home to an angry reception awaits him, as family and friends accuse him of sending Thérèse to her death. However, news arrives that Thérèse has landed safely and set a new record, and she returns to a magnificent reception at the aeroclub where her success is celebrated, attended by the whole community.

Despite the obvious references to the *aviation populaire* associated with the Popular Front in this tale of ordinary working people achieving great things, *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* was widely praised at its release for its portrayal of 'personnages pleins de ...santé moral',<sup>14</sup> representative of the 'braves gens... qui font...l'essentiel de la race française.'<sup>15</sup> This positive reception overlooks certain factors in the film which prevent such a straightforward reading, notably the fact that the couple's passion is clearly inscribed as an anti-social impulse which places the family, that touchstone of Vichy morality, in jeopardy, a point which will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. Of greater relevance to the present discussion is the fact that any interpretation which foregrounds the collective aspect of the film, viewing the Gauthiers as exemplary cogs in a social machine, is ignoring the film's emphasis on the individual. Although the action of *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* is firmly anchored in a realistic social setting, in distinction to the mythical loci of *LUMIERE D'ETE*,

the focus of both films is the same, namely the possibility of development within a relationship, in which commitment means respect for the other's freedom rather than a desire to imprison.

The first sequence in the film featuring the Gauthiers includes a number of elements which establish the dynamic nature of their relationship in opposition to the sterility and stagnation characterizing the negative couples of the previous films. These are fertility (they have two children); growth (father and son look at the marks on the garage wall indicating the height of the children over the years); mobility linked with progress (they are moving house to make way for an airfield); unity (the whole family is actively involved in the move) and, most importantly perhaps, equality. The egalitarian nature of the Gauthier's relationship, in which Thérèse is as mobile as her husband rather than being confined to the private sphere, is indicated in the fact that it is she who drives the removal lorry into town. In later sequences it is established that the division between professional and private spheres, so rigorous in the Laurent relationship, does not exist here, in that garage and living quarters are spatially linked and Thérèse holds sway over both.

The respect for the other's freedom and rejection of traditional gender-based roles is most clearly demonstrated in Thérèse's decision to take a job away from her family in Limoges. However, the family's distress at separation outweighs the financial advantages and Thérèse returns. It is clear that the constant change on which the couple thrive must take the form of a joint project and this they find in their passion for aviation, which carries their relationship onto new heights.

That their attempt to break records is to be seen as an exalted expression of their love rather than as an heroic feat intended to bring glory to their community is

spelt out near the end of the film by Larcher, Jacqueline's piano teacher, who defends

Pierre's decision to let Thérèse take off in the following terms:

Pierre et Thérèse se sont aimés comme tout le monde.  
Ils ont voulu une maison, des enfants, ce bonheur  
simple dont ils ont rêvé en écoutant cette chanson des  
lilas et des roses... ils se sont aimés davantage et c'est  
autre chose qu'ils ont dû trouver pour s'exalter  
ensemble, se dépasser...

but is also indicated at the beginning of the film in the fact that the home where they had their children is being demolished to make way for an airfield, which both foretells the new form of expression their love will find, and implies the destructive consequences this will have for their family.

As in *LUMIERE D'ETE*, the social, collective element in the film (the dam workers, the aviation club) is thus primarily a metaphor for the process by which the central relationship in the film develops and, as in the earlier film, this development necessarily entails the risk of death. This risk is symbolised by a group of orphans, who appear four times at crucial points in the film, providing a reminder of the potential fate awaiting the Gauthier children, and emphasised in the overdetermined sequences following Pierre's return home alone, in which the nightmare scenario of Thérèse's death is given full dramatic treatment before she is effectively resurrected when news arrives that she is safe.

If *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* thereby offers a socially realistic inscription of the Occupation theme of a relationship of mutual development involving a process of death/rebirth typically found in mythico-fantastical films such as *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, so too it conforms to the pattern set out in these archetypal films whereby the female role replaces that of the young male in a position of central importance in the text. Whereas this was the case in *LUMIERE*

D'ETE on a purely structural level, in as much as the lacklustre Michèle's nominally central role — the film charts her development — was not reinforced in terms of casting or script, in LE CIEL EST A VOUS the character of Thérèse in particular dominates the film through Charles Spaak's writing of the part and Madeleine Renaud's powerful performance, while female characters in general are privileged in that the text offers a number of instances of women 'replacing' men.

Thus, in the Gauthier family Pierre is merely a competent second to Thérèse, who is quite literally the driving force; she is seen driving lorries and cars, she takes the initiative in moving to Limoges, Pierre is only allowed to fly when she joins in and it is she who wins the cups. When Pierre breaks his arm — an obvious symbol of impotence — and tells Maulette, the elderly president of the flying club, that he is going to sell the plane as he is too old to achieve anything, it is entirely within the logic of the characterization that Thérèse should decide to make a record breaking flight on her own instead.

As in DOUCE, this pattern of weak/old/incompetent men as opposed to brave/competent/ young women recurs throughout the film, both within the Gauthier family — the son Claude appears both accident-prone and sickly, as he bangs his head sliding down the bannister and then contracts a cold, while the daughter Jacqueline excels at her music, which she courageously pursues in defiance of Thérèse's wishes — and outwith it. At the airfield opening ceremony, a young bartender responds to Pierre's enthusiastic outburst:

L'aviation, c'est l'avenir, Marcel. Seulement, il faut  
avoir la foi. Est-ce que vous l'avez?

with the pedestrian comment:

Vous savez, les avions, ça me fait plutôt peur. C'est la

buvette qui m'intéresse.

His pusillanimity contrasts with the courage of the female pilot invited to give an aeronautics display, suggesting, ahead of Thérèse's exploit, that the future of aviation lies in the hands of women.

Within the Gauthier relationship the notion of women taking over from men is made explicit in Pierre's enthusiastic reaction to Thérèse's dream of going for the women's record:

Des fois, tiens, je pense à Guynemer, comment je réparais son zinc. Comment on cherchait à travailler à faire mieux, tous les deux et puis comment il partait sur cette machine où tout dépendait de mon boulot. Alors, Thérèse, l'idée qu'il pourrait y avoir entre nous, en dehors de notre amour, une amitié comme celle-là. Eh bien, je ne peux pas t'expliquer ... Je t'aime encore plus que le jour où Claude est né.

which effectively places Thérèse on a par with Guynemer, a Great War flying ace for whom Pierre had worked as mechanic suggesting that the new partnership between the spouses will recreate the male bond forged in combat between Pierre and Guynemer. This then is the new level their relationship has attained; it has transcended the normal parameters of domesticity to reach the realms of the *camaraderie* generally reserved in French literature (eg. Malraux) and cinema (eg. the Gabin films) of the pre-war period for all-male groups.

If the emphasis is placed in this sequence on the private sphere and the movement beyond gender roles within a relationship, the historical reference to Guynemer prepares the way for the final inscription of a male being replaced by a female, in which the theme is placed in a wider social context. In the last sequence showing the triumphant return of the heroine, Thérèse, holding a bouquet of flowers presented to her by the mayor, is framed alongside a statue of Maulette, the deceased

President of the flying club, who had taken Thérèse on her first flight before dying in a flying accident. The juxtaposition of the two would suggest that Maulete has passed the baton onto Thérèse. The final heroizing image of Thérèse with her flowers, a living symbol of the spirit of French aviation<sup>16</sup> now incarnate in a woman who has taken over from the old dead heroes, can therefore be seen as analogous to the image of Irène in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* as Marianne, living symbol of the République Française as an eternal ideal, rather than as a political entity in the hands of corrupt and moribund old men.

The similar schema obtaining in the two films — spiritual/heroic values incarnated in a young woman, who takes over/is rescued from old men with the help of a younger man, who is a positive but weak character, requiring direction from the young woman, the driving force in the film — is all the more remarkable given the very real differences in the two works in terms of firstly, *écriture* and characterization — the L'Herbier film is a fantasy and Irène an anima/allegorical figure, whereas the Grémillon film is realist and Thérèse as believable a portrayal of a wife and mother as any in the cinema of the period - and secondly, directorial intent. As indicated in the earlier discussion of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, Irène is clearly the descendant of Rose-France, a less maudlin, more refined expression of L'Herbier's patriotism, while Thérèse, in her relationship with Pierre, provides the most perfect illustration in the work of Grémillon of the director's ideal of an egalitarian relationship between the sexes which transcends the division into gender-based roles imposed by society.

Such a relationship, which is defined in the film as against home and family, in that its passion risks the financial and emotional security of both, obviously goes against social tradition and the most vociferous supporter of that tradition in the film

is Thérèse's mother, Mme Brissard, who reproaches her daughter with neglecting her family and belittles her achievement in winning trophies. Indeed, Thérèse's competitive spirit is presented not just as a manifestation of her love for Pierre, but also as an act of defiance towards her mother. When Maulette suggests she try entering competitions. Pierre dismisses the idea but Thérèse replies:

N'empêche que ça me ferait rudement plaisir de ramener une coupe à la maison. Tu vois la tête de maman?...

These lines are followed by a wipe to the Gauthier's mantelpiece, on which stand three trophies, which Mme Brissard is dusting. She begins a series of reproaches to Thérèse with the remark:

Une, je ne dirais rien. Mais tous les mois, c'est une autre qui prend la place d'un vieux souvenir.

Thus, the theme of the rebellious daughter, which constitutes another link between *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* and *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, is here placed in the context of the healthy development essential if a relationship is not to stagnate and die, leaving only tokens of happier times for abandoned women like Cri-Cri and Yvonne.

The theme is doubly inscribed in the film, in that the Mme Brissard/Thérèse relationship is mirrored in that between Thérèse and her daughter Jacqueline. As Sellier points out, Thérèse's indignation at the notion of Jacqueline becoming *une artiste* is identical to her own mother's reaction to her flying:

Son refus catégorique à Monsieur Larcher qui propose de faire faire le Conservatoire à Jacqueline, sonne aux oreilles du spectateur comme la réaction obscurantiste d'une petite bourgeoise uniquement préoccupée de réussite matérielle. A ce moment-là, Thérèse ressemble à s'y méprendre à sa propre mère, vieille femme geignarde et vindicative.<sup>17</sup>

The equivalence between the mother's passion for flying and the daughter's passion for music is underlined both visually and verbally in the film. Jacqueline is at one point seen crossing a street at night as she makes her way to ask Larcher to continue her piano lessons in spite of her mother's opposition. In its nocturnal and secretive aspects, this scene is similar to a later scene in which Pierre and Thérèse work on the plane at night; an implicit comparison is thus drawn between Jacqueline's breaking of a parental and the Gauthier's breaking of a social prohibition. The transgressive nature of both passions is indicated in the repetition of Jacqueline's question to M. Larcher 'Est-ce que c'est mal?' in a later dialogue between Thérèse and Pierre.

The effect of this double inscription would appear to be to extend the notion of revolt beyond the context of a specific relationship, which, by the standards of the time, can only be seen as exceptional, and present it as an element of any parent /child relationship which is both natural, recurring from generation to generation, and positive; Jacqueline's musical ambitions are presented not only as equally valid to Thérèse's goals in aviation but also as essentially similar, in that they are simply a different manifestation of the same basic drive.

Thus, despite the formal similarities, there is an essential difference in content between the rebellious daughter theme here and in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*. Whereas the earlier films' depiction of the daughter, the repository of positive values, rebelling against a corrupt father, provides a simplistic Manichean view of a world in which good and bad are static values, easily defined and located within one character, Grémillon paints a more realistic picture of a paradoxical world in which things are less clear cut, where socially validated heroic



feats are seen as inherently antisocial, and where society itself is fickle in its condemnation and praise. This state of flux is at its most apparent in Thérèse's assumption of two contradictory roles; simultaneously reactionary mother and rebellious daughter she demonstrates that social traditions and interdictions are simply the prejudices of a generation unable to recognise its own youthful revolt in the form in which it manifests itself in their children, and that freedom, in whatever form it may take, is never won once and for all but must be recaptured time and again.

The overall effect is to lend an internal dynamic to the film, which relieves it of the *vase-clos* atmosphere so apparent in other works of the period. Not only is there a brief inscription of a geographic *ailleurs* in the film — the French colony where Thérèse eventually lands, its effect admittedly somewhat diluted in the almost caricatural signifying of 'abroad' in an establishing stock shot of camels wandering over some sand, followed by Thérèse in a studio-set-local-commissioner's-office assuring all and sundry that she is a homebody at heart — but, more importantly, Jacqueline's unfulfilled desire allied with her capacity for revolt extends the film beyond its diegetic end, allowing it to continue in the spectators' heads with scenes of a rising star at the Conservatoire, a Parisian epilogue unthinkable for Michèle and Julien, whom the spectator is content to leave in their no man's land...

If, in its non-hermetic atmosphere and its depiction of an egalitarian relationship in which the woman is not confined to a restricted sphere of activity *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* remains an exception in its period, it is nevertheless exemplary in the enhanced stature it accords to its female characters. Like *DOUCE* it provides a clear example of a rebellious daughter taking over the role that would previously have been the preserve of a male, and so demonstrates a tendency prevalent among

Occupation filmmakers to use a female character rather than a Gabin-esque male as a vehicle for their ideas, and this whatever their 'agenda'. The inclusion of a rebellious daughter figure in works as diverse as, to use Autant-Lara's terminology, a *film dérangent* such as *DOUCE* and a *film rassurant* like *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, a trend from which Autant-Lara, in the letter quoted above, sought to disassociate himself, backs up the contention made in the previous chapter — which showed the ease with which the same dramatic structure (the rebellious daughter/corrupt father pair) could be used to convey divergent discourses — that the defining features of Occupation cinema are a matter of form as much as of content.

The widespread replacement of male by female characters as a mouthpiece of revolt is perhaps in part attributable to the loss of a number of prominent actors — most notably Gabin, who went to the States, as did Dalio and Jean-Pierre Aumont, but also Jouvet, who found himself unable to return from South America, and to a certain extent, Michel Simon, who stayed in Italy until 1943 — and in part a reflection of the general loss of men from society, either to Germany as P.O.W.s or foreign labourers, or later, in small numbers, to the resistance.

If female characters in Occupation cinema fulfil the function of male characters in the 1930s, they do not enjoy the same advantages. As *REMORQUES*, *DOUCE* and *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* show, they are denied freedom of movement and/or the possibility of being a desiring subject within patriarchal society. Thus, Laurent's repression of the female side of his personality in *REMORQUES* demonstrates on a personal level what is shown at an institutional level in this and other films of the period: the refusal to allow women space within the patriarchal system.

While an Occupation film like *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* differs little in this respect from a pre-war film like *L'ENTRAINEUSE* — both films demonstrate the containment of women within the 'public' sphere and the denial of their subjectivity — the later film is nevertheless typical of its period in the sense of *huis-clos* created by the lack of any temporal or geographic *ailleurs*. Whereas Suzy enjoyed romance in a Popular Front rural paradise, Antoinette's love finds its highest expression in sublimation and death, the only *ailleurs* possible in Occupation cinema being on a spiritual plane.

