THE ORIGINS AND USES OF LOVE
IN THE CINEMA OF FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT

by

MARK ROBERT HARRIS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Deptartment of Theatre and Film)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September 1992
© Mark Robert Harris, 1992
Abstract

The Origins and Uses of Love in the Cinema of Francois Truffaut attempts to explain how the Nouvelle Vague film-maker's passions and enthusiasms created both the substance and aesthetic of his work. For the sake of concision, this study has been restricted primarily to the analysis of eight key films in the director's work. These seven features and one short have been further sub-divided into three "blocs": Les 400 coups, Antoine et Colette, Baisers volés, Domicile conjugale, and L'Amour en fuite making up the set centred on the adventures of Antoine Doinel; Jules et Jim and Les Deux anglaises et le continent constituting the diptych inspired by the novels of Henri-Pierre Roche; and Tirez sur le pianiste, the sole monadal entry, representing Truffaut's attraction to Hollywood genre cinema. Each of the director's four principal passions are granted a self-explicating chapter: Love of Children, Love of Film, Love of Literature, and Love of Love. In the first of these thematic chapters, it is pointed out that Truffaut's love of children was counterbalanced by an equally profound hatred for the objective conditions of childhood. Love of Film encompasses film criticism as well as film-making; it shows how Truffaut's formative viewing experiences subsequently influenced his choice of subject matter. Love of literature places special emphasis on the works of Honore de Balzac and Henri-Pierre Roche. The Antoine Doinel films, it is argued, are essentially a mini-Comedie humaine. Love of Love encompasses both romance and friendship. How Truffaut could glory in the pleasures of heterosexual love without really believing in its permanence proves pivotal in this chapter. How all these "loves" were bounded by the director's love/hate relationship to time is discussed in the thesis conclusion.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two Love of Children</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three Love of Film</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four Love of Literature</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five Love of Love</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six Conclusion</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filmography</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the writing of this thesis, members of the UBC Film faculty were generous with their time and their encouragement, both implicit and overt. In particular, I would like to thank my thesis adviser, Dr. Brian McIlroy, for his patience and helpful comments. Creative Writing also contributed to the completion of this thesis, inasmuch as Hart Hanson's course on screenwriting and George McWhirter's on translation honed related skills that proved invaluable when the time came to analyze films and interpret texts. Inter-library loans is to be congratulated on its prompt and efficient service, and Jim Sinclair, executive director of the Pacific Cinematheque, is cordially thanked for the free access he provided to that organization's useful library.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The permutations of love in the films of Francois Truffaut are both varied and complex, accounting in large measure for the director's interests, the diegetic content of his oeuvre, and the viewer's subjective response to both. In this context, "love" refers to the persons, objects and themes to which the film-maker was repeatedly drawn during the course of his quarter century career as a commercial cinéaste; to a lesser extent, it also embraces the positive reactions of those who share the director's world view. Indeed, it would probably not be stretching things too far to state that love was so central to Truffaut's aesthetic, his work would not have come into existence without it. This claim applies equally to the oeuvre's origins and its evolution.

For the sake of concision, it has been decided to restrict this study primarily to the close examination of seven features and one short film; the director's other 14 features and two shorts will be discussed only insofar as they shed illumination on the eight core works. Although, like all films, these motion pictures travel sequentially through time, they will not be considered in chronological order. Instead, they have been divided into three "blocs", one made up of five films, one of two, and one of one. The largest of these groups concerns itself
with the chronicles of Antoine Doinel, the alleged "alter ego" of Francois Truffaut who was always played, at various points in his life, by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Leaud. This bloc includes Les 400 coups (1959), Antoine et Colette (1962), Baisers volés (1968), Domicile conjugale (1970), and L'Amour en fuite (1979). The second largest bloc consists of Jules et Jim (1961) and Les Deux anglaises et le continent (1971), the diptych distilled from the two novels published under his own name by Henri-Pierre Roche. Tirez sur le pianiste (1960) is the solitary film that constitutes a group unto itself.

One should not conclude from this division that the motion pictures within each set's boundaries are wholly hermetic or self-contained entities. While they do represent certain major emphases in the director's work, they are also sufficiently porous to admit, to varying degrees, all of Truffaut's compound interests and obsessions. Unlike the Hollywood auteurs whom Truffaut so admired, virtually all of his projects were undertaken as "labours of love", Fahrenheit 451 (1966) being the only one of his features to fall even partially outside his usual orbits of fascination and delight.¹ This explains the thematic necessity of "outside" quotation, for while it would be hard to argue that any key aspect of Truffaut's ethos is absent from the eight "core" motion pictures, by the same token it would be absurd to suggest that they could not benefit from amplification, particularly from sources where they are perhaps made manifest in a purer form.
Although Truffaut once claimed that "Ma patrie, ma famille, c'est le cinéma" (Gillain 413), one should take such assertions with a grain of salt. His love of literature was at least as profound and long-lasting as his passion for the "seventh art", while his loyalty to friends, fondness for actors, and adoration of women were legendary. What's more, the legacy of his formative years is as evident in *Le Dernier métro* (1980) as it is in *Les 400 coups*. In a cinema notably innocent of villains (a subject which will be discussed at greater length in a subsequent chapter), that which Truffaut "hates" (the arbitrary power of adults over children; the inhumanity of "official" life) exists primarily on an antinomous plane, as the paradoxical concomitant of that which he "loves" (the private world of children; the organic imperatives of the romantic couple). Because his own experience of joy was salted with bitterness from his earliest days, this residual acidity functions as an antidote to the sentimentality which could easily overwhelm his *oeuvre*.

Truffaut was essentially an auto-didact, "culture" being something he discovered on his own. As always with the self-taught, this experience resulted in striking contradictions. While the director could self-deprecatingly claim in a note to Jean-Louis Bory that "Since I had left school at 14, I could not logically aspire to the kind of intellectual pleasures of a Robbe-Grillet or of my friend Rivette" (*Letters* 424), scenarist Jean Grusult, one of Truffaut's most frequent collaborators, in an article published several years after his
employer's death) would counter-claim that "Il lisait La
comédie humaine à l'age ou je lisait Kipling, Jack London et
Édgar Rice Burroughs" (Gruault 85). It's also important to
bear in mind that his "faulty" education was not always
perceived as such by his film-making peers, a fact made
abundantly clear in the following reminiscence by fellow
Nouvelle Vague member Eric Rohmer:

En ce qui concerne Truffaut, la
différence fondamentale entre lui et les
autres, c'était son côté rive droite. Nous
étions marqués rive gauche d'abord
parce que nous habitions presque tous rive
gauche et que nous n'étions pas parisiens.
Or les vrais parisiens c'est la rive droite,
la rive gauche est beaucoup plus provinciale
et cosmopolite. (Le Roman de François
Truffaut 19)

Truffaut’s discovery of movies was every bit as
idiosyncratic as his encounters with literature. The youth
whose love of Balzac, Genet and Proust in no way detracted
from his appreciation of hardboiled American detective novels,
approached the cinema with the same, almost Rousseau-esque
naiveté. Thus, Roy Armes's claim that the director’s "... "
habit of littering the screen with corpses" stems directly
from his desire to be an American "B" movie-maker (Armes 128),
is in no sense at odds with Truffaut’s recollection that "Les
films que j'ai vraiment admirés, évidemment, c'étaient les films
français puisque j'ai commence à aller au cinema pendant la
guerre" (Gillain 18). The young cinéaste-in-embryo saw films
repeatedly and in batches. During the Occupation, he would
"sneak in" to see the same wartime French features again and again. This process would be repeated with postwar American movies, and later on with the eclectic cinematic programs put out by the Cinematheque Francaise. For Truffaut, enjoyability was as important as "quality". While sheer quantity was an essential pre-condition for his happiness, the canons of excellence perfected by the "academy" meant little to this self-educated film enthusiast. Of his film-going experiences in the 1940s and '50s, Truffaut wrote:

I passed up period films, war movies and Westerns because they were more difficult to identify with. That left mysteries and love stories. Unlike most moviegoers my own age, I didn't identify with the heroes, but with the underdog and, in general, any character who was in the wrong. (The Films in My Life 4)

This fondness for characters who were "réprouvé par la société" (Desjardins 45), would never leave him, and might well account for much of the rigour in his art. Bourgeois mass culture could therefore impress this underprivileged rebel only with its glittering surfaces, and not with its conformist sub-texts, since these latter ingredients were incapable of satisfying Truffaut's emotional needs. Consequently, his cinema would never be as "thought-out" as that of his sometimes friendly rival, Jean-Luc Godard; its successes, like its failures, were rooted in a pleasure principle that constituted the director's first line of defence against the still-festering emotional memories connected to his early life. Behind the
bonhomie, lurked chaos.

The Origins and Uses of Love in the Cinema of François Truffaut will sequentially consider the director's love of children (a love magnified by his hatred of childhood, the objective condition of the young); movies (from the perspective of both an auteur and a critic); literature (with a special emphasis on the works of Honore de Balzac and Henri-Pierre Roche, the film-maker's most important "muses"); women, friendship, and the past. Because his work is so closely aligned with formative experience, much biographical material will be introduced, particularly in the chapter on childhood. Truffaut spoke repeatedly of his youth but seldom referred to the concrete events of his adulthood; this reticence will naturally be reflected by this paper.

What The Origins and Uses of Love in the Cinema of François Truffaut hopes to do is demonstrate how particular its subject's "loves" really were. This particularity travelled from film to film, sometimes in an overt and sometimes in a subterranean fashion. It accounts equally for the enthusiasm of the director's admirers and for the distaste of his detractors. Collectively, these "loves" constitute a sort of family romance in which fictional characters, general types, authors, film-makers, friends and relations enjoy more-or-less equal status. It is a self-referential melange that aspires towards--and sometimes attains--the multi-layered complexity of the fiction Truffaut most admired: Balzac's Comédie humaine.
Notes on Chapter One

1 Although she felt the film was an overall failure, Pauline Kael was quite perceptive about what worked in Fahrenheit 451: "There are a few nice "touches": the loss of memory by bookless people so that they have no past and no history; their drugged narcissistic languor..." (Kiss Kiss Bang Bang 149) Fahrenheit 451 will be mentioned again in the chapters devoted to literature and time.

2 Sentimentality and lack of aesthetic rigour are, of course, precisely the charges that are usually levelled against the "later" Truffaut by his detractors, notably Jean-Luc Godard.

3 Le Roman de Francois Truffaut was an unnumbered, special edition of Cahiers du cinema which was published shortly after the director's untimely death. Made up entirely of recollections and reminiscences of the professional people who had figured most prominently in the director's life, it reads more like a book than a magazine. Consequently, for the sake of easy referral, I have decided to treat it as such; henceforward, it shall be known simply as Le Roman. Bibliographical complexity also besets Anne Gilillain's Le Cinema selon Francois Truffaut. A Collection of Truffaut's most significant interviews, it seldom mentions where they originally appeared, sometimes conflating two or three articles for the sake of narrative coherence. All references to this work are signified by the editor's name.
CHAPTER TWO: LOVE OF CHILDREN

Like all people, Francois Truffaut arrived in this world as a child with an amniotic love for his mother. He was born on February 6, 1932 to Roland Truffaut, an architectural draftsman with a "passion for mountain climbing", and Janine de Montferrand, a secretary at a weekly newspaper. (Gillain 15) He was the young couple's only child.

For the first eight years of his life, Truffaut lived away from his parents, first with a nurse, and then with his grandmother. For this elderly relative, he was expected to be "silent and invisible", but his maternal grandmother nonetheless demonstrated a "great love for books", a love reflected by her conversations with a bookstore owner concerning the value of the latest novels. (Truffaut by Truffaut 11)

His grandfather was a stonecutter who "worked a lot for cemeteries." (Truffaut by Truffaut 11)

It was only in 1942 that the future director belatedly began to live under his parents' roof:

Quand ma grand-mère est morte, mes parents m'ont repris. Ils n'étaient pas méchants, seulement nerveux et occupés. Ma mère était aigrie. Elle aurait sans doute aimé une vie plus brillante. Je n'étais pas sportif, très vite c'est le cinéma qui m'a attiré. Cela paraissait louche à la maison de ne pas aimer le camping. (Gillain 15 - 16)

Annette Insdorf seems to accept this account of the
film-maker's upbringing at face value when she says that Antoine
Doinel, Truffaut's fictional "alter ego", "was less mistreated
than simply not treated at all." (Insdorf 161) On the other
hand, the director himself has contributed to the mystery
surrounding his childhood by presenting conflicting accounts
of the same events in films, articles, and interviews. The
following recollection, for instance, suggests maternal
characteristics considerably darker than mere "nervousness"
or preoccupation:

Ensuite, j'ai vecu avec ma mere qui ne
supporterait pas le bruit et qui me
demanderait de rester sans bouger, sans
parler, des heures et des heures.
Donc, je lisais, c'était la seule occupation
que je pouvais adopter sans l'agacer.
(Gillain 30)

So both his mother and his mother's mother insisted that
he "shut up", while his only refuge lay in books, the passion
of his grandmother. Already fear, pleasure and a desperate
need to please are present in his relationships with women.
No wonder he maintained the feeling all his life that he "was
a child who huddled forgotten in the corner and dreamed"
(Crisp 6 - 7).

Many of those reveries were fuelled by films, which his
parents discussed, though he generally preferred to sneak into
movies they had not seen, cultivating a guilty feeling of
"clandestinité" (Gillain 16 - 17).

Truffaut's usual "accomplice" on these "undercover"
excursions was Robert Lachenay, the life-long friend whose
surname would subsequently be appended to the hero of _La Peau douce_ (1964), the film-maker's fourth feature. Lachenay's recollection of the origins of this friendship reads like a précis of _Les 400 coups_:

```
Moi, j'avais été retrogradé de classe parce que j'étais toujours le dernier...
L'instituteur----il a servi de modèle à celui des 400 coups,----m'a dit le jour où je suis arrivé dans la classe: "Alliez vous asseoir à côté de Truffaut, tous les deux, vous ferez le paire." (Le Roman 7)
```

Despite the fact that he was the younger of the two boys, Truffaut clearly set the tone of this relationship, although he generally tried to conceal this in letters and interviews. Judging by his own account, however, Lachenay felt no qualms about admitting to his intellectual "inferiority":

```
...il me parlait du Lys dans la vallée, du baiser sur l'épaule de Madame de Mortsauf, qui était quelque chose qui me bouleversait, moi je suivais plutôt, alors je lisais Balzac. (Le Roman 7)
```

As the years progressed, this initial disparity grew rather than diminished. In the late 1940s, Truffaut would write most of the amateur reviews that Lachenay signed (Le Roman 8). That one finds no trace of envy or rancor in this childhood friend's brief memoir suggests that not only did Truffaut never lose his "common touch", but that "character" was at least as important to him as facility with words or love
of cinema. Even his "ordinary" friends had something extraordinary about them, and this ability to find the sublime in the "humdrum" would subsequently stand him in good stead when it became time to shoot the Antoine Doinel movies.

Of course, when Truffaut first ran away from home in 1943, Lachenay had something that Truffaut desperately needed: a place to go to. Truffaut hid out in his friend's bedroom in the manner described in Les 400 coups. When he told his teacher that his father had been arrested by the Gestapo, this "white lie" would later be transformed to the "my mother is dead" motif in the director's first film. Truffaut recalled that whenever one boy would be forced to change schools, the other would shortly follow. Discipline was just gasoline poured on fire. "The more I was punished," Truffaut once said, "the more trouble I made." (Gillain 17)

Still, despite their rebellious spirit, most of the boys' "criminal" activities were devoted to devising new methods of sneaking into the cinema. In virtually every book on this cineaste-in-embryyo, the means of doing so are itemized: going when a friend was taking tickets at the door; squeezing two boys in on one ticket; using old tickets; pretending to have "lost" something when the shows emptied out. Favourite films would be seen repeatedly. In his youth, Truffaut claimed to have taken in Jean Renoir's La Regle du jeu (1937) no fewer than 12 times.

At age 14, Truffaut started working with a grain exporter. Other part time jobs followed, along with a few petty thefts, although, unlike his fictional counterpart
Antoine Doinel, it was not the botched fencing of a purloined typewriter that brought the teenaged film fancier into conflict with the law. In his case, it was unpaid debts arising from the operation of "La Circle cinémane", the film society which Truffaut co-founded with his friend Lachenay. It was Andre Bazin who got Truffaut out of the Villejuif reform school, while it was Truffaut's real father who turned him in.