The notion of *huis-clos* permeates each of the films discussed in this chapter — with the exception noted above of *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* — be it in the lack of a geographical or temporal *ailleurs*, a unusual feature in a Gabin film, that *REMORQUES* shares with *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* or in the recurring structure of outsider(s) penetrating a closed society which *LUMIERE D'ETE*, *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* and *DOUCE* share with the emblematic Occupation films, *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*. Similarly, the element of spirituality most clearly expressed in the sublimation of Antoinette's love is also a feature of the anima type relationships in *REMORQUES* and *LUMIERE D'ETE*, with their otherworldliness and process of mutual salvation.

The centrality of the notion of *huis-clos* and the element of spirituality in the cinema of the Occupation, and the social factors which lay behind them, may constitute another factor explaining the importance of female characters. The restricted freedom of women within patriarchy is a perfect metaphor for the limitations placed on the activities of the French, both geographical, in terms of their physical isolation, and political, in view of the complexities of political allegiances

and the negative consequences of resistance activity, while the eternal values and ideals to which the French were encouraged to turn in reaction to the complexity of the socio-political situation and the influence of Pétainiste discourse are traditionally represented by female figures.

In this and other respects one can therefore argue that the function of female characters in the cinema of the Occupation, like the space allotted to them within the diegetic society, has not in fact undergone any fundamental change from that of films of the 1930s. The leading ladies are by and large present not as women but as symbols of social malaise or communal aspirations, puppets portraying the director/scriptwriter's preoccupations, or exteriorizations of a central male characters inner turmoil. Like the female figures in *LE JOUR SE LEVE* or *PARADIS PERDU*, they are manifestations of a male psyche, diegetic or otherwise. If *REMORQUES* makes this process manifest by providing in Laurent a male subject from whose subconscious the anima/muse Catherine can emanate, in *LUMIERE D'ETE* the creative consciousness whence the poetic fantasy<sup>18</sup> Michèle sprang has no on-screen alter-ego, while in *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* the transformation in the final reel of the otherwise realistic working wife and mother Thérèse into a latter-day Joan of Arc is testimony to the apparently irresistible urge on the part of the most philogynist of male filmmakers to transform female characters into the bearers of ambient social discourses.

## CHAPTER EIGHT : NOTES

1. The decision to deal with the Grémillon films was taken in spite of a certain reluctance to run the risk of reduplicating parts of the work done on these films by Geneviève Sellier in her book on Grémillon, *Jean Grémillon, le cinéma est à vous* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989) It would however be perverse to exclude from a consideration of the lot of women in the cinema of the Occupation the work of the very director most sympathetic to women, as demonstrated in his innovative and sensitive portrayal of female characters, at that time. While the following is in no way intended to rival Sellier's excellent and detailed analyses of Grémillon's *oeuvre*, it will attempt to extend that part of her work which deals with the position of women in two ways; firstly, by applying the terms of Jungian psychoanalytical theory rather than that of Freud/Lacan and so giving an alternative reading of the function of the female in REMORQUES, and secondly, by placing Grémillon's portrayal of female characters in the wider context of Occupation cinema.
2. Henri Agel, *Jean Grémillon* (Paris: Seghers, 1969) p. 47.
3. Agel, p. 122.
4. Geneviève Sellier, *Jean Grémillon, le cinéma est à vous* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989) p. 159.
5. Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French Cinema of the 1930s — Social Text and Context of a Popular Entertainment Medium' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston Polytechnic, 1985) pp. 375—379.
6. Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology* (London: Penguin Books, 1953) pp. 114—115.
7. Gaston Bachelard quoted in Ann and Barry Ulanov, *The Witch and the Clown — Two Archetypes of Human Sexuality* (Illinois: Chiron Publications, 1987) p. 33.
8. Sellier, p. 147.
9. Sellier, p. 184.
10. Yves Chalas, *Vichy et L'Imaginaire Totalitaire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1985) p. 59.
11. Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération 1938-1944* (Paris: Seuil, 1979) p. 88.
12. Jean Giraudoux, *Le Film de la Duchesse de Langeais* (Paris: Grasset, 1942) p. 137.

13. Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son Cinéma* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1981) p. 226.
14. Georges Adam and Pierre Blanchard in 'l'Ecran français' supplément aux 'Lettres Françaises'(clandestines) quoted in a selection of contemporary reviews reproduced together with the script of LE CIEL EST A VOUS in *l'Avant-scène* (15 November 1981).
15. F. Arnaud, quoted in above.
16. Although the Gauthiers' heroism is presented as an essentially anti-social passionate impulse, it remains heroism and is to be viewed positively, as is made clear in the caption following the open titles:

Le film qui va être projeté devant vous a été inspiré par un exploit véridique qui illustra en 1937 les annales de l'aviation française. Ses héros ne sont pas imaginaires. Ils ont eu pour vivants modèles des gens de chez nous qui menent aujourd'hui encore dans un coin de province landaise une existence modeste et laborieuse.
17. Sellier, p. 223.
18. The recurrence of the themes associated with the character of Michèle in Prévert's filmscripts and poetry alike is noted in Gérard Guillot, *Les Préverts* (Paris: Seghers, 1966) and Marc Louis Mancini, 'Jacques Prévert: Poetic elements in his scripts and cinematic elements in his poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southern California, 1976).

## CHAPTER NINE

Darkness and Light : Manicheism and  
the Inscription of the Patriarchal Order in  
LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES, LE BARON FANTOME,  
LA FILLE DU PUISATIER, LE CORBEAU  
and LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON

From the nine Occupation films analysed so far a certain pattern has emerged, the most striking feature of which is the predominance of father/daughter narratives among the emblematic works of the period. While this represents a continuation of the 1930s trend noted by Vincendeau, the Occupation films differ, as Chapter Seven demonstrated, from their earlier counterparts in the increased stature accorded to the female figure, in that her development is at the centre of the narrative and/or she replaces the 1930s male lead as the main voice of revolt against the dominant patriarchal order.

In contrast, the inscription of the patriarchal regime has changed little from the 1930s. Either its social structures are denoted as destructive (REMORQUES, LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS, DOUCE) or — with the exception of L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL — individual patriarchs are portrayed as corrupt and/or murderous (LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE, LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES, LUMIERE D'ETE) or impotent (LE CIEL EST A VOUS, DOUCE). Not only is it thus generally associated with sterility and death, but a number of films specifically depict the sacrifice of youth to age, in terms of either the marrying off of a young woman to a member of the patriarchal regime or in order to further patriarchal interests (LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE, LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES, LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS) or the Bluebeard pattern of salvaging a corrupt or wasted life through the injection of young blood (LUMIERE D'ETE, DOUCE).

Such a depiction is clearly at odds with both the personality cult surrounding the *Maréchal*, 'le culte du Père ou du Grand-père, du Chef ou du thaumaturge'<sup>1</sup>



fostered by Vichy in which the geriatric Pétain was portrayed as kindly grandfather-cum-national saviour endowed with a youthful sprightliness<sup>2</sup> and the Vichy discourses which emphasised the role of youth in the construction of the new France. In supporting initiatives such as the 'Compagnons de France', designed to 'transformer les jeunes réfugiés de la zone sud en une avant-garde de la révolution nationale'<sup>3</sup> and creating the *Chantiers de la jeunesse*, in which young males were installed in the countryside and subjected to a regime of quasi-military discipline, socially-useful work and the inculcation of civic values, Vichy intended to restore the physical and moral health of its youth, a concept which failed to leave its mark on the emblematic films of the period.

There is however one fundamental aspect of the Vichy regime which is evident in many of these films and that is its adherence to basic notions of good and evil. The Manicheism of *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* is a reflection of 'la substantialisation du bien et du mal' which, according to Chalas, 'est dénaturation totalitaire du mythe'.<sup>4</sup> In his analysis of Vichy as a totalitarian regime, he equates it with Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia in that:

Les totalitarismes affirment tous avoir atteint la connaissance ultime et ne voient en dehors d'eux que ténèbres bourgeoises, royaume de la nuit et du mal, chute, être damnés et condamnés par l'histoire. Le métèque, le juif, le bourgeois, l'athée sont les différentes expressions culturelles en rapport avec le contexte social et historique d'une même logique totalitaire: ils incarnent la Bête contre laquelle il faut opposer dans les faits un Ange exterminateur.<sup>5</sup>

In *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* this black and white world-view is expressed at the level of characterization, good and evil, life and death being incarnated by the lovers and the corrupt patriarchs respectively, an inscription echoed in *LUMIERE*

D'ETE, while in L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL and LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE the opposition is articulated in the body of the text itself, through the use of expressionist techniques which contrast with and threaten to disrupt the fantastic world of the lovers. With the exception of L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, one of the few Occupation films to depict a father-figure in a manner which conformed to the Vichy construction of Pétain, the patriarchal regime is thus frequently presented as a force of darkness as opposed to the lovers on the side of light.

In its examination of the inscription of patriarchy in films of the Occupation, this chapter will begin by looking briefly at what might be termed black and rose-coloured variations on the schema outlined above in two of the emblematic *films fantastiques* of the period, Serge de Poligny's LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES (1944) and LE BARON FANTOME (1942). Not only are these two films on opposite ends of the oppressive/permissive spectrum as regards their treatment of the 'sacrifice of youth to age' theme and so between them represent the range of attitudes to patriarchy inscribed in the films studied so far, but they also provide an excellent illustration of the stylistic expression of a black and white world-view through a combination of dimly lit and overexposed shots.

The image of patriarchy, particularly in terms of the "fathers'" attitude to the next generation, which emerges from this analysis will then be compared to that conveyed in two contemporary realist films, LA FILLE DU PUISATIER (Pagnol, 1940) and LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON (Decoin, 1941). As both these films star Raimu, one of the aims of the study will be to ascertain whether a phenomenon analogous to that identified in the actor's 1930s vehicles — i.e. the 'star text' dictating a 'positive' portrayal of the patriarch in defiance of the general trend

- recurs in his two main Occupation roles. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of *LE CORBEAU* (Clouzot, 1943) which will focus on the films' position *vis-à-vis* Vichy discourses on family values, as shown in its treatment of a 'father's' attitude to children, and of the concept of good and evil so frequently given visual expression in the mythico-poetic films of the period.

*LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* (de Poligny, 1944) is the story of Sylvie, 'la fille adoptive du dernier évêque albigeois', M. Toulzac, an old man in a wheel chair who responds to his doctor's remark that he should have died five years previously with the comment 'Et vous croyez que je suis vivant?'. This *mort-vivant* and his ward live in the ruins of the citadel of Carcassonne, historical seat of the Albigeois, 'les adorateurs de la Mort', whose beliefs are defined by a character in the film as follows:

Nous sommes en enfer. Première conséquence: faire  
durer ce monde, avoir des enfants, c'est travailler pour  
le diable. Deuxième conséquence: vive la mort!

Thus, the notions of sterility and death associated in a number of films with the patriarchal regime are here raised to the status of a religion and they unremittingly pervade what is perhaps the blackest film of the Occupation.

That the relationship between Sylvie and Toulzac conforms to the paradigm established in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, *LUMIERE D'ETE* and elsewhere of a young girl representing nature being sacrificed by a corrupt Bluebeard-like patriarch is suggested in a sequence at the beginning of the film when Sylvie brings the old man a bunch of white flowers and thereby provokes the following dialogue between Toulzac and a friend, Mlle Perdrière:

T : ...sans [Sylvie] je ne saurais même pas que c'est le printemps.

P : Vous n'avez pas peur qu'elle se sacrifie? Elle pourrait avoir envie de vivre à son âge.

Sylvie's initial sacrifice in devoting herself to the care of Toulzac is merely a preliminary for the real sacrifice demanded of her in the course of the film, namely that she give up her earthly life and descend into an underground Albigeois sanctuary discovered beneath the citadel in order to revive the old religion.

However, whereas Irène and Michèle were positive heroines, untainted by the forces of evil which confront them, Sylvie departs from the paradigm in that the aura of death surrounding Toulzac is also an integral part of her being. Flashbacks of her earlier life reveal the death of two boyfriends, for which she is blamed by the community, whose judgement she has internalised, believing herself to be cursed. It is this unwitting power to transform love into death which leads Toulzac to believe that she is the priestess foretold by Albigeois legend whose 'ombre fera fuir l'amour' and whose sacrifice will bring back the past. It is this role to which the title *FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* refers.

Although the film is set in contemporary Carcassonne, the citadel is steeped in myth and intrinsically linked to a past which pervades the present and threatens to engulf Sylvie. Like Irène and Anne, Sylvie has her moment of revolt, and pleads with Mlle Perdrière to take her place, describing her fear of the fate awaiting her as follows:

J'ai senti tout le poids de la cité sur mon corps. Et puis cette affreuse impression que la mort était dans la maison, qu'elle rodait autour de moi, elle me frôlait comme une chauve-souris. Je n'en pouvais plus, j'étouffais.

The narrative thus consists of Sylvie's struggle to escape the past, both personal and mythico-historical, and in each case linked with death. This struggle is

organised around a series of oppositions, death vs life, darkness vs light, underground caverns vs sky, horror story vs fairy tale, in which the first term represents the world of the moribund patriarch Toulzac, the second that of the love offered by Roland, a composer who has returned with his family to his home town in search of inspiration. The opposition is expressed visually in the text by the marked contrast in the manner in which the scenes in the citadel with Toulzac and those in the open air with Roland are shot.

Roland first sees Sylvie climbing up steps to the ramparts of the citadel. The shot is bathed in light and she appears to be ascending through a cloud. The mythical quality this lends their first encounter is enhanced by the subsequent dialogue, in which Roland woos Sylvie with tales of *troubadours* and their *belles* and arranges to meet her 'au bois joli' despite her insistence that she doesn't believe in fairy tales. The elements of air, light and fairy tale love which characterize this first meeting contrast with the notions of depth, darkness and death contained in the following sequence, in which Sylvie returns to the citadel to speak of her past with Toulzac, in the course of which the horrific death of her first lover is shown in flashback, and the death of another described. She then finds a map of the secret underground passage leading to the subterranean sanctuary where 10 000 Albigeois lie dead, which inspires Toulzac's hope that 'Tout le passé va ressusciter.'

The sequence is dimly lit and filmed in medium shot and close-up, and therefore contrasts in its turn with the next sequence, that of the lovers' rendezvous 'au bois joli' which begins with a series of long shots of the pair walking through sunlit meadows. The emphasis on air, light and space is diametrically opposed to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the citadel. A dialogue about happiness ('un joli mot

plein de ciel') ensues until it is interrupted by the sound of a bell tolling and the appearance of a funeral procession. This undermining of the notion of happiness by the sudden intimation of death parallels a similar development in their first encounter, when the rampart nearest to Roland had given way, reminding Sylvie of her fear of being a harbinger of doom.