One cannot help but think, in this context, of Antoine's illegitimacy in *Les 400 coups*. As so often with the most painful possibilities in Truffaut's life, one is struck by the fact that none of his major critics seem to have asked him a direct question about the status of his parentage, nor apparently did the director publicly volunteer the information. Truffaut was sent to live with his grandmother, after all, once a common way of dealing with "bastards". And there is the strong secondary evidence provided by the marked absence of strong biological fathers in the film-maker's *oeuvre*. In his life, however, surrogate fathers would play a commanding role, and Andre Bazin was the first and most important of these. Bazin first met Truffaut when the young film programmer rather brazenly suggested that the older critic re-schedule his weekly screenings because Bazin's incomparably more successful operation was creating invincible competition. Until he died prematurely at the age of 40 in 1958, Bazin would exercise a profound influence on his protege, an influence that Truffaut would absorb and subsequently exercise on others younger than himself. Much more will be said about this later in the proper place.
One of the terms of Truffaut's release was that he see a psychologist once a week. Based on the letters that Truffaut was writing to Robert Lachenay around that time, it seems as if psychiatric help might have been eminently needed:

Since my last letter, much has happened. Principally: there was a very real chance of my being in no condition to answer your letter, as I tried to kill myself and had 25 razor slashes in my right arm, so it was very serious. (Letters 22 - 24)

"Twenty-five razor slashes" on one arm sounds less like a suicide attempt than an act of self-mutilation. Clinical diagnosis nowadays inclines towards feelings of unworthiness engendered by sexual or emotional abuse as the root cause of such behaviour. Again we are faced with evidence of activity far worse in Truffaut's past than mere "nervousness" or "pre-occupation".

After suffering through the unfortunate romantic episode cinematically transformed into _Antoine et Colette_, the disappointed cinémane joined the French army in 1950, after first donating his substantial film archive to Henri Langlois on the understanding that he would be admitted free to the Cinematheque Francaise for the rest of his life. (Gillain 26) Since he was scheduled to embark for Indochina in 1951, the rest of his life might not have been very long if the future director had not deserted. Even "on the lam", Truffaut could only think of his plight in cinematic terms. Before obtaining
"clothes, a job, friends I can trust," he will be in "the same situation as Jean Gabin at the beginning of the film set in Le Havre"; afterwards, he will be "in the same situation as Jean Gabin at the end of a film set in Algiers (the ship leaves without him!)." (Letters 56)

Unlike the heroes of Marcel Carné's Quai des brumes (1938) and Julien Duvivier's Pepe-le-Moko (1937), Truffaut survived his travails, but not without hardship. He was twice confined to the French military asylum at Anderrach in West Germany, and served six months in military prison before being discharged, a la Antoine Doinel in Baisers volés, for "instability of character" in 1953. He had been shackled, his head was shaved, and he had once been squeezed into a cell designed for four men with 11 other prisoners. Andre Bazin was again instrumental in winning his release.

Truffaut's amateur film reviewing became more serious after he was inspired by the Cahiers du cinema issue devoted to the works of Robert Bresson. Bazin got him a job with Cahiers, and before long Truffaut was writing for Arts and other publications as well. At the same time, Truffaut began his film-making career as a cinéaste employed by the Service Cinematographique of the Ministry of Agriculture. Bazin got him this job, although he was clearly fired from it on his own initiative. In 1955 he made the short film Une Visite in tandem with fellow Nouvelle Vague members, Alain Resnais and Jacques Rivette. Making movies seems to have permanently re-channelled his creative energies away from fiction. "No."
he wrote, "my novel will never see the light of day. I destroyed 40 pages and the 20 that are left will soon go the same way; I have more talent for film criticism." (Letters 62)

That Truffaut enjoyed reviewing movies seems indisputable. Of the years 1954 - 1958, he wrote:

"This was the first happy period of my life; I was going to movies and talking about them and somebody was paying me to do it. I was finally earning enough money to do nothing from morning to night but what I enjoyed, and I appreciated it all the more because I had just gone through seven or eight years of trying to find enough money to eat every day and pay my rent. (The Films in My Life 17)

Besides writing, making friends with future film-makers, and helping Andre Bazin with his "Travail et culture" lectures, Truffaut was also rounding off his film education at the Cinematheque Francaise, "the only school he respected." (Crisp 106) Cinematheque director Henri Langlois was the second of Truffaut's "spiritual" fathers, while Roberto Rossellini, the great Neorealist film-maker with whom Truffaut worked as an assistant director between 1956 and 1957, was probably the third. One could say that Jean Renoir, Alfred Hitchcock and--especially--Honore de Balzac were even earlier parents of the psyche, but their paternal influence was much more indirect. When Truffaut married for the first time at the age of 25, it was to Madeleine Morgenstern, the daughter of a producer. That same year he made the best and most
typical of his short films, Les Mistons. A bout du souffle (1959), Jean-Luc Godard's first feature, was developed from a 15 page treatment drafted by Truffaut, while Les 400 coups, the director's own maiden long metrage, was shown at Cannes that same year. Along with the scores of other first-time directors who made up the French New Wave, Truffaut would sit with his friends in little cafes, "en general a la sortie des cinémas" (Le Roman 18).

From this point onwards, Truffaut's "real" experiences became increasingly entangled with those of his fictional protagonists. Books read and films seen contributed as much to his vision as events enjoyed or suffered. By his own admission, Truffaut was a true nostalgic, "totalement tourné vers le passé." (Gillain 197)

Beginning with Les 400 coups, none of Truffaut's films would fit into a purely "authentic" time frame. For ideological as well as economic reasons, he was obliged to set his first feature in the present tense late-1950s, rather than the era in which his childhood actually unfolded. This time lag would travel through all five "chapters" in the Antoine Doinel saga and occasionally produce a sense of confusion. Mores from one decade would frequently be superimposed on those on the next. Indeed, much of the motivation behind the making of Le Dernier métro ostensibly lay in the director's desire to transmit "the horrible vision of adults" he'd had during the Occupation in an historically accurate milieu.
Throughout his life, Truffaut would issue contradictory statements concerning the veracity of *Les 400 coups*. If in his introduction to *The Adventures of Antoine Doinel* he could argue, "without going into all the ugly details, I can testify that what I went through was considerably tougher than what is shown in the film" (*The Adventures of Antoine Doinel* 9), he could also protest that:

...if I had wished to put my adolescence into images, I would not have asked Marcel Moussy to come and collaborate on the screenplay and to write the dialogue. If the young Antoine sometimes resembles the turbulent adolescent I was, his parents are absolutely unlike mine, who were excellent, but on the contrary, are more like the families who confronted each other on the TV program *Ci C'Était Vous* which Marcel Moussy was writing.... (*Truffaut by Truffaut* 57)

The veracity of this dubious, "sitcom" version of the director's past is contradicted not only by his well-documented working methods, but by much incidental material as well. There is, for instance, in the published version of *Les 400 coups*, a passage describing the behaviour demanded of the young Antoine that is virtually indistinguishable from the autobiographical recollections already quoted:

As long as he does nothing, and remains silent in a corner, reading a book, there is no problem—she simply ignores him. But the slightest reminder of the childish presence, i.e., an untimely burst of laughter, a question, any noise, a fit of coughing, is sufficient to
awaken her hostility against him. (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 43)

One is similarly struck by the marked absence of the director's parents from virtually all the adult letters appearing in his posthumously published volume of correspondence. A rare exception to the rule provides little reassurance that his revisionist protestations were anything other than a child's transparent attempts to avoid inflaming his parents' wrath still further:

"I saw my parents again, both of them together, at a lunch at my mother's place. She thought La Peau Douce was a little less vulgar than Jules et Jim and my father is seeing the film next week. (Letters 271)

Although Marcel Moussy "novelized" Les 400 coups after collaborating on the screenplay, the voice that speaks from this text is virtually indistinguishable from that of Truffaut in his self-revelatory mode. When, for instance, young Antoine is asked by a government psychologist why "he doesn't love his mother", the boy nervously replies:

"--Parce que d'abord j'étais en nourrice...et puis quand ils ont plus eu d'argent, ils m'ont mis chez ma grand-mère...ma grand-mère elle a vieilli et tout ça...elle pouvait plus me garder...alors je suis venu chez mes parents, a ce moment-là; je l'avais déjà huit ans...je me suis aperçu que ma mère, elle m'aimait pas tellement; elle me disputait toujours et puis, pour rien...j'ai entendu que...que ma mère..."
Antoine's father, on the other hand, was described as "nice but cowardly" since his horror of scenes was so great he gratefully turned a blind eye to his own cuckoldry. (Moussy 155) Thus, what we have here is a scenario of emotional neglect and abuse accompanied by co-dependency, a pre-sexual revolution "scandal" nearly terminated by abortion, an essentially 19th century situation in terms of its morality, especially when one considers the father's "Balzacian" complacency.

Although this is not the proper place to explore this theme in depth, in a future chapter it will be shown how Truffaut's life-long love of Balzac was at least partially inspired by the structural similarities between the great 19th century novelist's family and his own. By the same token, the very different upbringing of Henri-Pierre Roche, the author of *Jules et Jim* and *Les Deux anglaises et le continent*, encouraged a certain emotional distance between the creators, despite Truffaut's unreserved admiration for Roche's texts. To love something, Truffaut had first to understand it from the inside out. A pained, deprived childhood was the surest way to win his sympathy.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude from this that *Les 400 coups* is entirely concerned with autobiographical
issues. The director was equally interested in children in general, and their problems in particular. His abstract thesis statements are at least as pertinent to his aesthetic motivations as are his more personal confessions, such as the following reflection on *Les 400 coups*:

...adolescence leaves pleasant memories only for adults who can't remember. When you're in that difficult age, the thirteenth year is your bad luck time: discovery of injustice, first sexual curiosity left unsatisfied, too early desires for social independence, and often lack of family affection. *(Truffaut by Truffaut 57)*

Of course, when talking about the experience of childhood, distinctions between the public and private spheres tended to blur in Truffaut's mind:

*J'avais toujours été impatient d'être adulte... je n'étais pas, mais enfin j'étais impatient d'être indépendant. Je n'avais aucune nostalgie de l'enfance. J'avais l'impression que le monde adulte était celui de l'impunité, celui où on a le droit de tout faire et où on peut rire des choses parce que rien n'est grave....* *(Desjardins 25)*

Truffaut was genuinely interested in what children had to say, and this interest led to unusually fruitful collaborations between director and cast. Much of the dialogue in *Les 400 coups*, for instance, was improvised by the young actors, a liberty that resulted in a remarkable feeling of versimilitude which has endured, even if the strategem's...
short term goal of avoiding "dated" argot has already been subverted by time. Similarly, when casting the film, Truffaut refrained from telling his young hopefuls that they were being tested for major parts because he planned to mitigate the "côté très cruel de l'elimination" by placing as many as possible behind the 30 desks surrounding Antoine's. (Desjardins 36)

Dealing with parents "who were cumbersome because they felt their children were cumbersome", the director discovered Jean-Pierre Leaud among his unschooled actors, fatefuly choosing him to be his "alter ego" even though the boy was both "healthier" and "more aggressive" than Truffaut had been at his age. (Desjardins, 40) Naturally, these differences were more than counterbalanced by Leaud's childhood, which was every bit as troubled as those of both Truffaut himself and his literary idol, Honore de Balzac. As the developing actor interpreted not only the onscreen growing pains of his "spiritual father", but also those of the fictional characters with whom the director felt most in tune, their relationship grew ever more complex. By the late 1970s, Leaud had even begun to physically resemble his mentor to a disturbing degree, a development which is most evident in their last cinematic collaboration, L'Amour en fuite. It was doubtless this "doppelganger" element in their "bonding" that induced Dominique Fanne to write, "Antoine Doinel, extérieurement Leaud, intérieurement Truffaut, mais peut-être aussi l'inverse...." (Fanne 167)

In Truffaut's case, the connection between fatherhood
and film-making is too palpable to ignore. It was Andre Bazin, after all, and not the director’s biological (?) father who had helped him with his film society, gotten him out of reform schools, insane asylums and military jails, provided him with the opportunity to write film reviews, and introduced him to the government officials who would finance his first short films. Similarly, Henri Langlois took care of his informal education, while Renoir, Rossellini, Hitchcock, Bresson, Roche and Balzac furnished his imagination with the timber from which he would eventually construct his own oeuvre. All the "parents" he admired were his elders, and since he responded to who they were primarily through what they did, it seems to have mattered little whether a given father was initially living or dead. Indeed, looked at from a certain angle, there were distinct advantages to loving "fathers" who were already dead. One could not, for example, be deprived of Honore de Balzac, deceased since 1850, in the same way that one could be bereft of Andre Bazin, who died in 1958. Implicit in all human contact is the possibility of grief. If what art has to offer is less tangible than interpersonal relationships, it's also less subject to temporal fluctuations. To his credit, Truffaut never favoured one option to the point of excluding the other. In many respects, he used books and films to keep the "world" at arm's length, but this retreat did not preclude interest in others and personal warmth.

Truffaut's interactions with "directorial" fathers would have been more or less the same, one suspects, even if he had not known them personally. Whatever sustenance he derived from
them was sown on the screen. Roberto Rossellini might have employed Truffaut as an assistant director, but none of their projects came to fruition. In fact, on the level of practical assistance, Truffaut generally behaved more like a father towards his "fathers" than they did towards their "son". Hitchcock, after all, was the beneficiary of the director/critic's adulatory book of interviews. Bresson was championed by Truffaut. Renoir's late films were lavishly praised in Truffaut's reviews, and Cocteau might never have produced Le Testament d'Orphée if not for his young admirer's wholehearted help with this 1959 "swan song". The director actually named his production company after Renoir's 1952 feature, La Carrosse d'or. The compliments Renoir returned to his younger admirer were not altogether innocent of envy, while Hitchcock demanded many changes in the interview book.

Once again, however, Truffaut remained loyal to the enthusiasms of his youth and childhood. Not even the artistic failure of his more "Hitchcockian" films, such as La Mariée était en noir (1967), could deflect him from his near-idolatry. To a CBC interviewer he once said, "n'oubliez pas que j'avais grandi dans la peur et que Hitchcock est le cinéaste de la peur." (Desjardins 31 - 32)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, only Henri Langlois seems to have almost equalled Bazin's paternal importance on a personal level. For him, the Cinematheque was "the only school he respected, and represented all that was worth fighting for in his world" (Crisp 105). Thus, when the Gaullist government tried to replace Langlois with a party hack, Truffaut led the
successful counterattack that resulted in the film programmer's official reinstatement, even though, amongst other indignities, the director was beaten by the Parisian riot police.

In Raisers volés, the third "volume" of the Antoine Doinel "novel", there are no fewer than three homages to the embattled Langlois. The film opens with a lingering shot of the Cinematheque's sealed doors. A little later on, Christine Darbon, the object of Antoine's affections and his future wife, describes a demonstration on behalf of a beloved teacher at her music conservatory, a teacher who is as transparently Langlois as the conservatory is the Cinematheque. Somewhat more subtly, the older detective who initiates Antoine in the mysteries of private investigation is called "Andre", a reference to Bazin that neatly divides the importance of theoretical and practical apprenticeship.

Still, whatever filial "infidelities" Truffaut might have practiced, Andre Bazin clearly enjoyed pride of place in his heart. When talking of his mentor, he seems to be describing the fulfilment of every unmet childhood need:

Il pouvait discuter avec n'importe qui, parlementer avec des agents de police dans la rue; il partait du principe que les gens sont de bonne foi, il était de bonne foi lui-même; il n'avait jamais l'idée de rapport de force, jamais l'idée de ruse... C'était la même chose avec son enfant qui avait cinq ou six ans, il lui disait: "Evidemment, les parents traditionnels te donnerait une fessée, mais étant donné que je n'y crois pas, je ne te le donnerai pas..." Il parlait à son fils comme à un adulte.
Having been raised in a family that valued sport and Silence above all things, Truffaut was rescued by a "father" who put movies, communication, and personal authenticity at the pinnacle of his private pantheon. He would talk to "anyone", and being from the lower middle class himself, Truffaut was acutely aware that inclusion in the conversations of the upper bourgeoisie was not his by right. Above all, though, Bazin was a man who was as kind and "democratic" towards children as he was enthusiastic about all of Truffaut's adult passions. In the next chapter we will see how this unconditional affection seems to have resulted in Truffaut's taking certain uncharacteristic critical positions.

Even so, it would be wrong to assume from this that the "apprentice" ever swore unconditional fealty to the "master's" Christian socialist positions. As Janine Bazin, the critic's widow, recalled: "Les rapports de Bazin et de François n'étaient pas ceux d'un maître et d'un élève, mais de deux personnes qui aiment le cinéma et en parlent chacun suivant son tempérament et sa formation." (Le Roman 14)

As late as 1972, the director could still write, "André died twenty-four years ago. One might think the passage of time has assuaged the feeling of his absence. This is not the case." (Truffaut by Truffaut 19)

If Bazin was almost 14 years Truffaut's senior, Jean-Pierre Leaud was a good 15 years his junior. His onscreen evolution would always retain elements of "double exposure"
thanks to the unavoidable time lag between his coming of age and Truffaut's. In *Les 400 coups* he had to contend with the ghostly presence of the German occupation of France, while many of his *Baisers volés* attitudes properly belonged to the early 1950s, and not to that most revolutionary of years, 1968. If not for the great intuitive understanding between film-maker and performer, this problem would be even more intrusive than it is.