The film's structure is thus composed of a series of contrasting sequences representing the possibility of love or death, the former being consistently interrupted by a reference to death. This continues until Sylvie, convinced by the death of Mlle Perdrière at the very moment she had asked her to replace her that she is indeed cursed and a public menace and/or the priestess foretold by legend, agrees to descend into the Albigeois sanctuary. From the moment Sylvie enters the underground caverns the film loses any reference to contemporary reality, switching from the Hammer horror atmosphere of the subterranean sets to the Alice-in-Wonderland fantasy world to which Roland subsequently conveys her. He rescues her from the dark caves which collapse about them as they emerge into radiant sunlight, the first of a sequence composed of over-exposed shots which relate the lovers' day of perfect happiness in what Roland calls 'la vallée heureuse', a Never never land populated with nursery rhyme characters in which the pair are lent an empty house where they consummate their relationship.

If this clear inscription of a black and white world-view at the level of characterization and *mise-en-scène* is similar to the Manicheism expressed in LES VISITEURS DU SOIR, LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE and LUMIERE D'ETE, so too the relationship between Sylvie and Roland echoes that of Anne and Gilles, Irène and Denis, Michèle and Julien in that it appears to follow a pattern of mutual liberation,

rescue, death and rebirth. Like Denis, Roland is undergoing a crisis at the beginning of the film where he laments his failure to fulfil his youthful promise and compose a great work. He describes himself to Sylvie as 'un musicien à la recherche d'une muse' and despite her protest ('Je ne suis pas une muse'), this is the function that she fulfils, as the day in the *vallée heureuse* ends with Roland playing his new composition on the piano. Just as Sylvie enables him to overcome his creative block, so he saves her from death in the underground caves. The dialogue — 'Qu'est-ce que tu es venue chercher au fond de ce tombeau? Il fait grand jour sur la terre' — together with the manner of the rescue — she faints, he carries her out into brilliant sunshine, where she regains consciousness — suggests the process of death and rebirth.

However, whereas in the films listed above this pattern is the prelude to a euphoric ending in which the forces of darkness are overcome and the lovers united forever in some mythical realm, in *LA FIANCÉE DES TENEBRES* there is a change of narrative course towards an ending which bears a greater similarity to the tragic outcome of *REMORQUES*, *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* and *DOUCE*. At the end of their perfect day, the lovers fall asleep. Sylvie awakens to hear cries of 'Sorcière, sorcière', cries which have haunted her ever since the death of her first lover. Realising that she can never escape her past, and will always carry the threat of death to those whom she loves within her, she leaves Roland a note explaining 'Si je restais, je te porterais sûrement malheur. J'aurai toujours ma robe noire. Il fera toujours nuit dans mon cœur.' and returns to the citadel, where she discovers Toulzac is dead. Roland returns to his wife and family, to the joy of his little boy. The film ends with Sylvie leaving Carcassonne. From behind the bars of a gate she

watches Roland playing his new composition on the piano, surrounded by his wife, child and sister. The sister then draws the curtain, shutting her out. A reverse close-up showing Sylvie's face behind the bars of the gate is followed by the final shot of her walking off alone into the darkness.

On the one hand this ending echoes that of *REMORQUES*, in that it shows the exclusion of an anima/muse figure from the daily life of the male subject. Sylvie's disappearance is prefigured by Fontveille, a family friend, comforting Roland's wife, who has become suspicious of Roland's fascination with the 'fille en noir' with the thought:

Une muse, ça n'existe pas. C'est un peu de soleil qui  
rit, un peu de pluie qui pleure, c'est du vent sur les  
remparts ce n'est pas une femme.

Seen from the perspective of the family, Sylvie is not a muse but a *femme fatale* in the truest sense of the word in that she not only threatens the family unit but is also viewed with fear as a harbinger of doom. On their return from the funeral of Mlle Perdrière they discuss Sylvie's role in the woman's 'mort surnaturelle', ending on Fontveille's conclusion 'Tu n'aimerais pas que cette fille en noir vienne te demander, ou ton fils.' Her *femme fatale* potential is the negative side of the anima, that which lures men away from their obligations as demonstrated by Catherine in *REMORQUES*. By remaining in Roland's life only long enough to inspire a symphony, Sylvie safeguards the family unit, which is shown to be the true site of happiness in the film.

Roland's family home is presented as a place of warmth, laughter and happiness, attractively furnished, inhabited by his attractive wife and sister, wearing Paris fashions, and visited by jovial family friends. It thus represents normality, in



contrast to the Gothic strangeness of the bare-walled and sparsely furnished citadel, inhabited by Sylvie in her black dress and frequented by old men and a frustrated 'vieille fille'. Moreover, the presence of Roland's lively young son indicates that hope for the future resides in the family unit and not in the sterile doctrine of old men.

Family life is presented as a positive alternative not only to the nightmare world of Toulzac, but also to the fantasy world of Roland. That the two are in fact different facets of the same thing, that Toulzac's attempt to use Sylvie in bringing the past back to life is a negative mirror of the death/rebirth process undergone by the lovers, is suggested in the similarity of their discourse; both speak to Sylvie in terms of old legends from which they seek to impose upon her a role, be it that of *la bonne messagère* or *la belle Aude*. Moreover, Roland's mythical paradise, *la vallée heureuse*, denoted in a series of over-exposed shots as a place of eternal light, is interchangeable with the world of the dead which Toulzac is desperate to enter, and which he describes in exactly the same terms: 'Trois pas et c'est la vallée heureuse. Toujours le matin qui se lève.' Thus, for *la fiancée des ténèbres* as for *Douce* and *la duchesse de Langeais* there is no alternative to the sterile patriarchal regime, only exile and death.

LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES is thus one of the most oppressive films of the period, as it dismisses the possibility of not just a geographic but also a mythical *ailleurs*, by showing the world of the imagination to be tainted and destructive. It is also in chronological terms the latest film under discussion here (production start: March 11 1944)<sup>6</sup> and it is no doubt significant that it should contrast most strongly with the earliest film shot entirely during the Occupation, *L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL* (production start: February 17 1941)<sup>7</sup> in its treatment not only of the spiritual

dimension but also of the father-figure. In the earlier film *le père Cornusse* aka *le père Noël* was the wrongly maligned defender of the world of harmless fantasy, small children, whom he miraculously cures, and the family unit, which he reinforces on his Christmas rounds by doling out a judicious mixture of punishment and pleasure. The film ended with an apotheosis of this latter-day Christ figure-cum-*thaumaturge* and a fairy-tale sublimation of the lovers on one hand, Father Christmas and the children on the other.

In *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*, however, Toulzac is designated an anti-Christ, the last representative of a heretical religion which is as anti-children/family values ('faire les enfants, c'est travailler pour le diable') as it is possible to be, and is himself an impotent, nightmare figure — one particular shot of his skeletal head lolling back on his wheel chair is reminiscent of Munch's *Scream* — as opposed to Harry Baur's sprightly, rotund, rosy-cheeked patriarch who appears inspired by the chocolate box school of art favoured by Christmas card manufacturers — or by Vichy's *culte du maréchal*.

Despite superficial similarities, notably the stylistic inscription of a black and white world-view, with *films fantastiques* such as *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, films which can be termed positive narratives in that in that they show love triumphing over (the threat of) death, *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* in fact exemplifies the pessimistic narrative trend in Occupation cinema, that of films such as *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS* and *DOUCE*, whose defining feature is a sense of *huis-clos*, not just as in Ehrlich's definition of a sense of remove from reality, which applies to most of the films under discussion, but in the sense of there being no alternatives within that unreal world, in that ultimately black equals

white, lovers are no less representative than fathers of oppressive patriarchal attitudes and love is synonymous with death.

This narrative trend is not restricted to mythico-historical, female-centred films like those mentioned above, but also occurs in Jacques Becker's *FALBALAS*, which, like *LA FIANCÉE DES TENEBRES*, is a film of the late Occupation (it also went into production in March 1944),<sup>8</sup> but is set in contemporary Paris — it was in fact one of the very few films to show life during the Occupation by having characters cycle home in the blackout etc. — and revolves around a central male character, Clarence. Clarence is a *couturier* who, like Roland, uses his mistresses as inspiration for his creations. Once the collection is finished, the mistress is discarded. This repetitive process comes to an end when he falls genuinely in love with a friend's fiancée, Michèle. In order to see her, he insists on making her wedding dress, and attempts to seduce her when his friend is out of town. She eventually rebuffs his advances. Unable to free himself of his obsessive love for her, he jumps to his death embracing a wax dummy dressed in the wedding gown he had made for Michèle.

A *huis-clos* atmosphere linked with the conflation of love and death is established from the first scene of the film, in that it begins with what is in fact the closing sequence, a high-angle shot of Clarence lying dead on the ground clasping the dummy-bride, followed by a low-angle shot of seamstresses looking down at the body and commenting in turn 'Il a l'air heureux.' 'Elle aussi, elle a l'air heureux.', as if they were observing a wedding rather than a suicide. The main body of the film, the events leading to the suicide, are then related in flashback. Despite their different themes, *FALBALAS* thus bears a marked similarity to *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*, in that both films begin and end with evocations of death. Ronquerolles'

doom-laden predictions in the earlier film, like the advance showing of the tragic end in *FALBALAS*, create a sense of fatality, while this tragic beginning/end provides a visual illustration of one of the final comments passed on the plot of *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*: 'voici ce que l'amour a apporté à cette petite âme charmante: un mariage avec la mort.'

As in *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*, the conflation of love and death is accompanied by the presence of a Bluebeard character who preys upon young women, transforming love and life into something sterile and dead. This is made clear in a scene in which the mistress Clarence has just discarded finds in a closet gowns labelled with the name of the mistress who had inspired them and the dates between which the relationship had lasted, a discovery analogous to that made by the young wife in the Bluebeard myth proper, who finds the dead bodies of former wives behind a door in the castle. The ex-mistress's comment on seeing the labelled dresses, 'C'est un vrai musée' emphasises the movement from a living relationship to a lifeless artefact, which is an integral part of Clarence's 'creative' process.

Clarence is thus an amalgam of the lover-artist/father characters in *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*. On the one hand, the movement from life to death is an analogy for the transformation of nature into art which typifies the relationship between the creative artist and his muse, a transformation explained by Clarence in the following terms: 'L'âme d'une robe, c'est le corps d'une femme.' On the other hand, Clarence, like Touzel, is an agent of destruction who not only wrecks the lives of those around him — Michèle's judgement of his character, 'Tu rates ta vie et celle des autres', is vindicated through the suicide of a despairing ex-mistress — but is fascinated by death, which is inextricably linked to his 'creativity'. This is suggested

at the dress 'baptism' ceremony, when one of his employees looks surprised at the choice of the name 'Antigone' for a gown, and he explains it comes from 'une dame qui est morte il y a longtemps.' Such an interest in long-dead ladies is reminiscent not only of Touzel's obsession with *la bonne messagère*, but also of the Egyptian mummy which is the focus of Montriveau's interest at the beginning of *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*, a *reine morte* to whom the *reine vivante* of Paris society is compared and whom she will have joined in her *repos éternel* before the end of the film.

The inherently sterile world of Clarence's *maison de couture* is contrasted with the lively bourgeois household of Michèle's uncle, aunt and ten cousins, which, like Roland's family in *LA FIANCÉE DES TENEBRES*, represents fertility/ normality/ Vichy family values of which Clarence's 'creative' processes, like Touzel's dream of life through death, appear an inversion or sick parody. Thus, in both films the world of the imagination is depicted as corrupt and synonymous with death, while true happiness is to be found in the daily reality of home and family.

Such a prosaic 'message' is at odds with the idealist ethic of 'positive' films of the Occupation, such as *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*, in which the conflict is not between humdrum reality and an exciting, dangerous dream world, but rather between two types of dreams, nightmares and fairy tale fantasies, representing the patriarchal regime and the triumphant love of a young couple. It is this narrative trend, in which the patriarchal regime is overcome and age gives way to youth, that is exemplified by Serge de Poligny's earlier work, *LE BARON FANTÔME* (1942).

*LE BARON FANTÔME* begins in 1826 with the arrival of the newly widowed comtesse de St-Hélie, accompanied by her daughter Elfy and Elfy's *soeur de lait*,

Anne (Jany Holt), at the castle of her uncle, le baron Carol. While the comtesse explores and learns that the baron has mysteriously disappeared, the two girls make the acquaintance of Hervé, Carol's manservant's nephew, who disputes Elfy's claim to the castle, maintaining it belongs to him. Ten years pass... Anne, Elfy and Hervé have grown up and their childhood trio has been broken up by a newcomer, the dashing officer and gentleman, Albéric de Marignac. Albéric and Hervé love Elfy, Elfy loves Hervé as a childhood sweetheart and Albéric as a suitor of her own class, while Anne, unaware of her own love for Hervé, tries to unite her two childhood companions. Albéric, refused permission to marry Elfy, bribes the local 'dauphin', the reputed son of Louis XVI, to override his colonel's command and allow the marriage. On the evening of their engagement dinner, Elfy disappears. Anne and Hervé find her in the opening to a secret passage into which she has fallen. While Hervé looks after Elfy, Anne explores and finds a secret chamber containing the mummified baron, the treasure and a will revealing that Hervé is his illegitimate son and heir. In the course of the next few days, the young people resolve their emotional conflicts, Anne and Hervé, Elfy and Albéric deciding they love each other. The film ends with the two newly wed couples going to visit the 'dauphin', in fact an ex-poacher, who, tired of the masquerade and frightened of the townspeople's wrath, takes up the position of gamekeeper on the Carol estate.

The film is constructed in three distinct parts, the main part of the text, the *chassé-croisé* between the lovers, being situated between a fairy-tale epilogue featuring the fixed pairs of newly-weds and a nightmarish prologue showing the arrival of the St-Hélie entourage at the castle. This initial sequence is filmed in an expressionist style with stark black and white photography, canted camera angles and

low angle shots framing the characters against a dark brooding sky. In classic horror film style, a coach arrives at the gates of a ruined castle in the middle of a storm. As the way is barred by a fallen tree, Mme de St-Hélie proceeds to the apparently deserted castle on foot. The sense of foreboding aroused by the cinematography is enhanced by constant — if metaphorical — references to death in the dialogue ('Je suis morte', 'Mme la comtesse va attraper la mort'). Her persistent knocking is followed by a shot of a wooden leg tapping along a corridor. The baron's servant opens the door in a state of terror; after weeks of increasingly lengthy absences his master has disappeared.

Despite the alarmist behaviour of the servant, who insists the baron has become a ghost and/or changed into the black cat who prowls the ruins, the atmosphere of horror turns rapidly to one of comedy as his description of his master's bizarre behaviour is illustrated in flashbacks of the baron (Jean Cocteau, who also wrote the dialogue, in a wig and Restoration costume) appearing and disappearing in his room, and sleepwalking along the corridors of the castle. The down-to-earth countess flings open the windows, letting light into the room, announcing 'l'air pur chasse les fantômes', which is a prelude to the next, over-exposed shot of the children Anne, Elfy and Hervé playing in the brightly sunlit grounds. A caption over a shot of white clouds informs the spectator '10 ans passent' Anne and Elfy, now grown up and dressed in white dresses, run out of the manor house where Mme de St-Hélie has taken up residence, through a courtyard again filled with bright sunlight towards the nearby ruined castle.