That Leaud felt much the same way about Truffaut that Truffaut did about Bazin is made manifest in his brief memorial tribute: "Je dois tous à François. Non seulement il m'a communiqué son amour pour le cinéma: mais il me donna le plus beau métier du monde. Il fit du moi un acteur." (Le Roman 40)

By the time *Les 400 coups* went into production, its director was already a father in the biological sense of the word, but he was latterly inclined to disparage his abilities in this direction. Ironically, since his daughters were better at both sports and athletics than he had been, they might well be precisely the children that Truffaut's own parents had secretly wished for. After his divorce from Madeleine Morgenstern, the director chastised himself for being too "jokey" with his daughters, of never having a serious conversation with them, "perhaps because they're girls" (Desjardins 56–57). By default, Truffaut's ex-wife assumed the greater part of their upbringing.

This peculiar melange of warmth, sexism, paternal affection and self-deprecation, like so many other aspects of the film-maker's personality, seems to belong to another time
and place. Truffaut's backward-looking romanticism frequently
gave a 19th century cast to his recorded comments. For example,
his "Orientalist" complaints that Les 400 coups didn't "sell"
in the Middle East because there children are treated like
royalty (Desjardins 40), is something Gerard de Nerval would
be more wont to say than Claude Levi-Strauss. In a subsequent
chapter, we will consider more fully the "nostalgia" that left
Truffaut open to charges of political conservatism or
irrelevance.

Such accusations are seldom levelled against his first
feature, Les 400 coups. By harking back to the Popular Front
aesthetics of his cinematic forefathers, regardless of content. The film's anarchistic spirit is perhaps
best epitomized by the loving long shot in which an entire
class of boys disappears down serpentine back alleys when their
athletics instructor takes them jogging through the streets
of Paris. Everything from the teacher's absurd self-importance
to his shrill whistle is meant to remind us of Jean Vigo's
blistering attack against the French educational system, Zero
de conduite. In a similar vein, Antoine and Rene's passion
for Bob le flambeur (1955) is more than just a period update
of the director's wartime obsession with Les Visiteurs du soir
(1942). Jean-Pierre Melville's proto-Nouvelle Vague policier
was also an elegaic swan song for the vanishing sights of
Montmartre, the "nocturnal" district which had served as a
backdrop for so many of Jean Renoir's early films.

From a psychological point of view, the most striking
difference between the lives of Antoine Doinel and Francois
Truffaut would seem to be the genders of their respective "saviours". Onscreen, the director's "spiritual fathers" are replaced en bloc by substitute "mothers". Paternity and patriarchy are definitely not synonyms in this universe where father figures are seldom more than a comfortable part of the background bourgeois decor. M. Darbon, Christine's father, epitomizes this character type. Andre, the avuncular detective who takes the unemployed Antoine under his wing, is the closest approximation to a "spiritual father" that the Antoine Doinel films can produce, and not coincidentally he dies half way through Baisers volés. It seems likely in fact that it is Antoine's very fatherlessness which most endears the character to his creator.

Biological fathers are also singularly absent from Truffaut's oeuvre. For masculine role models, young Antoine must rely on his stepfather, the man who married his unwed mother. Alphonse, the passive hero of Les deux anglaises et le continent (also played, incidentally, by Jean-Pierre Leaud), lives with his widowed mother. In Tirez sur le pianiste, both of Charlie Kohler's parents are apparently still living, but they are notably absent, almost ghostly figures, when he returns to the family farm. Adele H's father is none other than Victor Hugo, but his presence is restricted to "Olympian" Voice Over letters. Unlike their fictional antecedents, Jules, Jim and Catherine would seem to be devoid of elder relatives of any kind in the screen version of Jules et Jim. Theatre and film provide the respective familial contexts in Le Dernier métro and La Nuit américaine (1973). The most
sympathetic teacher in *L'Argent de poche* (1976) witnesses the birth of his first child, but that baby plays no subsequent part in the film's proceedings. If anything, significant male progenitors are even scarcer in *La Peau douce, Fahrenheit 451, La Mariée était en noir, La Sirène de la Mississippi* (1969), *La Chambre verte* (1978), *La femme d'a côté* (1981), and *Vivement Dimanche* (1983). The father in *Une Belle fille comme moi* (1973) is a brute who exists only to be comically killed. Because Truffaut himself played Dr. Itard, the late 18th century savant who tried to "tame" the wolf boy of Avignon in *L'Enfant sauvage*, the director's screen version of that historical event, it has been suggested that the "wild child" was Truffaut and the doctor Andre Bazin (Samuels 51). Considering the icy correctness with which this scientist treats his wolf-raised pupil, and the limited success he achieved, this conjecture seems somewhat unlikely. Itard's demeanor contradicts everything we know about the pedagogical techniques of both Bazin and Truffaut. Even the film's dedication to Jean-Pierre Leaud should not tempt us to make overly explicit parallels. *L'Enfant sauvage* was released in 1969, after all, a full decade after *Les 400 coups*, so it's quite possible that this homage was made to mark the ascension of the film-maker's "fetish" actor to full manhood. In any event, the film cannot be read as the director's definitive statement on the rites of fatherhood. If one knew Truffaut only from his films, one would be inclined to suspect that his fatherless world view was more or less synonymous with that

As mentioned earlier, Truffaut does not seem to have discussed the issue of his own legitimacy with the press, but Antoine's bastardy unquestionably throws him even more completely on the mercies of his indifferent mother. Doinel senior is thereby reduced to the stature of a weak, reasonably good-natured "guy" who voluntarily assumes the mantle of fatherhood. This means that the only parent who cannot evade the responsibility of child-rearing is the one who most wants to do so. If M. Doinel is cast in a more favourable light than is his wife, he is also regarded as the weaker of the two partners, and this weakness engenders contempt. In relation to this portrait, one can't help but remember that it was Truffaut's father who surrendered his "erring" son to the authorities. That he would do so at someone else's behest to cravenly maintain the illusion of domestic tranquillity makes him appear even more despicable.

That the director considered such behaviour to be "normal", if not exactly "natural", is made clear in one interview after another:

...on m'a souvent accusé d'avoir des hommes faibles et des femmes qui décidaient, des femmes qui commandaient des événements; mais je crois que c'est comme ça dans la vie, en tous cas c'est comme ça dans mes films.... (Desjardins 51)

When not performing "hit man" duty on his son, Antoine's
father is constantly trying to patch up the "quarrel" between mother and child. That he does not see how one-sided this dispute really is stems directly from his cowardly need for self-deception. Her "difficult" nature is explained entirely in terms of their crowded quarters and her unfortunate working conditions. When he tells this 13 year old boy, "you know how offices are. They always take advantage of women," he depicts his own cuckoldry in a sanitized, unthreatening form. "But she loves you, you know," this snivelling speech's mendacious conclusion, is similarly contradicted by everything that has gone before. First M. Doinel explains why his wife is too preoccupied to love her son, then he contradictorily asserts that she does. Even his assumption of full responsibility for her unhappiness is motivated by fear of confrontation rather than generosity of spirit. (The 400 Blows 49 - 50)

That Doinel is objectively his wife's tool is further reaffirmed during the sequence where the candles ignite Antoine's "shrine to Balzac". Madame Doinel slaps her husband angrily on the back and orders her son to fetch water. When the boy returns, he accidentally spills most of this liquid on the elder Doinel, a circumstance which prompts Antoine's father to throw him against the wall and brutally cross-examine him while his wife methodically beats out the flame. The furious incomprehension that emerges from his mouth is more hers than his, since Doinel has already shown himself to be fairly easy-going and a shrewd judge of childish character when not intimidated by his wife's presence. Earlier, when
Antoine had asked him for a thousand francs, he gave him precisely half that sum, correctly assuming that the boy needed 300 while hoping for 500 (Moussy 29). By the gradual accumulation of telling details such as this, Truffaut lets us know that M. Doinel is something far worse than naive.

In colloquial French, the phrase "les 400 coups" generally refers to raising "hell", but in the case of the film-maker's first feature, it seems to be painfully literal. At least 400 physical and emotional blows fall on Antoine's unprotected head. Antoine and Rene are most commonly seen on "la rue des martyrs". According to Truffaut, he had to force his young star to stop grinning: "For three months I was continually stopping him from smiling...I'm sure I was right." (Crisp 26) In this context, Truffaut really does sound a bit like Dr. Itard.