And so the dark, threatening shots denoting a patriarchal regime linked with death which permeate *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* are here confined to the

prologue, even within which the atmosphere of menace is quickly dispelled and replaced with a lighter ambience, associated with youth, which is the dominant mood of the rest of the film, where the exteriors are generally shot in bright sunlight. The notion of a fearful patriarch is thus positioned firmly in the past, the sinister mood of the opening shots persisting only within the room in which the baron disappeared, where Anne likes to explore and frighten the impressionable Elfy ('Vous croyez que je vais découvrir les femmes de Barbe Bleu?'), and the baron Carol himself having disappeared, his name evoked only in the person of the black cat whom the children have baptised Carol.

The father-figure is therefore above all an absence, and this lack of menace and non-existence of opposition to young lovers is conveyed in the sequence following Anne and Elfy's exploration of the baron's room, where the two climb on the roof of the castle, and Elfy asks 'Anne, ma soeur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir?' Like the earlier reference to the Bluebeard myth, these lines evoke the patriarchal threat only to emphasise its lack of foundation, in that what Anne sees is Albéric, Elfy's dashing young suitor, galloping over the now sunlit bridge which Mme de Hélié had crossed in a storm 10 years previously, on his way to a rendez-vous with Elfy, who greets him in fairy-tale terms as 'un homme cheval, un homme bleu-ciel, un centaur'.

The situation presented as a *fait accompli* at the beginning of LE BARON FANTOME is thus analogous to that arrived at in the course of LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE, where the initially menacing Thalès is transformed into a comic character, 'un coquin de fantôme' as Denis calls him, who eventually disappears through a wall, leaving the way clear for the reunion of the lovers in some mythical realm. There is indeed a certain similarity in the plot development of the two films,



in that both show the accession of an outsider/son figure to the realm of the father, the difference being that whereas in *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, Denis must combat the murderous Thales and force his submission, in *LE BARON FANTOME* Hervé need only fill the vacuum left by the abdication of the patriarch.

It is the overcoming of the problems created by the baron's disappearance and the absence of the Law of the father which constitutes the central conflict in the film. On the one hand, the fairy-tale idyll of Elfy and Albéric is shortlived, as the romantic Elfy is brought back down to earth by Albéric's news that he has been refused permission to marry her. Lacking a personal fortune, he may only marry a girl with a dowry and Elfy is poor because the family treasure vanished with the baron. While Anne and Elfy stake their hopes for Elfy's happiness on finding the treasure, Albéric simply circumvents the rule of his regiment by applying for a dispensation to the false dauphin, who grants it because of his fondness for young people, ('J'aime la jeunesse. Et comme ma jeunesse a été une jeunesse martyre, je ne veux pas que celle des autres lui ressemblent.'), a love of youth which is reiterated at several points in the film, and because of the 10 000 francs bribe offered by Albéric, which the 'dauphin' then uses to bribe the local bishop, upon whose support he is dependent for the continuation of his charade.

This alternative patriarchal authority, the 'dauphin', who to a certain extent fills the gap left by Carol, is, like the church which supports him, clearly designated corrupt and willing to trade on the good faith of naive citizens. His incompetence and impotence (he is pushed into the deception by a domineering wife) render the corruption comic, and so he constitutes a second unthreatening, present yet absent father-figure, in that his blatantly false credentials, like Carol's disappearance,

prevent either occupying the place of the patriarch. Just as he himself is an impostor, a poacher turned lawmaker, so the 'law' he makes is invalid in that it conflicts with the demands of reality, the adult world which is synonymous with the realm of the father. Anne, with whom the spectator identifies as the voice of reason, points out to Elfy the senselessness of a marriage in which both parties are *sans le sou* and in order to hold up what she conceives to be a mistake, she attempts to seduce Albéric, hoping Elfy will turn to Hervé.

The chaotic relationships and constantly changing attractions between the four young people are symptomatic of the second aspect of the absence of the Law of the father, the inability of Anne, Elfy and Hervé to progress beyond the fluid ludic polygamous relationships of their childhood, where Hervé married each of the girls in turn, and enter the adult world of fixed couples. Despite the intervention of a fourth term, Albéric, to break up the childhood trio, the confusion remains, with Elfy torn between Hervé and Albéric, Anne secretly loving Hervé but offering herself to Albéric and Hervé believing he loves Elfy but in fact loving Anne.

The 'laissez-aller', as Mme de St-Hélie describes the maternal regime of their childhood, extended to class as well as personal relationships, in that the lines were blurred between servant and master, the aristocratic Elfy being allowed to treat the maid Anne and future gamekeeper Hervé as equals. This too is jeopardized by the arrival of Albéric, vicomte de Marignac, whose aristocratic presence puts the servants back in their place, as is indicated in the following conversation between Anne and Hervé:

H : Moi, je vais où je veux.

A : Tu te trompes, Hervé, le château n'est plus à toi.

H : (looking at Albéric's horse) Et celui-là, il va où il veut?

A : Mais mon pauvre Hervé, tu ne te rends pas compte,  
on n'est plus chez nous.

H : On était tous les trois si tranquille.

As in LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE, LES VISITEURS DU SOIR and elsewhere, movement towards the resolution of the conflict takes place on a mythical dimension, but here the death/rebirth pattern is fragmented in a manner which reflects the confusion of the protagonists pre-Symbolic meanderings. During the search for Elfy, Anne pricks her finger in fairy-tale fashion on a thorn. Yet it is Elfy who 'falls asleep' — faints when Anne and Hervé find her — and when she is woken from her sleep by Albéric's kiss (Hervé tells him 'Embrassez-la, elle a dormi cent ans.') she makes the wrong identification of the prince, calling for Hervé instead.

In the meantime Anne has found the mummified remains of the baron, which disappear in a draught of air, along with the treasure and a will naming Hervé as the baron's son and heir to the estate and half the treasure, the other half of which has been left by the monarchist baron to the son of Louis XVI, should he be alive or otherwise to Elfy. This knowledge, which would solve part of the conflict by restoring to the adult Hervé the castle to which he had laid claim as a child by elevating him from servant to master, is however suppressed until Hervé takes the place of the now definitely defunct father himself. He does this by displaying the somnambulistic tendency inherited from his father and sleepwalking with Anne in his arms, thus revealing both his Carol status and his true love for Anne.

Hervé's assumption of the role of the father is therefore synonymous with the fixing of previously fluid relationships in the symbolic realm. Convinced that Hervé reciprocates her love, Anne succeeds in persuading her *soeur de lait* that she, Elfy, truly loves Albéric, and it is these pairings which will be consecrated in the rite of

marriage. This movement from the chaotic relationships of the imaginary realm to the fixed pairings of the symbolic realm, consequent upon a son/servant acceding to the realm of the father/ranks of the aristocracy, is reiterated in the penultimate sequence of the film when Albéric, madly jealous of Hervé, fires his gun into some shrubbery and kills not Hervé, but the black cat Carol. Hervé's reproach to Albéric 'Vous avez tué mon enfance' links the movement from the ludic polygamy of childhood to adult monogamy with the death of this symbolic father, which clears the way for Hervé (learning of the cat's death, Elfy says to Anne 'Il n'y a plus place que pour un Carol, et tu l'épouses'). What is being lost is made clear in that Albéric's bullet smashes a symbol of the infantile polygamy, a heart on a ribbon which Hervé would give to the bride of the day and which was around the cat's neck.

In order for the final element of conflict, the poverty standing in the way of Elfy and Albéric's union, to be resolved, a second father-figure, the fake dauphin must be removed so that his half of the treasure may go to Elfy. Like the progressive disappearance/death of the baron, this is accomplished in a series of stages. First, the dauphin, like the baron, arranges for his own disappearance. Afraid of being revealed an impostor, he follows Anne's advice 'Disparaissez comme par enchantement' and seeks refuge in his old poacher's haunt, the Carol forest, hiding up a tree. It is there that Albéric, in a final displacement of his anger against Hervé, shoots him by accident. The 'death' of this second patriarch marks the final accession of Hervé to the ranks of the aristocracy, as it is followed by him addressing the vicomte de Marignac as an equal, by his first name rather than as previously by his title.

The 'death' also marks the end of the main part of the film. There then follows an epilogue which, in a repetition of the prologue, abruptly changes from

black to white, death to life, nightmare to fairy tale. It begins with four hooded black figures, like mourners from a funeral, walking through the snow. They enter a cottage, where the 'dauphin' who evidently is not dead after all, is waiting for them, and throw off their cloaks to reveal their wedding garb. The one-time poacher is formally appointed gamekeeper by the presentation to him of a medal marked 'LA LOI'. He then picks his dog up on his knee, remarking 'Je voulais réunir toute ma petite famille autour de moi.' and the film ends with Anne telling their story, beginning 'Il était une fois...', followed by a cut to a shot of three children playing.

The transformation of the 'mourners' into a bridal party emphasises the triumph of love over death, which, together with the final shift into fairy-tale mode, places *LE BARON FANTOME* firmly in the tradition of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* and the other films of that ilk, where death/a corrupt patriarchal regime is overcome and lovers are united on some spiritual plane. It is in fact the most optimistic of these 'positive' films, in that in it the patriarchal regime is not so much overcome as shown to gracefully give way to the next generation. This represents a marked departure from the situation commonly depicted in 1930s films, in which the ageing patriarchs maintained a stranglehold on power to the exclusion of the 'sons', who, unable to accede to the realm of the father, clung to childhood fantasies in the imaginary realm until they were eventually eliminated from the film. Here it is on the contrary the patriarchs who disappear — if only to reappear in youth-friendly form — and the happy end, in which class differences are banished and Hervé is given rightful possession of the *château* he laid claim to as a boy, represents the integration of childhood dreams in the adult world.

Dreams come true in *LE BARON FANTOME* because, unlike *QUAI DES*

BRUMES and similar narratives, which adopted a critical stance to the status quo, it acts as a vehicle, unwitting or otherwise, for the myths of the dominant regime. It leaves the spectator with an image of overall harmony on a personal and political level in that inter-generational and inter-class warfare is eliminated and illegitimate/deviant elements are legitimated and incorporated into one big happy family, the bastard son becoming heir, the poacher turning gamekeeper, the 'father' graciously accepting the position of law enforcer bestowed upon by his 'children'. The elevation of the servants is conducted in a suitably conservative manner, as the film ingeniously contrives to change their rank while keeping them in their place. Thus, Anne persuades Elfy that she, Anne, is most suited for Hervé and Elfy for Albéric because, as she explains, 'Que Hervé soit un Carol, ça ne change rien. Il reste un garde et moi une domestique. Je le servirai et il me gardera.' We are far from the miscegenation proposed in the *film dérangeant* DOUCE.

LE BARON FANTOME is certainly what Autant-Lara would class as *un film rassurant*, but is it Pétainiste? Whereas L' ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL, a film to which, as regards the fairy-tale ending featuring a benevolent patriarch surrounded by his 'children', LE BARON FANTOME bears a certain resemblance, backed up its inscription of the dominant ideology with a positive image of an ageing patriarch, it is difficult to view the characterization of Eugène Dauphin, with his oft expressed fondness for children, as anything other than a parody of Pétain which, beneath the comedy, suggests he is not only a usurper maintained in the place of honour among foolish people through the connivance of a corrupt ecclesiastical regime, but also a puppet in the hands of others.

In her discussion of the varying claims made for another emblematic film of

the Occupation, PONTCARRAL, COLONEL D'EMPIRE, by those who considered it either pro-resistance (the popular view at the time) or pro-Vichy (the revisionist view), Ehrlich concludes that 'the necessity for equivocation... permeates all of the "so-called 'political' films of the period and makes any straightforward political reading impossible"<sup>9</sup> and ends her discussion with a quote from Louis Daquin about his — reputedly 'resistance' — film, PREMIERE DE CORDEE:

the boy scoutish angle, the return to earth - all that was no doubt inspired by Pétainist ideology. And here was I a communist and a resister. One should not forget that this was a time of contradictions and confusions. And we can never escape the times.<sup>10</sup>

Following Ehrlich I would conclude that any straightforward reading of the not overtly political BARON FANTOME is equally impossible, not necessarily because of any attempt on the part of de Poligny to 'conceal' through equivocation some 'message' he wished to impart, but simply because he, like Daquin, was influenced in his creativity by the confusing ideologies and contradictory allegiances of the time.

LE BARON FANTOME is of interest here not as a crypto-Pétainiste text, but as a linchpin between on the one hand, the mythico-historical set of *films rassurants* — LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE and others — with which it shares a number of stylistic and structural elements, notably the inscription of a Manichean world-view, the positive outcome of the conflict between good and evil, and the leading role played by a young girl in the resolution of this conflict, and on the other hand, the realist, contemporary Pagnol film, LA FILLE DU PUISATIER (1940), to which it bears a marked resemblance in terms of discourse.

'La fille du puisatier', Patricia, is in fact the eldest of the six daughters of

Pascal Amoretti (Raimu). Following the death of her mother, she returns from the Parisian convent, where a rich benefactress had paid for her to be educated, in order to look after her father and sisters. She has a brief affair with Jacques Mazel, the pilot son of the local storeowner. When war is declared and his sudden mobilisation prevents him keeping a date with Patricia, he entrusts a letter for her to his over-protective and jealous mother, who tears it up. Believing herself abandoned, Patricia discovers she is pregnant and comes with her father and sisters to apprise the Mazels of the situation. They refuse to accept their son's responsibility and Patricia is packed off to her aunt in disgrace where she gives birth to a son. Pascal's love for his daughter and desire for a grandson overcome his outrage and he accepts them back into his family. The Mazels, having meanwhile learnt of their son's death in action, wish to adopt the child but are rebuffed by Pascal. Jacques then reappears and comes with his parents to ask for Patricia's hand. The two families make their peace around the baby's crib.

Along with *LA NUIT MERVEILLEUSE*, *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* is one of the few films to refer directly to *les événements* of the summer of 1940. Shooting, which had started in May 1940, began again in August of that year in the *zone libre* with a script modified to take account of recent events. Not only is the departure of Jacques, the starting point of the melodrama, attributed to the outbreak of war, but also, in a sequence missing from copies currently in circulation but referred to by Siclier,<sup>11</sup> the community gathers around the radio in the Mazels' shop to listen to Pétain announcing the armistice. Despite these references to 1940s reality, the structure and storyline of *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* owe an unmistakeable debt to the Pagnol trilogy of the preceding decade, notably in the prominence accorded to the



star, Raimu. Is it then a fundamentally 1930s film dressed up with Occupation frills, or is the narrative modified in such a way as to encompass a discourse familiar from the Occupation films analysed above?

Contrary to the expectations aroused by the title, *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*, unlike *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES* or *LA DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*, is not a female-centred narrative. Dramatic interest is focused firmly on the *puisatier* himself, Amoretti/Raimu, whose trauma at 'losing' his daughter overshadows not only the anguish of the unmarried mother herself, who goes through pregnancy and the birth of her son in some extra-diegetic space while the spectator is invited to contemplate Amoretti's crises d'âme, but also the grief of the Mazels on the death of their son. In a scene which must have endeared itself to the recently bereaved among the audience, Amoretti replies to Mazel's observation, 'Vous n'avez pas perdu un fils de 25 ans, vous.' with a long speech beginning 'Pendant sept mois ma fille Patricia était morte pour moi...' during which Raimu is filmed in close-up to convey the full extent of his emotion.

Amoretti's rejoinder to Mme Mazel's rather obvious remark at the end of the speech:

M : Vous saviez qu'elle était vivante. Vous pouviez aller la chercher.

A : Je ne pouvais pas. Je me l'étais défendu.

is indicative of the real conflict at the heart of the film, namely the dichotomy between the biological father who loves his daughter, and the symbolic Father who must enforce the Law. It is this internal conflict which is played out in scenes such as the departure of Patricia, when Amoretti, framed like a tragic hero in a low-angle shot against the sky, seeks external justification for a show of affection which he

desires but cannot condone, telling his errant daughter 'Il faut que je t'embrasse à cause des petites.'

In taking the nature of paternity itself as a central theme and so foregrounding the second term of its title, *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* remains true to the form of the Raimu-centred narratives of the 1930s and thereby sets itself apart from the general trend of Occupation cinema to accentuate the female role in the father/daughter dyad. This differing emphasis is reflected at the beginning of the film in Patricia's constant and exaggerated self-effacement before her father. She defines herself uniquely in terms of her relationship to him, introducing herself to Jacques not by name but as 'la fille du puisatier', and even gives him a present on her birthday, reasoning 'Si mon père ne m'avait pas donné la vie, ça ne sera pas ma fête puisque je ne serais pas née.'

This foregrounding of the paternal role is accompanied by the other features typical of classic 1930s narratives, the threat of incest with the 'daughter' and the exclusion/criminalization of the 'son.' Here symbolic incest is implied in the dialogue between Amoretti and his apprentice Félipe, where Amoretti states 'Elle a remplacé sa mère' and replies to Félipe's evocation of her eventual marriage with a woeful 'Ah, je sais bien qu'il faut qu'un jour ça arrive. J'aime mieux ne pas y penser.' which suggests that the presence of a 'rival' would be perceived as problematic. The possibility of incest is made acceptable by the outsider appearance and manner of Patricia/Josette Day, in Siclier's words 'bouclée comme une caniche et très Parisienne'<sup>12</sup> which renders her completely unlike her Provençal family. Siclier attributes the explanatory sub-plot of the rich benefactress and the education 'chez les bonnes soeurs', which has no narrative function whatsoever, to Pagnol's desire to

accommodate the non-Provençal Day, his current mistress, in the film.<sup>13</sup> While this may indeed be the case, the accommodation has the fortunate secondary effect of providing an exogamous sub-text which neutralises the implication of incest.

The 'criminality' of the 'son', meanwhile, is established from the very first encounter of Jacques and Patricia, which takes place when he offers to carry her over the stream which she must cross in order to take lunch to her father. His attempt to reassure her — 'C'est moi qui dois avoir peur parce que je pêchais à la main et c'est défendu' — situates his 'fishing' activity, in which she is the 'catch', and hence their relationship, outwith the Law. His symbolic criminality is compounded by the lack of moral rectitude associated with his apparent abandonment of Patricia and their unborn illegitimate child. Just as Jacques' sudden departure to the air force, albeit in this case by force majeure, is a repetition of Marius's culpable desertion of the pregnant Fanny for the sea in the first part of the trilogy, so the dominant patriarch Amoretti, like his counterpart César in the second part of the trilogy, takes advantage of this elimination of the 'son' from the diegesis in order to replace him as father and authority figure to the child, of whose existence the biological father is unaware.

In *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* this reassertion of the power of the dominant patriarch over his younger rival occurs simultaneously with the resolution of the biological/symbolic f/Father conflict. Félipe, who has kept in touch with the daughter Amoretti refuses to mention, informs his boss that a son has been born who bears his name:

F : Il s'appelle comme vous. C'est la loi. Un enfant qui  
n'a pas de père porte le nom de sa mère.  
A : C'est valable, ça, un nom de femme?  
F : Bien sûr c'est valable, c'est la loi.

From these repeated assurances that legally the child is entitled to his name,

Amoretti draws the conclusion '...il s'appelle Amoretti, et que ça me plaise ou non, je suis responsable pour lui.' On the one hand, this legal imposition of the name of the father on the illegitimate child allows the reconciliation of Amoretti's dual role as doting biological grand/father and upholder of the Law, on the other the substitution of his name for that of the rightful father Mazel symbolically obliterates the younger rival, allowing the resumption of the fictitious incest, now enhanced by the fact that Patricia has given him the boy he always wanted.

Spurred on by Félipe's intention to propose to Patricia and so deprive him of his newly consolidated fatherhood, he hastens to his sisters' home to order Patricia to refuse him. In response to the sister's threat that Patricia might find a husband there and give the child 'un joli nom de la ville' he removes both mother and baby to the paternal home, where his right to the baby who bears his name against the Mazel's desire to participate in the child's upbringing, refusing their offer of financial help with the comment 'Je veux que ce soit à moi qu'il doit sa soupe.'

Thus far the film's development conforms to the pattern of numerous 1930s Oedipal narratives, including that of the Pagnol trilogy. However, whereas in the earlier Pagnol work Marius was effectively eliminated until his child had grown to manhood under the jurisdiction of César, here the sudden reappearance of Jacques signals a modification of the father-dominated narrative in accordance with changing trends.

The influence of nascent Occupation filmic discourses upon the inscription of the Jacques/Patricia relationship is visible in the lovers' first encounter, where Jacques fishing in the stream is clearly a Pan-like figure while Patricia taking lunch to her father is very much the Little Red Riding Hood. This fleeting addition of a

mythopoetic dimension to an otherwise bucolic realist film heralds the inclusion of the death/rebirth scenario familiar from the later 'fantastic' films analysed above, which is here placed in the realist contemporary context of a young man believed missing in action who turns up alive.

Once Jacques has returned from the war he goes with his parents to propose marriage to Patricia and thereby assume the paternal role in the place of Amoretti. In order to enter the order of the fathers he must dispute the claim to absolute power of the older generation which is made by his future father-in-law in the following dialogue:

A : Je veux qu'avant le mariage on soit bien d'accord  
et qu'on dise clairement à qui cet enfant appartient.

Mme M : Que veux-tu dire enfin.

A : Je veux dire, il est à moi ou à [M. Mazel]?

J : Il est à nous.

A : Ça, on le sait naturellement. Mais pour ce qu'il y  
a de l'autorité?

J : Il a son père et sa mère. Nous sommes assez grands  
pour penser à lui...

This displacement of the patriarch by the adult 'son' represents a marked departure from classic 1930s narratives in general and those centred around Raimu in particular. It conforms to the pattern of 'positive' Occupation films such as *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, in which Denis stands up to Thales, and by overcoming him wrecks his plans to sacrifice his daughter Irène for his financial gain. While the positive Raimu star text precludes the attribution to Amoretti of the venality and lack of paternal affection which characterise Thalès, his obsessive desire for power is problematized, and the narrative progresses from a situation analogous to that at the beginning of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, in which age has all the rights over youth, to one in which the balance of power is reversed, rights become responsibilities and

age is expected to sacrifice itself for youth. The dialogue quoted above continues:

J : ... Vous dites que vous avez les droits. C'est vrai.  
Vous avez le droit de l'aimer, le droit de le soigner, le  
droit de vous sacrifier pour lui si c'est nécessaire. Mais  
il n'est pas à vous. C'est vous qui êtes à lui.  
M : Il a raison. Voilà les seuls droits qu'ont aujourd'hui  
les vieux sur les jeunes.

The film thus arrives at a position similar to that presented in *LE BARON FANTOME*, in which the older generation gracefully gives the way to the young, whom they serve rather than command.

As in *LE BARON FANTOME* the inter-generational truce coincides with the reconciliation of different social classes to compose a final vision of social harmony. This blueprint for a new regenerated France is arrived at after the vindication of the virtue of the honest peasants and the expiation of their fault by the morally defective bourgeois, a process which combines those elements — *la souffrance, le travail, le retour à la terre*, the condemnation of materialism — identified in the discourse of Vichy as essential for a social renaissance.

*Retour à la terre* ideology linked with the ennoblement of manual labour and the implicit condemnation of the decadent bourgeoisie is present from the initial sequence of the film, as it features in the first conversation between Jacques and Patricia. Jacques' claim that the stream in which he is fishing belongs to him as it flows through his father's field leads to the following exchange:

P : Les pierres et les sables sont peut-être à vous, mais  
le ruisseau, c'est l'eau qui passe. Et l'eau qui passe est  
à qui?  
J : Elle est à moi quand elle passe chez moi.  
P : Vous n'êtes pas chez vous sur cette terre, même si  
vous l'avez payée très cher.  
J : Mais pourquoi?  
P : Parce que vous ne la cultivez pas.  
J : Mon grand-père la cultivait pendant longtemps, mais

mon père n'était pas paysan. Il a voulu garder la ferme dans la famille mais il a interdit qu'on y travaille parce qu'il voulait en faire une chasse-gardée.

The contrast between the peasant who works on the land and the bourgeois who exploits it for his leisure which is drawn explicitly in the above dialogue is made implicitly in the move from the sight of Jacques fishing in the water in this first sequence to that of Amoretti digging a well in the following sequence. This contrast between the worker who brings water to dry land thus rendering it fertile for the community, and the bourgeois who use the land for his own selfish ends is reminiscent of the opposition between the dam worker and the aristocrat in *LUMIERE D'ETE*, just as the association of the positive element in the film with the life-giving aspect of nature, and the negative element with hunting recalls the good/bad dichotomy in *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR*. There is thus a certain thematic overlap between the realist *FILLE DU PUISATIER* and the more symbolic/schematic Prévert/Carné, Prévert/Grémillon collaborations.

A further reference to the decadence of the bourgeoisie is made when Amoretti, having learned of Patricia's pregnancy, goes with his children to demand that the Mazels' accept responsibility for their son's act. When the couple shift the blame onto Patricia, implying she is a girl of easy virtue attempting to blackmail their son, Amoretti leaves them with the damning comment, 'Maintenant je sais qu'il faut se méfier des gens qui vendent des outils et ne s'en servent jamais.' Two separate issues — the Mazels' bourgeois status and their wrongdoing in blackening the character of an innocent girl — are thus conflated, and the opprobrium attached to the latter spills over onto the former. The process of expiation they undergo when Jacques goes missing and they are forced to humiliate themselves before Amoretti by

begging for contact with their grandson, therefore atones not only for the wrong they do to the honour of the Amorettis, but also, on a sub-textual level, for their culpable social status, and so prepares the way for their return to the peasant lifestyle and values of the preceding generation which is promulgated in the final sequence.

The death/rebirth scenario referred to above in connection with Jacques' return from war is linked intrinsically with this process of atonement. His disappearance is seen by Patricia as expiation for his conduct towards her; she tells his mother 'Sa mort a peut-être racheté sa faute.' However, the youth-oriented ethic of the film preserves Jacques from blame, which is displaced onto his abnormally possessive mother. Mme Mazel confesses to Patricia that Jacques did not abandon her but that, motivated by her fear of losing him — 'il y a tant de filles qui voulaient me le prendre' — she had torn up the letter in which he explained his departure.<sup>14</sup>

This initial stage in the process of atonement is rewarded by Jacques' return from the dead, which leads to the final restoration of the Amoretti honour through Jacques repairing the wrong he had done by marrying Patricia and so legitimising the baby. Mme Mazel's comment to Patricia at this point:

Dieu nous a rendu notre fils. Je tiens à te dire que je regrette profondément le mal que je t'ai fait sans le vouloir et je remercie le bon Dieu de m'avoir laissé le temps de réparer notre mauvaise action.

articulates a concept central to the film, that of the possibility of making good a mistake, an innovative concept in a national cinema where, as Wolfenstein and Leites point out in their comparative study of French, American and English films of the 1930s and 1940s:

... missed opportunities are more apt to be occasions for endless regret. The lost opportunity is not recapturable.<sup>15</sup>



If Jacques and Patricia are reunited, in distinction to Jean and Nelly and all the other doomed lovers of poetic-realist films, to whom the above quote primarily refers, it is because *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* is articulating a view of society which is fundamentally different to that conveyed in *QUAI DES BRUMES* and other such narratives. The resurrection of Jacques and the subsequent construction of a new family unit after a period of suffering is a metaphor for the renaissance of a new France, strengthened by the trials of defeat and Occupation, which are a consequence of the hedonist, individualistic ethic of the Third Republic and a timely warning of the need to create a new moral order based on self-sacrifice, hard work and a return to basic collective values. It is the hope of a new order through the union of classes which the baby Amoretti-Mazel represents. His smile is the trigger for the following expression of *retour à la terre* ideology from Amoretti, which sums up the Pétainiste ideal of spiritual regeneration:

Ca veut dire qu'il faut semer le blé, planter les vignes, trouver des sources. Nous en avons déjà trouvé beaucoup mais les plus belles sont encore cachées parce que ce sont les plus profondes. Avec des pioches, des bras et de l'amour, peut-être ils sortiront au soleil un jour.

While this in itself does not necessarily denote the influence of the dominant ideology upon the text — Siclier points out the presence of similar *retour à la terre* discourses in two Pagnol films of the 30's, *REGAIN* and *ANGELE*, commenting 'Sur ce point-là, l'idéologie vichyssoise allait coïncider avec les conceptions de Pagnol.'<sup>16</sup> — the accumulation of so many of the elements crucial to Pétainiste ideology makes it a seminal work of what can be properly called 'le cinéma de Vichy'. Far from being mere window dressing, the reference to contemporary events reflect the real influence of contemporary discourses on what would otherwise have been a classic

1930s narrative, most notably in the displacement of the ageing patriarch, a *dénouement* which is at variance with both the general trend of 1930s films and the Raimu star text.

In his assessment of the ten films he defines as constituting 'le cinéma de fiction de la Révolution nationale'<sup>17</sup> and which include *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*, Jeancolas states it is noteworthy that they all:

trouvent leur référent dans la France du Sud et en Afrique du Nord, et qu'ils sont antérieurs à novembre 1942. Le débarquement américain en Algérie et au Maroc lui est fatal. S'il y a eu un semblant de cinéma officiel, de cinéma patronné, ou convaincu, dans le royaume du Maréchal, il n'a duré que les trente mois où le pouvoir du Maréchal a pu faire allusion.<sup>18</sup>

While this is perfectly accurate in as far as it goes, it fails to take into account the similarity in discourse between the realist contemporary films to which the quotation refers, and those of the 'veine fantastique et poétique, qui court de *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE* ... à *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*'<sup>19</sup> which Jeancolas goes on to discuss in the following paragraph, thereby implying a clear distinction between the two genres which does not in fact exist. In ideological rather than stylistic terms, a film like *LE BARON FANTOME*, with its emphasis on family and youth, and on the creation of a harmonious social whole through the legitimization of the illegitimate and the union of classes bears a greater resemblance to *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* than to *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*.