Based on the evidence of his films, however, it would seem that this attempt to wipe the grin off Leaud's onscreen face was scarcely less gruelling for the director than it was for his star. His true attitudes are probably best expressed by the scene in Les 400 coups where Antoine and Rene briefly join the audience of a puppet show. Significantly, most of the spectators are far younger than they. One of their most vexatious problems involves finding pleasures and companionship equal to their personal development. Objectively, they are neither children nor adults. Thus, when Antoine is accused by P'tite Feuille of plagiarizing a page of Balzac, his adult component is technically guilty of the charge, while his childlike side is simply expressing enthusiasm and revelling
in the joys of literary imagination. This unresolved contradiction is eloquently transmitted by an earlier shot that shows us the boy reading *La Recherche de l’absolu* while precociously smoking. For Antoine, to copy out a page that one loves is reverence, not plagiarism. P’tite Feuille, of course, that unsubtle "corrector" of poetic syntax, is totally incapable of appreciating the fineness of this distinction.

Although it is his most famous film about childhood, *Les 400 coups* is, in many respects, less concerned with the subject than is the director’s much later feature, *L’Argent de poche*. Certain scenes, notably the one centred on the "amateur" haircut, were in fact transferred from the first screenplay to the second. What’s more, in place of budding adolescents, *L’Argent de poche* featured children proper. It’s generally much lighter in tone, except for the dark sub-plot surrounding the abuse of Julien. Whether this relative gaiety should be attributed to the youthfulness of the protagonists or to a general softening of the director’s authorial rigour is a question that cannot properly be answered, because of its intimate and unavoidable connection to the viewer’s relation to Truffaut’s *oeuvre* as a whole.

As the film-maker changed, so did Antoine Doinel during the two decades that elapsed between 1959 and 1979. This "young man of the nineteenth century" (*The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 11*) would be treated with less indulgence as the years rolled on:

Antoine Doinel is far from being an
exemplary character: he has charm and takes advantage of it, he lies a great deal and demands more love than he is willing to offer; he is not man in general, he is a man in particular. (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 12)

Truffaut claimed that his increasingly "severe approach" to his alter ego was directly related to age, "since I am never as gentle with adults as I am with adolescents" (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 12).

Perhaps not, but even as late as L'Amour en fuite, we are not permitted to forget the depth of Antoine's early anguish. Although his parents never appeared onscreen again after Les 400 coups, in the final film in the cycle he does meet "Monsieur Lucien", the lover whom Antoine had seen embracing his mother in the streets of Paris 20 years before. Madame Doinel, we learn, died while Antoine was in military prison. Even though their encounter is quite pleasant, Antoine bites down on his sandwich in sorrowful anger when Monsieur Lucien insists, with a blindness that would do credit to Doinel senior, that "she loved you bizarrely perhaps, but she did love you" (Avant-Scène 254 48). His mother has been in the ground for more than a decade, but her admirers are still trying to convince Antoine that she truly cared. In film after film we see the same elements reappearing: philandering heroes whose obsessive love for women is constantly undermined by childhood-rooted doubts; strong women and weak men; the joys of quotidian existence precariously balanced over an abyss of cosmic uncertainty. As it was in the beginning--childhood
--, so shall it be in the end--adulthood--, and all because the Truffautian hero is constitutionally incapable of convincing himself of the one lie that would make his life bearable: that he was loved by his mother.
Notes to Chapter Two

1. Onscreen evidence of this particular aspect of Truffaut's background is perhaps most evident in *La Chambre verte*, a brooding, literary film about a middle-aged journalist in the 1920s who spends most of his time in the cemetery, mourning his late wife and his friends killed in the war. Because of its love for the written word and rather odd obsession with the Great War (a disproportionate emphasis which one also finds in *Jules et Jim*), the film's concerns would seem at first glance to be more "mainstream" than they actually are. Hints of this fascination with funereal masonry can also be observed in *L'Homme qui aimait les femmes* and *L'Amour en fuite*.

2. Mirella Jona Affron's brief introduction to the published screenplay of *Le Dernier métro* observes that "Truffaut...bad wanted the adventures of the young Antoine Doinel to be served by 'a thousand details of his adolescence that were tied to the period of the Occupation, but the film's budget and the spirit of the 'New Wave' were not compatible with the notion of a 'period film'." (The Last Metro 3)

3. While all parties seem to have found the experience agreeable, script collaborations between Truffaut and his co-scenarists have typically been perceived in radically different ways. While the director made a point of giving most of the credit to his associates, they in turn insisted on the paramount importance of Truffaut's input. Such authorial claims as "I have never written a shooting script" (Letters 144), should
therefore be taken with a grain of salt. Jean Gruault, for instance, one of the director's favourite screenwriters, explained how he would write the dialogue following the film-maker's instructions, after which Truffaut would re-write it, substituing his own words for Gruault's (Le Roman 60). Nowhere is the director's influence more profound and all-permeating than it is in the novelization of Les 400 coups. Ostensibly written by Blows' scenarist Marcel Moussy as a solo effort, this book contains scenes that aren't in the movie but which nonetheless seem thematically appropriate to the then-unrealized Doinel cycle. In particular, the scene where the psychologist berates Madame Doinel for her lack of maternal affection reads like a scene that was devoutly wished by an author other than Moussy.

5. Of all Truffaut's relatives, the hardest to "read" in her onscreen incarnations is his maternal grandmother. As we have already seen, she demanded the same unnatural silence from him that his mother did. On the other hand, she also inspired the young Truffaut with her love of literature and, if Les 400 coups in a reliable record in this respect, perhaps even saved him from the abortionist's needle. Also on the positive side is the novel on bigotry which Truffaut's grandmother reputedly wrote but lacked the courage to publish. This portrait becomes even more complex when it includes the horrific grandmother in L'Argent de poche, the vicious old woman who conspires with her daughter to physically mistreat her grandson. This "team work" can't help but remind us uncomfortably of the parallel silent treatments that the
director allegedly suffered at the hands of his own female relatives. While this scenario could well be pure fiction, with equal ease it could also be the "Freudian slip" exposing the unexpressed horrors that Truffaut hinted he'd kept hidden from outside eyes.
CHAPTER THREE: LOVE OF FILM

From earliest childhood till the day he died, cinema was employed by Truffaut as a buffer against "life". As a youthful viewer, it transported him from the prisonhouse of youth to the free air of adulthood. Then, as a highly influential Parisian film critic, movies permitted Truffaut to earn his living doing something he loved. Finally, as a professional cineaste, the director was able to meld what he loved onscreen with what he had experienced himself in a manner which was meaningful to others and which served to insulate him further from the more painful aspects of quotidian existence. As one chronicler observed, "Truffaut's early film-going experiences were flavored by what we might call 'sinema': not only were his excursions into the darkness clandestine, they were also accompanied by a growing awareness of sexuality." (Insdorf 15)

It is Truffaut's reviewing years that remain most controversial. Although he devoted the better part of the years 1973 - 1975 to the composition of The Films in My Life, it was during the seven years preceding the release of Les 400 coups that his critical career can truly be said to have unfolded. After that, his writing was essentially a string of elegaic tributes paid to fallen heroes. Throughout the
1950s, he was almost universally regarded as the "deadliest" of film critics, being temporarily banned from the Cannes Film Festival on account of his uncompromising views.

His early film aesthetics were motivated by a sort of romantic anarchism. He defiantly declared, "J'ai une méfiance totale à l'égard des groupements humains, de l'homme au pluriel... En revanche, j'ai un amour très grand de l'homme au singulier." (Panne 30)

Such sentiments could not help but arouse controversy in advanced French film circles where the Stalinism of the Liberation era had not yet been supplanted. Compared to Bazin's Christian socialist views, Truffaut's attitudes could at times seem almost fascist. They were not, however, and posterity has confirmed his positions more often than not.

According to fellow critic/film-maker Eric Rohmer, Truffaut was the best stylist of all the writers connected to Cahiers du cinema. What's more, he was more Stendhalian than Balzacian, despite the critic's pronounced preference for the latter author. (Le Roman 20 - 21)

Even more tellingly, the current generation of Cahiers critics has argued that it wasn't until after the publication of "Une certaine tendance du cinéma français" that the magazine "naissent comme courant d'opinion et comme école." (Cahiers du cinéma 365 ("Les Journalades": I)

Ironically, it is that particular article which contributes most strongly to both Truffaut's positive critical reputation and to the lingering suspicion that he was, at bottom, a reactionery. To synthesize this seemingly
unresolvable snarl of contradictions, one must consider many things, including the author's past and future, the general thrust of his critical writings, his association with Andre Bazin, and his "unmediated" relationship to classical French film and literature. To attempt to interpret its meaning within a narrower frame of reference is a formula for misunderstanding.