As it went into production in September 1942, *LE BARON FANTOME* just scrapes into the time frame proposed by Jeancolas for the cinéma de Vichy. In support of his selection of the end of 1942 as a date which marks a turning point in attitudes to the dominant regime as reflected in the cinema of the period, one may

note that, of the films he refers to as part of the 'courant fantastique et poétique', those shot before this date — LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE and LES VISITEURS DU SOIR — have a positive ending which, in its demonstration of young love triumphing over the patriarchal regime which opposes it, articulates a discourse of regeneration similar to that expressed in the Vichyist FILLE DU PUISATIER, whereas L'ETERNEL RETOUR (production start: March 1943) ends with the separation and death of the lovers at the hands of the patriarchal regime, a tragic end which sets the tone for the pessimistic FIANCEE DES TENEBRES, shot the following year.

The *film fantastique et poétique* to which LA FILLE DU PUISATIER bears the greatest resemblance, however, is one missing from Jeancolas's list. In its accordance of a central role to a father-figure, who, despite the triumph of the young lovers, retains his significance in that it is he who voices the film's 'message' in the final sequence, the Pagnol film could be described as a realist ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL *à la mode provençale*. This highlighting of the paternal role at the expense of that of the daughter is the one appreciable difference between these two films and later mythico-poetic positive texts, in which it is the young female lead who has the pivotal role. It seems reasonable to suggest that this variation from the paradigm is linked to the fact that both LA FILLE DU PUISATIER and L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL date from the very early Occupation, the period at which *le culte du Père* surrounding Pétain was being constructed.

However, the dominance of the father-figure in the Pagnol film may also be due in some measure to the weight carried by the male lead, an explanation suggested by the fact that in a subsequent Occupation film starring Raimu as half of a father/daughter dyad the same pattern prevails. As this film also dates from 'les trente mois

où le pouvoir du maréchal a pu faire illusion', these two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

In *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON* (Decoin, 1941) Raimu plays the part of Hector Loursat, grand bourgeois of St-Maur, *avocat en partibus* and *père présumé* of Nicole, with whom he lives the life of a recluse in his crumbling villa, having ceased to practise at the bar the day his wife left twenty years previously. Doubts as to his paternity of Nicole prevented him from taking an interest in the child and the two have remained strangers. One night the sound of a shot lures him out of the study where he usually hides with books and a bottle of burgundy to the attic, where he finds a corpse. In the subsequent investigation it emerges that Nicole was a member of a teenage gang composed of other young people of her class, including her cousin Edmond, son of the state prosecutor, and of two boys of more modest origins, Manu and Luska. In the course of a bout of drunken joy-riding, the group knock over Gros Louis, a small-time criminal, whom they hide in desperation in the Loursat attic and whose blackmail demands force them to commit petty crimes. During this period Manu and Nicole fall in love and, as Manu had visited Nicole on the evening of Gros-Louis' death, he is arrested for his murder. Intrigued by the secret life his daughter has been leading, Loursat investigates the circumstances of the crime and agrees to defend Manu, whom he clears by revealing the real murderer, Luska. The lovers are reunited and father and daughter reconciled.

In generic and stylistic terms, *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON* could scarcely be more different from *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*. An adaptation of a Simenon novel, it bears hall-marks of the *série noire* genre, notably the urban setting — in this case a small provincial town — whose dark, rainy streets recall the poetic-

realist aesthetic of the 1930s and are a far cry from the brightly lit exteriors of Pagnol's rural melodrama. There is however a distinct similarity at the level of plot development in that *LES INCONNUS*, like the earlier film, highlights the role of the father in terms of both character and function. Dramatic interest centres upon Loursat, in whose story the daughter and her lover are mere *figurants*, while fatherhood itself is presented as a problematic concept rather than as a *fait accompli* and it is the issue of the responsibilities of the father — and, by extension, that of the older generation — which lies at the heart of the film.

The film begins with a series of pans and tracking shots of a nocturnal, rain-swept St Maur, accompanied by the voice-over of an unidentified narrator, which, by predicting what will appear in shot, adds a sense of fatality to the claustrophobic atmosphere created by these shots, which finish with a dissolve to the interior of the Loursat household, where the maître in partibus and his daughter are having dinner. The voice-over states that Loursat 'a renoncé au barreau le jour où sa femme l'a quitté pour un autre. Il a renoncé à vivre par la même occasion.' There then follows a domestic row in which the maid, despite Nicole's attempts to hush her ('Monsieur n'aime pas les scènes') tells Loursat 'ses quatre vérités', ending with the challenge, '...s'il avait du sang dans ses veines au lieu du pinard il me prendrait par les bras et il me jetterait dehors, n'est-ce pas, cher maître?' Upon which Loursat takes his bottle of burgundy and silently leaves the room, evoking the maid's comment, 'Mais voilà, il est bien trop trouillard.' She then turns on Nicole, suggesting that her father is unknown, only to be silenced by the faithful servant Fine, who comforts Nicole, remarking 'Pauvre petite, est-ce que ton père ne devrait pas être là?' The sequence ends with the narrator stating: 'C'est fini. L'orage est passé,

la maison retombe dans son silence pareille à toutes celles du quartier. Les heures passent.'

This opening sequence exposes the two issues to be resolved in the course of the film. Firstly the society depicted in the film is denoted as oppressive; the analogy drawn by the narrator between external elements and the protagonists' emotions adds to the claustrophobic atmosphere in its implication that the former is a mere reflection of the latter, while the parallel drawn between the Loursat household and their peers indicates that elsewhere as here, the oppression is linked with the suppression of scandalous scenes and the avoidance of unpalatable home truths as demonstrated by Loursat's timely exit. This impression is confirmed in a subsequent sequence when the state prosecutor's anxiety to avoid a scandal is such that he expresses regret at the failure of Manu's suicide attempt on being arrested for the murder of Gros Louis. Had he succeeded, the insalubrious behaviour of the youth of the bourgeoisie need not have come to light.

This willingness to sacrifice youth in the interests of a dominant regime which is designated oppressive is a familiar theme in Occupation cinema. If, however, in other films of the period this situation provides the background for the rebellion of the 'daughter', here the paradigm is modified in accordance with the increased importance accorded to the father-figure. It is the question of the paternal role which is the second issue raised in the opening sequence, where the absence of the father is doubly inscribed. The physical absence of Nicole's unknown biological father, to whom no further reference is made in the text, functions as a motive for an absence of greater importance, the moral absence of the father whose name she bears in law and who fails to live up to his responsibilities.

That this loss of the father is synonymous with the loss of Law is indicated both by the profession which Loursat has abandoned and by the lack of authority he shows *vis-à-vis* the maid. His retreat from life leaves a vacuum, which is filled by Gros Louis, a petty gangster of the type portrayed in the movies later castigated by Loursat for their pernicious influence on youth. The fact that Gros Louis is never seen suggests that his shadowy presence in the attic is a phantasmic manifestation of the forces of evil to which Nicole has fallen prey in the absence of her father as the embodiment of the Law. Thus, unlike the determined young heroines of the paradigmatic films, Nicole is portrayed as morally and practically incompetent, unable to run either a household or her own life without a f/Father, who is designated the solution to the film's conflict rather than an incarnation of the problem itself. The narrative is then devoted to the reintegration of Loursat into society, and his resumption of the role of father in its personal and psycho-social sense.

After the body is discovered and the police begin piecing together the story of the gang's activities, Loursat emerges from the seclusion of his study to play an active part in the investigation, visiting Manu, his daughter's boyfriend, in the bookshop where he works and going to the Boxing Bar where the gang met to interview the bartender about their activities. His discussion with Manu focuses not so much on the crime as on Nicole, reflecting the central importance of the father/daughter relationship in the film. His ever-increasing understanding of and interest in Nicole, together with the gratitude he arouses in her by agreeing to defend Manu leads to a gradual *rapprochement* between the two, in the course of which a conversation about their feelings for each other includes the following speech from Nicole:

J'aurais voulu vous aimer comme toutes mes camarades aimaient leur papa, seulement c'est vous qui n'avez pas voulu. Si je ne suis pas votre fille, c'est votre faute. Si vous m'aviez prise sur vos genoux quand j'étais petite, raconté des histoires qu'on raconte aux enfants... je serais votre fille, mais vous n'avez pas voulu.

Paternity is thus made a question of action and volition rather than biology and the way is paved for Loursat's assumption of the patriarchal role through his redemption for past omissions in present acts.

His assumption of the role in the personal sense is concomitant with his resumption of his function as upholder of the Law. In his defense of Manu at the trial, the conflation of the personal and the socio-political is made clear in the following statement to the judge:

Le témoin est ma soeur. Dans la salle il y a mon neveu et ma fille. Mon cousin est mon adversaire et l'accusé est mon futur gendre. Ca devient une affaire de famille et c'est pourquoi je me permets de sortir des formes traditionnelles.

which precedes his indictment of the parents of the young delinquents, himself included, for the behaviour which drove their children to rebel:

Je n'entends pas que les parents de ces enfants, les parents qui doivent être à la place de Manu au banc des accusés, viennent plaider à la barre. Quelles que soient les circonstances qui ont amené la mort de Gros Louis, le véritable coupable ne peut pas être un enfant. Les enfants ne sont jamais coupables...

He then lists the shortcomings of each set of unfit parents — the unnatural, suffocating affection lavished on her son by Loursat's sister Marthe, for whom the boy was a replacement for an unfaithful husband, the lack of understanding displayed by Destrivieux père, concerned only with money, his own alcoholism etc. — before extending the blame to the depraved older generation in general, and, in a speech



which has become a part of French cinema history,<sup>20</sup> denouncing the decadence of a society which provides bars and brothels but no sporting facilities.

Thus, *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON*, like *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* ends with a redefinition of the nature of paternity which changes the balance of power, criminalizing the 'fathers' rather than the 'sons', and emphasising the responsibilities of the older generation rather than their rights. This redefinition is accompanied by a dose of Vichy ideology, in this case the idea of regenerating French youth through a régime of sport and fresh air, rather than that of *retour à la terre*. However, *LES INCONNUS* goes further than *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* in its foregrounding of the father-figure, in that the evolution undergone by Loursat is greater than that undergone by Amoretti, and the role of the younger generation is correspondingly diminished in the later film.

At the beginning of the film, Loursat is defined as part of the oppressive regime which drives the young to rebel, both in his depraved behaviour and in his desire to suppress the truth and avoid scenes. By the trial scene, he has become a renegade to his caste, who is willing to reveal the scandalous truth about the bourgeoisie. His announcement

Je ne cherche pas le scandale, quoi qu'en pense M. l'avocat général. Mais je ne l'éviterai pas non plus s'il doit m'aider à faire jaillir la vérité devant vous, la vérité toute nue qui sort de son bain comme la belle garce qu'elle est, quitte à éclabousser tout autour d'elle  
...

is followed by the description of the unsavoury characteristics and shortcomings of his peers mentioned above, and a condemnation of the stifling effect this had on the youths:

Si mon neveu... a pu organiser cette bande de

gangsters, c'est qu'il étouffait chez lui... ... Rien d'étonnant que Manu n'ait eu qu'une idée. Foutre le camp. L'évasion. L'évasion. Voilà ce que cherchaient ces enfants écoeurés par l'image de la bourgeoisie qu'ils trouvaient chez eux. Ils étaient prêts à faire n'importe quoi pour se libérer d'un conformisme étouffant.

The idea of escape from a suffocating régime is one familiar from both the 1930s, where it was, for example, the goal of Jean and Nelly in *QUAI DES BRUMES*, and the Occupation; Germaine's cry 'J'étouffe' in *LES AFFAIRES SONT LES AFFAIRES* could equally well have been uttered by Yvonne in *REMORQUES* or by Douce. However, whereas in each of these cases the complaint was articulated by the heroine, and, in the 1930s narratives, the hero actively sought some practical form of escape, here Nicole and her fellow gang members remain silent and passive while Loursat pleads on their behalf. Similarly, while it was the heroine of *LA NUIT FANTASTIQUE*, *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *DOUCE* who created a scandal by blatantly defying the dominant regime, here that function is fulfilled by Loursat.

*LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON* is therefore something of an exception in the cinema of the Occupation in that the 'father' takes over the part played in other films of the period by the 'daughter', not only in that he rather than she is now both the voice of moral righteousness and the source of effective rebellion, but also in that he is the character who evolves in the course of the film, while she is a pre-established two-dimensional figure, and this evolution takes a form similar to that undergone by the 'daughter' in other contemporary texts. Thus, the narrative focuses on his development from the situation at the beginning of the film, in which 'il avait renoncé à vivre', to his reemergence into society in a new form, a process analogous to the death/rebirth structure associated with the younger generation in films such as *LES VISITEURS DU SOIR* and *LUMIERE D'ETE*.

If the father-figure is the rebel hero of the film, the youth can only express their discontent in petty crime, a sterile form of revolt which is suited to the physically and/or morally impaired characters with which they are endowed. It is this depiction of a set of incompetents in need of a strong father which may in part explain the reputation *LES INCONNUS* acquired as a 'fascist' film, which led to it being banned in 1945. The film's notoriety stemmed from a number of sources, most importantly perhaps from its supposed anti-semitism. The murderer of Gros Louis, Ephraïm Luska, is a Jew and the film was distributed as part of a double bill with the anti-semitic *court-métrage*, *LES CORRUPTEURS*. The charge of anti-semitism is unfounded: Luska's racial origin is never mentioned in the film, which is not only free from the primitive anti-semitism of the original novel but even treats the character of Luska sympathetically, as a victim rather than a criminal, while the film's creators cannot be held responsible for the unfortunate conditions of its distribution.

Otherwise, *LES INCONNUS* seems to have been found guilty by association with its Continental stablemate, *LE CORBEAU* (Clouzot, 1943) for which the wrath of the committee set up at the Liberation to judge Occupation filmmakers and films was mainly reserved. *LES INCONNUS* and *LE CORBEAU* were two of the only three films to be banned from cinema screens, and seem to have been selected in part because of the involvement in them of Henri-Georges Clouzot, who wrote the scenario of the first and directed the second. Clouzot was suspected of pro-fascist sympathies because of his personal life<sup>21</sup> but in fact his only 'crime' seems to have been the negative picture he painted of provincial French society in films produced by Continental, the German ownership of which left Clouzot open to a charge of

treason after the war, although rumours that the two films had been shown in Germany under the titles *LA JEUNESSE FRANCAISE* and *UNE PETITE VILLE FRANCAISE* respectively proved to be unfounded.

The violent reaction against *LE CORBEAU* at the Liberation can in part be explained by its central theme, which, in referring obliquely to the wave of denunciations which was one of the less savory aspects of Occupation France, shatters the desired image of a France united against the occupier. The plot of the film revolves around the activities of the eponymous *corbeau*, a writer of poison pen letters who sparks off a frenzy of anonymous letter writing in a small provincial town, St Robin. Chief target of *le corbeau* is Dr. Rémy Germain, a reputed abortionist who, in defiance of Catholic teachings, saves the mother rather than the child in births where the outcome is doubtful. Other letters are directed at Denise, Germain's crippled mistress and sister of the one-armed school teacher with whom he lodges and at Laura, the young wife of old Dr Vorzat, head of psychiatry at the local hospital, with whom Germain is supposed to be having an affair. Suspicion as to *le corbeau's* identity centres on nurse Marie Corbin, sister of Laura and ex-mistress of Vorzat, whom she supplies with morphine stolen from terminally ill patients. However, the letters continue after Marie's arrest and *le corbeau* turns out to be Vorzat himself, who is stabbed by the mother of a terminal cancer patient who had committed suicide after an anonymous letter had informed him of his condition.

From the above summary it will be clear that the film was likely to offend not only those *résistants* with a certain conception of France, but also the moralizing elements of Vichy society. Indeed, a number of elements in the film would appear to attack various cornerstones of Vichy ideology. The inviolate nature of the family is

questioned by the suggestion of abortion — a delicate subject in a regime which introduced and implemented the death penalty for *faiseuses d'anges* — and of the sacrifice of the child for the mother, while the idealized images of passive saintly motherhood and innocent child are undermined in the portrait of a homicidally vengeful mother and in the string of sexually aware, deceitful children and adolescents who populate St Robin. The cold and uncaring nurse Marie and the mad psychiatrist Vorzat, together with the local government officials who seek to break the law rather than uphold it by attempting to trick Germain into performing an abortion, demonstrate that the figures of authority in society are in fact corrupt and untrustworthy, while the characters who emerge most positively at the end of the film, Denise and Germain, are physically or mentally scarred and have in some way contravened the dominant moral code of the period. Denise's club foot and her brother's missing arm, which are in themselves a provocation to a regime which linked health, goodness and beauty, are external symbols of a sick society writhing with sexual frustration, a society which could not be further from the Vichy ideal of a regenerated France.

While the film was indeed condemned on its release by those sectors of society concerned with the upholding of family values,<sup>22</sup> most of the invective towards *LE CORBEAU* emanated from the pro-resistance members of the film industry who were responsible for its banning at the Liberation. Their response to the film is typified by an article circulated in the clandestine *Lettres Françaises* in 1944, in which Georges Adam and Pierre Blanchar compare the Clouzot film unfavourably with Grémillon's *LE CIEL EST A VOUS*:

Aux estropiés, aux amoraux, aux corrompus qui  
déhonorent, dans *Le Corbeau*, une de nos villes de

province, **Le Ciel est à Vous** oppose des personnages pleins de sève française, de courage authentique, de santé morale, où nous retrouvons une vérité nationale qui ne veut pas et ne peut pas mourir... ...Au pied-bot et à la putasserie de l'héroïne, il réplique par une jeune mère de France, modeste et forte, qui accomplit sans grandiloquence tous ses devoirs et dont le cœur est assez vaste pour concevoir, par surcroît, un rêve héroïque.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that Blanchar had himself played a drug-crazed abortionist with none of Germain's redeeming features five years previously in Duvivier's **UN CARNET DU BAL**, a pessimistic, *fin d'époque* film typical of the late 1930s, detracts somehow from the credibility of his righteous indignation. Moreover, the opposition he draws between the **LE CORBEAU** and **LE CIEL EST A VOUS** in the article quoted from above, an article which reflects the general perception of the two films by *bien-pensants* on both sides of the political spectrum, rests on a fundamental misconception of the work of Grémillon in general, who is far from being the propagator of patriotic values which he is presented as here, and on a misreading of the two films in question in particular.

Firstly, the moral ambivalence, the departure from stereotypical representations of good and evil were as much a feature of the work of Grémillon as that of Clouzot. One of the most shocking aspects of **LE CORBEAU** was its demolition of the rigid division between the sweetheart and the whore. These two stereotypes are set up in the persons of Denise (Ginette Leclerc), the cigarette-smoking, toe-nail painting, sexually predatory vamp, and of Laura (Micheline Francey), the demure, blonde, social worker wife of Vorzat. They are then knocked down when Denise emerges in the course of the film as the character endowed with the greatest courage and moral integrity, while Laura is shown to be

possessed by her desire for Germain and in cahoots with *le corbeau*. Prejudices are thus challenged and turned on their heads as the free expression of sexual desire by the cripple Denise is synonymous with health, while the repressed sexuality of the angelic Laura is associated with the 'illness' which erupts and spreads through St Robin. A similar, if less radical, challenging of the stereotypical roles allotted to women, was a central feature of Grémillon's 1939 film, *L'ÉTRANGE M. VICTOR*, in which the vamp, Viviane Romance, and the dutiful wife and mother, Madeleine Renaud, gradually take on some of each other's qualities. (In this case, 'la putasserie de l'héroïne', less flagrant in Romance than in Leclerc, but present nonetheless, did not stop Blanchar playing one of the leading roles in the film.)

Secondly, a point of greater relevance to the topic of this chapter: in its evaluation of *LE CORBEAU* and *LE CIEL EST À VOUS*, the Blanchar school of criticism misses the fact that as regards the inscription of family relationships in the two films, it is *LE CORBEAU* — contrary to initial appearances — which could be said to reflect the dominant ideological view of the primacy of children, whereas *LE CIEL EST À VOUS*, in its defense of the Gauthier's right to indulge their passion, could in a sense be interpreted as an anti-family — as constructed by Vichy — film. The suggestion quoted above that Thérèse carries out all her duties as *mère de famille* and then accomplishes her heroic deed is simply wrong, as the film shows clearly that her obsession with flying is fulfilled at the expense of her children, whose gradual sidelining, along with the progressive disregard of their interests, is illustrated in the following two sequences.

When the Gauthier family have settled into their new home they go *en famille* to buy a new piano for Jacqueline to replace the one destroyed in the move. Each of

the three generations represented in the family has their say in the decision-making process. This demonstration of family democracy confirms the impression of a happy, united family unit given in an earlier sequence in which the whole family participated in the process of moving house, while the nature of the purchase under discussion represents an investment in the future of the children — Jacqueline wants to be a pianist — and so is an expression of the same self-sacrificing parental instinct which makes Thérèse go and work in Limoges to earn money for Claude's education.

All of which contrasts with a later sequence in the film, which begins with a scene in which Pierre, in need of money to finance the couple's aviation project, tells Jacqueline they are going to sell the piano and sends her out of the room when she appeals in protest to her mother, who remains silent. This is followed by a dissolve from the piano to the spot where the piano had been and which is now occupied by chairs, which the grandmother is cleaning. There is then a dissolve to the two children in the empty cellar, looking at the marks left by the wheels of the plane and trying to work out why their parents had gone to Marseilles. The scene ends with the sound of the group of orphans passing the window. The distribution of the various members of the family in different scenes is indicative of the disintegration of the family unit, while the abrupt disappearance of the piano and plane is symptomatic of the breakdown in communications within the family as the increasingly dictatorial behaviour of Thérèse and Pierre exclude the weaker generations from the decision-making process. The sound of the orphans, like the sale of Jacqueline's piano, indicates that the couple are willing to sacrifice the children's future for the sake of their own fulfilment, in that they risk leaving them parentless as well as penniless.

The movement in *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* from a situation where the older



generation sacrifice themselves in order to secure the future of the young to one in which the needs of the children are disregarded is an inversion of the progression depicted in *LE CORBEAU*. The film begins with a series of pans and tracking shots around and in St Robin which end in the town's graveyard, an opening sequence not dissimilar to that of *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON*, and which also creates a sense of claustrophobia and — in this case morbid — fatality. This is followed by a scene in which Germain emerges from a difficult labour and admits he has saved the mother instead of the child. The two 'negative' elements — the stifling atmosphere and 'anti-child' attitude of Germain — presented in these two initial sequences are combined in a slightly later scene in Denise's bedroom, where Germain closes the window and so shuts out the sound of children playing in the schoolyard, replying to Denise's protest, 'Ah non, laissez. L'air me fait du bien, j'étouffe', with the explanation, 'C'est pas pour vous, c'est pour moi. Ces piailllements m'exaspèrent.'

The narrative charts the progressive development of Germain from his repressive 'anti-child' behaviour — which, it transpires, stems from his bitterness at losing his wife in childbirth at the hands of an obstetrician who favoured the baby's life over that of the mother — to an attitude more in tune with the dominant pro-natalist ideology, a movement designated positive in that it is linked with a release from the claustrophobic atmosphere which permeates the film. Thus, after sleeping with Denise, Germain is filmed in an interior medium shot by an open window overlooking the schoolyard. This is followed by a medium shot of Germain from the exterior then a high angle point of view long shot of the children. The suggestion of crossing spatial boundaries contained in this sequence of shots which

establish a *rapprochement* between Germain and the children foreshadows the movement away from the entrenched position Germain occupied at the outset which is indicated in the following dialogue between him and Denise:

D : Qu'est-ce que tu fais?

G : Je regardais jouer les enfants.

D : Je croyais que tu n'aimais pas les gosses?

G : Je ne sais plus ce que j'aime...

By the end of the film Germain's position has undergone a 180° revolution.

The *futur père* of Denise's baby, he welcomes the prospect of the child and tells Denise:

...je me disais que l'accoucheur qui a tué ma femme  
n'était pas aussi coupable que je l'avais jugé. On ne  
peut pas sacrifier l'avenir au présent.

This last remark is prefaced by Germain crossing to the window and throwing it wide open, letting in the sound of children playing. From inauspicious beginnings, the film thus arrives at a conclusion similar to that of the Vichyist film *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*, namely that the older, parental generation should bow before the superior claims of youth.

Moreover, despite its realist style and sordid reputation, *LE CORBEAU* both shares certain structural elements with the positive, uplifting mythico-poetic works of the period, and is informed by a similar discourse. The film is permeated with references to threatened or actual deaths. The opening panning and tracking shots which finish in the graveyard foreshadow the death of the baby in the following scene, the suicide and funeral of the cancer patient, Denise's attempt to kill the baby she is carrying by throwing herself downstairs, the stabbing of Vorzat and finally Germain's account of the death of his wife and baby at the hands of an obstetrician who, he says, 'a par la même occasion tué le Docteur Monatte'. While this high

mortality rate no doubt accounts in part for the film's morbid reputation, a closer examination of the text reveals that these deaths are placed in the context of a pattern of death/rebirth and of crisis leading to positive change familiar from other films of the Occupation.

The main narrative strand of the film involves the one-time Dr Monatte overcoming his obsession with the past, laying *les deux fantômes* which initially stop him making love to Denise, and looking towards the future. His initial reinvention of himself as Dr Germain is part of a process of death/rebirth which is reflected both in the movement from a doubly inscribed dead baby [his own and that which he failed to deliver] at the beginning of the film to a prospective live one (Denise, reassured of Germain's desire for a child, no longer wishing to abort it) at the end and in the associated progression from the initial intimation of a closed future — the opening claustrophobic shots ending in a churchyard — to the opening up of new perspectives — Germain opening the window and letting in air and the sound of children playing.

The second narrative strand of the film, that involving the activities of *le corbeau* which bring to the fore all the dark secrets and suppressed passions of St Robin and account for the suicide of the *cancereux* and ultimately the death of Vorzat, is also placed by Germain in the context of a necessary evil which in a sense purges the town, who remarks to Vorzat:

J'ai beaucoup changé depuis hier. J'ai compris pas mal de choses. Voyez vous, Vorzat, ce genre de crise n'est pas inutile. On en sort, comme le convalescent émerge de sa maladie, plus fort et plus conscient. C'est terrible à dire, mais le mal est nécessaire.

Thus, the plague of anonymous letter writing which takes hold of St Robin is defined in terms similar to those in which Vichy ideology presented defeat and

Occupation: a bitter pill for a sick society which will cure it of its ills and allow it to emerge better and stronger than before. Germain represents on a personal level the change to be undergone by society in general: unlike Sylvie in *LA FIANCEE DES TENEBRES*, he successfully overcomes his past loss of loved ones and present bitterness and goes forward to a brighter future. The movement from death to life which underpins the narrative is analogous to the development from nightmare to fairy tale expressed stylistically in films such as *LE BARON FANTOME* by the alternation between darkly-lit and over-exposed shots.

If on the one hand *LE CORBEAU* reflects Pétainiste discourses on the regeneration of France and the primacy of the family in a manner not entirely dissimilar in structure if not in style to that adopted by 'positive' films of the period, it represents on the other a radical departure from the Manicheism inherent in the dominant ideology and reflected in various *films rassurants*.

At the beginning of the film Germain is possessed of a rigid moral framework which he uses to categorise people and events as good or bad. In order to arrive at the point where he openly accepts his new future with Denise he must divest himself of this limited way of thinking which pigeonholes people and at one point leads to him breaking off his relationship with Denise, believing that a girl with her promiscuous past is incapable of love:

G : Ma pauvre fille, les gens sont ce qu'ils sont: un honnête homme rest un honnête homme, un coureur reste un coureur et une...

D : ...fille reste une trainée, n'est-ce pas?

If it were not bad enough that Germain's assessment of Denise, which would also be the Vichy view, is proved wrong in the film, where she turns out to have an array of moral qualities and sound judgement denied to other characters, Germain is

taught the concept of moral relativity, which brings him to the idea of a necessary evil (a reflection of the Pétainiste concept of redemption through suffering) by Vorzat himself, who is allowed to expound the 'message' of the film, illustrating the indeterminate nature of good and evil by means of a swinging light in the following conversation with Germain:

G : Quand vous rencontrez une mauvaise bête...

V : J'en rencontre une chaque matin dans ma glace en compagnie d'un ange... Vous êtes formidable! Vous croyez que les gens sont tout bon ou tout mauvais! Vous croyez que le bien, c'est la lumière et que l'ombre, c'est le mal. Mais où est l'ombre? (He swings a lamp which alternately casts light and shadow on the wall) Où est la lumière? Où est la frontière du mal? Savez-vous si vous êtes du bon ou du mauvais côté?

Thus, the villain of the film, *le corbeau* himself, is also the voice of truth, a perfect demonstration of the moral relativity which is anathema to the Manicheist doctrine of the Vichy regime. If the black and white world-view of the dominant ideology was illustrated literally in contrasting darkly-lit/over-exposed sequences in a number of the emblematic films of the period, here it is obliterated in the swings of Vorzat's lamp.

The black and white world-view attacked by LE CORBEAU, far from being the sole province of the dominant ideology, was also a salient feature of resistance thought. Evelyn Ehrlich points out:

... in Occupied France, a Manichean view of human nature was almost a necessity. In order to risk one's life by distributing newspapers, assassinating German soldiers, or blowing up troop trains, one had to believe that one was on the side of justice and virtue, and that the enemy shared no common humanity with oneself.<sup>24</sup>

and suggests that the hostility manifested towards the film by members of the resistance is attributable to its attack on this premise.<sup>25</sup> Certainly this would explain

the violence of the reaction against *LE CORBEAU* at the Liberation, which is otherwise surprising in that of the two Clouzot films sanctioned, *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON*, which was treated lightly by comparison, is the more disturbing in as much as its depiction of a morally bankrupt bourgeoisie and their incompetent delinquent youth suggests, to borrow the terminology of Renoir *à propos* of *QUAI DES BRUMES*, 'qu'il faudrait un maître, un dictateur à trique pour remettre de l'ordre dedans',<sup>26</sup> a master which they indeed receive in the shape of Loursat/Raimu, whereas *LE CORBEAU* undermines the idea of placing implicit trust in a father-figure by showing that figures of authority can both guide and corrupt, and so puts the responsibility for her/his life back on the individual.