John Hess does precisely that in "La Politique des Auteurs", a two-part article originally published in Jump Cut. "As a result of their cultural and social milieu, the auteur critics came to value the spiritual dimension of life more than participation in society," he argues (Hess I 19). Even worse.

La politique des auteurs was, in fact, a justification couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in the years immediately after the war....
(Hess I 19)

Cahiers du cinema, it seems, was a house organ where the "disciples" were far worse than the "prophet":

...while Bazin was more interested in the mutual interdependence of all things and the revelation of the divine order in the world, the auteur critics were more concerned with the transcendence and salvation of the individual. (Hess I 20)
To be fair, a close reading of Truffaut's famous article would seem to confirm even Hess's harshest judgements. The young critic takes his betes noires, screenwriters Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, to task for, amongst other things, loading their scripts with "blasphemy", "obscenity" and pacifist sentiment. He is particularly incensed by their decision to stick the words "When one is dead, everything is dead" at the end of their unproduced screenplay of Georges Bernanos's Journal d'un curé de campagne in place of the author's, "What does it matter, all is grace." Elsewhere, he condemns them for placing too many swear words into a single script, and he implicitly disapproves of the authors' tendency to intrude their own anti-militarist ideology into whatever scenario they happen to be working on at the time. Truffaut sneers, "They behave, vis-a-vis the scenario, as if they thought to reeducate a delinquent by finding him a job" (Nichols 229).

In the preceding passage, one finds the very personal key to Truffaut's dislike for Aurenche and Bost and the "cinema of quality" for which he felt they stood. Being basically an uneducated rive droite boy himself, Truffaut did not take kindly to being lectured on the evils of the bourgeoisie by writers whose bourgeois credentials were incomparably more impeccable than his own. After being ignored by mother and grandmother, betrayed by father, talked down to by teachers, and bullied by superior officers, he bitterly resented being told how to think. On the political level, what he rejected
in Aurenche and Bost was not their "radicalism", but, rather, their liberal bien pensant oversimplifications and sentimentalities.

Because Truffaut loved literature with the same fervour with which he adored film, he was implacably hostile to the mongrelization of either beloved medium. "When they hand in their scenario," the critic complained, "the film is done; the metteur-en-scene, in their eyes, is the gentleman who adds the pictures to it and it's true, alas!" (Nichols 233) When Truffaut chides Aurenche and Bost for being "literary" rather than "men of the cinema", he is really attacking their lack of "life". He wrote:

Aurenche and Bost were unable to make The Diary of a Country Priest because Bernanos was alive. Bresson declared that were Bernanos alive he would have taken more liberties. Thus, Aurenche and Bost are annoyed because someone is alive, but Bresson is annoyed because he is dead. (Nichols 228)

Truffaut also inveighs against the existence of "unfilmable scenes". He was far from certain that "these scenes, decreed unfilmable, would be so for everyone" (Nichols 227). From the vantage point of the 1990s, it seems probable that the "blasphemy" the critic most objected to was the desecration of the "host" (i.e. the original literary text).

Even during this most vitriolic stage of his career, though, Truffaut still preferred to praise what he loved more than damn what he hated. In "The Rogues are Weary", another
Cahiers article from the '50s, he celebrated the writer/director’s freedom to "replace scenes and dialogue typical of what scriptwriters produce with scenes and dialogue that a scriptwriter could never dream up" (Hillier 28).

Perhaps because he was over-compensating for his perceived lack of formal academic training, Truffaut's opinions ultimately proved more influential than those of his university-educated peers:

It is well known that the New Wave developed along much the same lines as Truffaut prescribed. What is less known is that, of all those who were to form the group, he alone had clearly and concisely enunciated the principles over the preceding years. (Crisp 16)

C.G. Crisp's emphasis on Truffaut's intellectual seriousness is matched and counterpointed by James Monaco's reminder of his political courage and integrity:

...it has been the received opinion that Godard is the only political intelligence of the New Wave.

Yet it was Truffaut, not Godard, who spent time in the brig for deserting from the army; Truffaut who in 1960 signed "Le manifeste des 121" organized by Sartre, which urged French soldiers to desert rather than fight against the Algerian people; and Truffaut who in 1968 organized the events of May. Truffaut did have political sentiments, even if they were not overtly displayed in his films. (Monaco 39)

What Truffaut could not abide, on the other hand, was
abstract allegiance to abstract causes. For him, people had faces; they were never "the People".

Indeed, it was Godard's treatment of individuals, rather than his Maoist ideological affiliations, that prompted Truffaut's public rupture with his former friend and colleague. Reacting angrily to an insulting request for money, Truffaut charged in a famous letter:

...you're the Ursula Andress of militancy, you make a brief appearance, just enough time for the cameras to flash, you make two or three duly startling remarks and then you disappear again, trailing clouds of self-serving mystery. Opposed to you are the small men, from Bazin to Edmond Maire and taking in Sartre, Bunuel, Queneau, Mendes-France, Rohmer and Audiberti, who ask others how they're getting on, who help them fill out a social security form, who reply to their letters--what they have in common is the capacity to think of others rather than themselves and above all to be more interested in what they do than in what they are or what they appear to be. (Letters 390)

Reflected in this complaint is the memory of the time when Truffaut himself needed help and of the man who so unstintingly provided it. Whatever paternalistic tendencies might have existed in Truffaut were always counter-balanced by this freely acknowledged debt. Thus, he wrote in the introduction to Andre Bazin's posthumously published study of Jean Renoir, of his inability to speak "dispassionately" of the text, admitting that it was "quite natural that I should feel that Jean Renoir by Andre Bazin is the best book on the
cinema, written by the best critic, about the best director.” (Jean Renoir 7)

In Truffaut’s mind, the line between creators and their creations was not always distinct. Personal authenticity was of paramount importance even when the critic did not share the artist’s beliefs. Truffaut respected the faith of Georges Bernanos: in the same way that he “blessed” the orthodoxy of John Ford. Unlike many atheists, he had no wish to proselytize his lack of faith. What mattered to him, was that a creator believed in something and remained true to his own vision. For him, the “cinema of quality” was as “soulless” as the middlebrow Hollywood “blockbuster”.

Interestingly enough, while he had no qualms about berating Aurenche and Bost for their anti-militarist “propaganda”, both Jules et Jim and La Chambre verte are informed by an almost visceral hatred of World War One. Similarly, the heroines of both Tirez sur le pianiste and Une belle fille comme moi are far more foul-mouthed than any of the female protagonists found in Bost and Aurenche’s screenplays. One likewise looks in vain for a “transcendent” religious image in any of Truffaut’s films.

These contradictions lead one to agree that, as a critic Truffaut might have been “virulent and outspoken”, but “as a film-maker he reveals a totally different side of his personality” (Armes 127).

Of course, this “flip-flop” has led some theorists to conclude that the director eventually degenerated into a latterday practitioner of “le cinema de papa”. Nevertheless,
despite his admiration for American movies, Truffaut never disowned the Popular Front "patrimony" that he inherited from the French film-makers of the 1930s.

It is probably not coincidental that the film-maker's least successful movies were those that most slavishly followed the formulae of Alfred Hitchcock. Truffaut's "Hollywood" model. *La Mariée était en noir* and *Une belle fille comme moi* seem like disastrous imitations when set beside a thoroughly "Gallicized" policier like *Tirez sur le pianiste*. That latter film owes more to the bleak poetry of Marcel Carne and Jean-Pierre Melville than it does to any "hard-boiled" American source novel.

On the other hand, Truffaut was never particularly enraptured by the notion of "poverty row" film-making, not even during the formative years of the Nouvelle Vague. Unlike Godard, he would never walk down the Champs Elysées with a hand held microphone in search of "natural" sound. He shot his first feature in *Dyaliscopée*, even though the then still-standard square ratio would have been more economical. In fact, it's easy to see *Les 400 coups* as the sort of film Jean Vigo might have made if the budget for *Zero de conduite* (1931) had been larger.