To what extent then can it be said that the media construction of Pétain affected the inscription of father-figures and the patriarchal order in the cinema of the Occupation? The above analyses would suggest that the answer is very little, in that the predominantly negative image of patriarchy in its individual and institutional manifestations conveyed in the films of the 1930s prevailed throughout the Occupation, albeit with temporal variations in the degree of negativity. In the earlier part of the Occupation the sinister or corrupt father-figures are relatively easily displaced, whereas in the later part - the turning point being 1942 - the patriarchal regime is increasingly oppressive and the death motif increasingly prevalent.

Unsurprisingly, the rare positive father-figures, the exceptional *père Cornusse*, and Amoretti and Loursat, whose positive inscription can be explained by reference to the phenomenon of the Raimu star-text discussed in Chapter Five, and, in the former instance, the world-view of Pagnol, all appear before 1942. The contemporary-realist *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* and *LES INCONNUS DANS LA*

MAISON interface with the 'rose-coloured' narrative trend of the mythico-historical films typified by *LE BARON FANTOME*, in that the resolution of the three films revolves around the creation of social harmony through the overcoming of class and generational conflict, which suggests a certain homogeneity in discourse and mood before the 1942 watershed, despite the differing inscriptions of the father-figure.

If the characterization of the negative patriarchs remains constant from one decade to the next, the inscription of their positive counterparts does undergo some degree of modification in accordance with the *Zeitgeist*. The emphasis placed in both *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* and *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON* on the duty of the older generation towards the young in the context of, respectively, discourses on *retour à la terre* and restoration of the moral and spiritual health of French youth, constitutes a marked departure from the primacy accorded to the aged patriarch in the Raimu films of the thirties. Taking this pro-youth and family values theme as a benchmark of political orthodoxy, a close analysis of *LE CORBEAU* and *LE CIEL EST A VOUS* permits a reevaluation of the position occupied by each film with regard to the dominant ideology of the period, revealing *LE CORBEAU* to be more pro-natalist and hence more in accord with Vichy thinking (in that respect at least) than a superficial viewing of the film may suggest.

## CHAPTER NINE : NOTES

1. Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération 1938—1944* (Paris: Seuil, 1979) p. 106.
2. In *La Vie du Maréchal Pétain racontée aux enfants de France* (Nice: Ed. de la Vraie France, 1941), R. Descouens offers the following portrait:

Il est un beau vieillard, solide et droit comme l'arbre des Druides.... Il va, la démarche ferme, la tête rejetée en arrière sous la triple couronne de chêne, le bras constellé des sept étoiles, la Médaille Militaire sur la poitrine, face au cœur. C'est le Maréchal Pétain, notre Maréchal, le Père de tous les enfants de France [qui...] fait don de sa personne à la France... Une deuxième fois, au bord de l'abîme, il a sauvé la France meurtrie mais toujours vivante. Il est le signe d'espoir, la promesse des lendemains nouveaux...

quoted in Azéma, p. 104.

3. Azéma, pp. 94—95.
4. Yves Chalas, *Vichy et l'Imaginaire Totalitaire* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1985) p. 102.
5. Chalas, p. 103.
6. Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Fimmaking under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) Appendix A: Feature Film Production June 1940—August 1944.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ehrlich, p. 112.
10. Evocation: Louis Daquin, *Cinéma 79* (January 1979) pp. 32—33, quoted in Ehrlich, p. 112.
11. Jacques Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son Cinéma* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1981) pp. 76—77.
12. Siclier, p. 77.
13. Siclier, p. 78.



14. Whereas the father-figure harbouring incestuous desires towards his daughter is common-place in French films of the 1930s, the only example of the same phenomenon occurring in a mother-son relationship which springs to mind is that of *PENSION MIMOSAS* (Feyder, 1935), where a Phèdre-like Françoise Rosay succumbs to her unnatural passion for her son. There are two points to be made here:  
1) While incestuous desire in a father is frequently portrayed as normal if somewhat excessive, in a mother it is monstrous and deviant. This 30's rule holds good in *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER*.  
2) Given the extreme rarity of the over-affectionate mother, it is noteworthy that she should appear in both the Occupation films starring Raimu under discussion here. As the narrative drive of both *LA FILLE DU PUISATIER* and *LES INCONNUS DANS LA MAISON* is towards the deculpabilisation of youth and the shifting of responsibility for society's shortcomings onto the older generation, a project which is at variance with the Raimu star-text, it seems reasonable to suppose that the unnatural mother fulfils the function of a scapegoat, as a representative of the blameworthy older generation whose non-masculinity distances her from the positive Raimu character, while her 'repulsive' behaviour deflects criticism from any lapses elsewhere.
15. Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, *Movies, a Psychological Study* (Illinois: The Free Press, 1950) p. 92.
16. Siclier, p. 78.
17. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *15 ans d'années trente; le cinéma des Français 1929—1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983) p. 327.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Monsieur le Président a dit à l'un [de la bande], 'Quand vous sortiez de chez vous, vous trouviez des distractions.' Vraiment. Messieurs les jurés, pouvez-vous m'indiquer la route du stade, du vélodrome, le chemin de la piscine? Non, ne cherchez pas. Il n'y a ni stade ni vélodrome ni piscine. Il y a 132 cafés et bistros. Je les ai comptés. Et quatre bordels. Ceux-là, je ne les ai pas comptés, tous mes concitoyens les ayant repérés depuis longtemps. Messieurs, quand les enfants ne peuvent se saouler de grand air et de vitesse, il faut bien qu'ils aillent user leurs nerfs quelque part. Ils vont au cinéma. Et là ils se pâment devant les performances de Tintin le Balafre quand ils ne s'excitent pas sur les jambes de la star ou de la vamp. Et un beau jour ou une belle nuit de spectateurs ces enfants deviennent des acteurs. Ils se couvrent de sang. Eh bien, ce manteau de sang, c'est vous, c'est nous qui le leur avons jeté sur les épaules.
21. For a detailed account of the charges made against Clouzot and *LE CORBEAU* see Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, *Le Cinéma sous l'Occupation*

(Paris: Olivier Orban, 1989), pp. 224—228.

22. The *président du centre départemental de coordination et d'action des mouvements familiaux de la ville de Pau* complained about 'les vices et agissements néfastes qui y sont évoqués et même parfois étalés, adding that 'Au moment où tout un peuple, égarés par la furie des propagandes contraires, aurait besoin plus que jamais de quelques idées simples et saines auxquelles il puisse se rattacher, il est navrant de voir à quels spectacles on lui demande de se complaire.' (quoted in Bertin-Maghit, p 102), while the Centrale Catholique du Cinéma et de la Radio rated it as a '6', their 'worst' category, which meant: 'A rejeter: film essentiellement pernicieux au point de vue social, moral ou religieux.' (Siclier, pp. 447 and 453).
23. Georges Adam and Pierre Blanchar in *L'Ecran Francais supplément aux Lettres Francaises* (clandestines), 10 March 1944, quoted in 'Le Ciel est a Vous' *l'Avant-Scène*, (15 Novembre 1981) p. 65.
24. Ehrlich, p. 186.
25. Ibid.
26. From Marcel Lepierre's account of Renoir's criticism of *QUAI DES BRUMES* in 'Le Merle Blanc', 16 July 1938, quoted in Jeancolas, p. 271.

## CONCLUSION

It can be said of the role allotted to young female characters in films of the 1930s emphasised that they are denied subjectivity in the patriarchal order. On the one hand, the cinematic mechanisms of fetishism and voyeurism designed to keep women in their place reflect the social sanctions reserved for women who dared to act as desiring subjects and cross the patriarchal boundaries between the private and public spheres. On the other hand, the passive 'sweetheart' figures exist only to articulate regressive male desires or to represent values which cannot be accommodated within a corrupt patriarchal order, an order from which these females are by definition excluded.

The study of the trajectory of son figures shows that elements described by Ginette Vincendeau as an inherent part of the Gabin 'star text', are in fact a feature of a number of narratives focusing on younger male characters played by a variety of *jeunes premiers*. In *QUAI DES BRUMES*, *LE JOUR SE LEVE* and *LA BETE HUMAINE*, for example, the Gabin hero is excluded from the patriarchal order in both a sociological and psychoanalytical sense. His inability to accede to the realm of the fathers frequently has as its corollary a regressive desire for an imaginary state of unity with the mother, a desire articulated in the love relationship. In as much as the father-figures who represent the Law in these narratives are unsympathetic and/or corrupt figures and the Gabin character is sympathetic, a victim of patriarchy in its individual or collective manifestations and/or the mouthpiece of morality, the Gabin hero occupies a paradoxical position of honest criminality.

The elements of criminalization and banishment from the patriarchal order are also part of the development of the young male heroes of *LE GRAND JEU*, *LE*

CRIME DE MONSIEUR LANGE, LA MAISON DU MALTAIS, MAYERLING, the MARIUS/FANNY/CESAR trilogy, L'ETRANGE MONSIEUR VICTOR, PARTIR, L'HOMME A L'HISPANO and, to a limited extent, GRIBOUILLE. In a number of these films, in which the male lead is played not by Gabin but by one of a variety of *jeunes premiers* including Pierre Richard-Willm, René Lefèvre, Dalio, Charles Boyer, Pierre Fresnay and Pierre Blanchar, the inevitable love affair clearly articulates regressive desires and the hero is depicted as the source of moral values and/or hapless victim of an oppressive social order, who, like the Gabin hero, is driven to commit murder and/or suicide.

In poetic-realist films such as QUAI DES BRUMES, LE JOUR SE LEVE, LA BETE HUMAINE and LA FIN DU JOUR, both individual patriarchs and the patriarchal order itself are portrayed as destructive and corrupt. In particular, the desire of an older man for a younger woman is branded incestuous and perverse. The inscription of the patriarchal order in these works thus differs from the pattern detected by Vincendeau and exemplified in Pagnol narratives, whereby a lost, mythical order of phallic supremacy is recreated and presented as desirable, the father-figure's desire for sexual control of a 'daughter' figure being validated in the text. The negative inscription of patriarchy is not, however, confined to the poetic-realist canon of the late 1930s, but informs a variety of narratives, including works from the first half of the decade, such as PARTIR, L'HOMME A L'HISPANO and LE CRIME DE MONSIEUR LANGE.

This consistently negative image of patriarchy, together with the repeatedly tragic fate of young male characters, who, unable to compete with the patriarchal possessors of power, can only kill themselves and/or the 'father'/rival, suggests that

these narratives are expressions of a sense of frustration at the *société bloquée* which was France in the 1930s, a society in which economic, legal and political power was concentrated in the hands of elderly males and whose archaic structures were ill-equipped either to bring about social reform or to cope with the international problems besetting France in the 1930s.

The inscription of bourgeois father-figures as corrupt — a reflection, perhaps, of feelings of mistrust towards the ruling élite aroused by the plethora of financial scandals involving financiers and politicians of the Third Republic — contrasts with the inscription of proletarian father-figures as impotent but virtuous, in other words occupying the position normally reserved for ‘sons’. This exclusion from the patriarchal order of those who are ‘fathers’ by virtue of biology and/or age but not income underscores the importance of the sociological as opposed to the psychoanalytical dimension of these narratives.

In films of the Occupation the most striking modification in the paradigmatic inscription of father, son, and daughter relationships lies in the diminishment of the role of the *jeune premier* and the corresponding increase in importance of the role of the young female lead, who is frequently the main voice of dissent and/or the principal focus of interest in the narrative. The increased prominence of the female role is not, however, accompanied by a greater degree of freedom for ‘daughters’. The young female characters in the cinema of the Occupation are subject to the same constraints as their pre-war sisters, their confinement in the public or private sphere being reinforced through the mechanisms of fetishization and voyeurism. Moreover, they fulfil an identical function as bearers not makers of meaning, symbols of the hopes and fears of the society — or scriptwriter — whose creations they are.

This modification in the relative importance of the two participants in the love affair central to most narratives could be attributed to various social factors. Firstly, the subdued, toned-down inscription of young male characters could be seen as a reflection of the absence of a considerable number of their real-life characters for a variety of reasons at different stages of the Occupation, as well as a consequence of the exile of some of the more charismatic actors of the younger generation in American studios or some theatre of war. Secondly, the concentration on female characters can be explained in terms of the extent to which they reflected certain aspects of life in Occupied France. On the one hand, their circumscribed lives mirror the geographic and political restrictions placed on the activities of the inhabitants of an occupied land, restrictions which are also reflected in the *huis-clos* atmosphere permeating the films of this period. On the other hand, as the time-honoured representatives of abstract virtues, female characters are uniquely qualified to embody those spiritual ideals to which the French population were invited to turn in their hour of need.

It is this notion of spirituality which informs the inscription of the central love affair in films of the Occupation. In films of the 1930s the relationship between lovers had articulated on a psychoanalytical level the regressive desires of the hero, desires which, as was shown in Chapter Three, could be interpreted on a sociological level as an expression of the disquiet felt by some sectors of the workforce in the face of the alienating working conditions of the factory environment. The changes undergone by French society in 1940 are accompanied by a modification in the nature of the love affair in films of 1940 and beyond. Its development into a relationship of mutual salvation rather one of regression is part of its articulation of ambient Pétainiste

discourses, as shown in Chapters Six and Seven.

As a result of the decline in importance of 'son' figures, the predominant relationships in films of the Occupation are those between fathers and — frequently rebellious — daughters. If the inscription of daughters undergoes a slight but constant modification in the increased stature accorded to female characters throughout the Occupation period, that of father-figures changes briefly but dramatically in the earlier part of the Occupation. The small number of positive filmic inscriptions of father-figures and the patriarchal order are contemporaneous with the construction of the Pétain myth, but these swiftly give way to the negative inscriptions familiar from the 1930s as narratives become increasingly pessimistic in the latter part of the Occupation, a trend which may be interpreted as suggesting diminishing enthusiasm for Pétain and his regime.

While the main focus of this study has been on the influence of social attitudes and discourses on a national cinema, it has also taken some account of the more easily discernible role played by individual artists in the shaping of a narrative. The relationship between writers and/or directors of various political persuasions and ambient discourses, as demonstrated in the films on which they collaborate, has been touched on, but attention has been directed primarily towards the influence of the actor Raimu on the characters he interpreted. It emerges from an examination of narratives starring Raimu that the actor modified dominant representations of father-figures in accordance with his 'star-text'.

In its concentration on father, son and daughter configurations, this study of family patterns in French films of the 1930s and the Occupation has neglected the fourth member of the traditional family unit, namely, the mother. This neglect is to



be attributed to the paucity of actual mother figures, as opposed to representations of an imaginary maternal realm, in leading roles in the cinema of the period, the only notable exception in the 1930s being the characters played by Françoise Rosay in films directed by her husband, Jacques Feyder, films such as *PENSION MIMOSAS*, *LES GENS DU VOYAGE* and especially *LA KERMESSE HEROIQUE*. A comprehensive analysis of those representations of maternity which do exist was not possible within the scope of this present study, if only because of the material difficulties involved. It remains, therefore, a project to be undertaken.

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