Formally, though, it was the second film that re-educated "audiences to the aesthetic possibilities of mixed genre and disruption of tone" (Braudy 4). Of *Les 400 coups*, Annette Insdorf adds:

The camera is alive and nervous.
reflecting the characters' personalities. The style is therefore as desirous of freedom as the individuals. The word that comes to mind is one of Andre Gide's favorite terms—disponibilité—a palpable freedom of the character, camera, and film itself to go where they like. (Insdorf 24)

Many of the film's most memorable characters—the passer-by who talks to Charlie's brother about his love life, the female violinist whose audition with Lars Schmeel is not successful, the aged mother who drops dead when her gangster son swears a false oath on her name—are completely unnecessary from an Aristotelean point of view; indeed, they are almost as extraneous as individual audience members. If the film never seems "difficult", it is because its populist sentiments can't bear to leave anyone out of the "joke". If a former vagabond can find his way to culture, the logic implicitly runs, then so can anyone.

In Jules et Jim, Truffaut's third feature, most of Raoul Coutard's most playful hand-held shots are contained by the film's first half hour; after that, the cinematography becomes more conventional while the editing, if anything, becomes more complex. Truffaut confessed that he feared he would die during this shoot, and that the montage was too complex to be completed by anyone but himself. (Letters 125) His feeling towards the project were probably best expressed when he said, "un film c'est un bébé qu'on protège jusqu'au bout." (Desjardins 53)

Complaining that he'd "never been able to understand
flashbacks" (Letters 144), Truffaut looked for subtler, less intrusive means to mark the passage of time, especially when it came to recording the ageing process. Although more than 20 years of "real time" elapses in Jules et Jim, the characters' hair is never whitened. Instead, Jean Gruault came up with the inspired idea of placing Picasso canvases from different periods conspicuously in the frame. (Gillain 121)

Subsequent controversies over Truffaut's stylistic innovations would be few and far between. Aside from different-lengthed versions of Les Deux Anglaises et le continent, some with the director's own voice-over and some without, and the use of so much archival footage in L'Amour en fuite, few of the later films' formal elements invite prolonged debate.

For a film-maker so steeped in world cinema, Truffaut's use of film quotation is remarkably restrained. The similarities between Les 400 coups and Zero de conduite, for example, are more "spiritual" than exact.

The apartment building in Domicile conjugale is an equally discreet homage, this one to Jean Renoir's "courtyard" films of the 1930s, notably Le Crime de M. Lange (1935). None of the characters, it should be understood, were cut from the cloth of the previous film; even the "borrowed" ambience is more of an echo than a precise reconstruction.

Such copying was not necessary in Truffaut's case. As we have already seen, his co-scenarists were filled with admiration for the film-maker's "fictional" powers, even if
he tended to disparage them.

In a similar fashion, the director professed not to understand what made him "tick":

Bruno Bettelheim explains that, with food one has the same relationship as with one's mother, and I really believe that's the case with me. The fact remains that an hour after a meal I am incapable of saying what I ate. It's the same thing in my work, since, in twenty years, I have failed to discover the recipe that would enable me to make nothing but good films. (Letters 518)

Nevertheless, a Truffaut "recipe" was recognized in almost all his films, the bad as well as the good. As John Simon wrote, "Truffaut is not a comic filmmaker at all: his best efforts are, always, serious films laced with comic touches" (Something to Declare 33). Elsewhere, Stanley Kauffmann opined that "for those committed to the auteur theory of film criticism...their response to all future Truffaut films is already pretty well formulated and awaits only details of plot" (Kauffmann 255).

That there is a definite mood in Truffaut films is beyond dispute, and that mood is bittersweet. To recall the director's motion pictures is to mentally match parallel sets of happy and sad images. In Tirez sur le pianiste, for instance, memories of Charlie and Lena's first night together are tenderly conveyed by means of a subtle rhythm of cuts and dissolves that manages to reproduce the sensations of lovers' talk and sleep; a more staccato montage pattern is employed...
to reproduce the high-spirited camaraderie of their comic abduction by "Groucho Marxist" gangsters. Conversely, the deaths of both Lena and Theresa, Charlie's first wife, employ long shots to emphasize tragedy. Both are condensed into the final haunting close-up of the pianist's "thousand yard stare" into the ruins of his own life; Charlie's "timidity" is karmically fated to bring death to those whom he most loves, and the piano player's eyes let us know that he knows it. This is the "flip" side to the film's playfulness. Tragic mortality is not "a fortuitous encounter"; neither does it represent "the possibility of an acquaintance that will never be realized" (Insdorf 24). It is, rather, the ultimate "spoiler".

In no subsequent film would the difference between the hedonistic and the solemn be so sharply juxtaposed. Not even Jules et Jim's sashay from turn-of-the-century Parisian frolic to double suicide during the early days of the Nazi regime is quite so jarring in this regard. Still, diluted though it might be, this unique tincture of dark and light is found in most of the director's later films. L'Histoire d'Adele H and Vivement dimanche are somewhat anomalous in their determination to split the Truffautian "isotope".

The mixture persists even in pictures as superficially frivolous as Baisers volés. Antoine's picaresque adventures with jobs and women are foregrounded against a rather sad world. One of the fledgling detective's employers is a humourless racist who defends Hitler against "slander". His
vile opinions, however, do nothing to impede his material success. Elsewhere, a heartbroken homosexual becomes violent in the detective agency when he learns that his former boyfriend has not only betrayed him but actually married a woman. Christine, Antoine’s future wife, is persistently followed by a sinister-looking man in a trenchcoat.

When Andre, the older detective who initiated Antoine into the mysteries of “sleuthing”, dies, an older colleague opines:

You know, when my grandfather died... I felt terrible. My cousin too... she was crying her eyes out... Well, right after dessert, we went up to the attic together and I laid her right there... on the floor... Since then I’ve often thought about it. Making love after death is like a way of compensating... as if you need to prove that you still exist. (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 156)

Even if sex is self-valorizing, it is also dangerous. A military instructor likens mine detection to handling a girl. When it isn’t dangerous, it’s usually distant. Fabienne Tabard will “submit” to Antoine only once, “for a few hours.” A prostitute will not allow a recently demobilized soldier to either kiss her or stroke her hair.

Summarizing his “alter ego’s” character, Truffaut wrote:

Antoine proceeds in life like an orphan and looks for foster families, but once he has found them, he tends to run away, for he remains by nature an escapist. Doinel does not openly
oppose society (and in this respect he is not a revolutionary), but he is wary of it and goes his own way, on the outskirts of society. (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 12)

Again we are reminded of John Hess's assault on Truffaut's aesthetic position: "An auteur was a film director who expressed an optimistic image of human potentialities, within an utterly corrupt society" (Hess II 20). Seen from this perspective, Nouvelle Vague film-makers were essentially latterday dandies pursuing their own exquisite destinies against a sordid backdrop of bourgeois acquisitiveness and proletarian stupidity. But is such a description truly applicable to a director like Truffaut?

His own origins were "common", while he seems to regard his "alter ego's" lack of revolutionary fervor as a socially explicable fault. In his universe, "human potentiality" is thwarted at every turn by random fatality. Even the myriad joys of life are essentially compensations for the unavoidable finality of death.

What's more, the same driven family circle seems to be described in one motion picture after another:

...en cinq films, Francois Truffaut met en scène un homme, une femme--et un enfant--qui se rencontrent, se prennent de tendresse, se connaissent et se disloquent. Humilis, tous solitaires ou poursuivis par leur passé, par les autres, par une fatalité originelle dont ils ne parviennent pas à se défaire, ils recherchent un secret depuis l'origine, mais il ne se souviennent que de
If Truffaut did not despair of his characters, it was because he felt that all their shortcomings could be explained by the sufferings of their formative characters. On the other hand, there is no indication that he felt psychoanalytical discovery might result in liberating insight. His films are intrinsically fatalistic, though never smugly or judgementally so.

This "double vision" was memorably recorded by Claude Berri in "L'Ami définitif", his affectionate memoir of his late friend. François, he said, first fell in love with your films, then he fell in love with you, then he fell in love with your family: "il aimait les familles des autres" (Le Roman 126). Similarly, while he professed not to believe in the romantic couple, he was deeply saddened by Berri's own marital difficulties (Le Roman 127).

If Truffaut was a pessimist, his pessimism was seemingly incapable of growing "scar tissue". The "optimism" that Hess perceived in his work was actually something far more complex.

As it was before the camera, so it was behind. Only those emotional crises which affected Truffaut most profoundly could expect to be fictionally reproduced on screen. When the director once professed to love the city and countryside in F.W. Murnau's Sunrise more than any place he had physically visited, he was grossly oversimplifying his own response patterns (Crisp 9). To prefer one fictional place to another
is to draw the parallel between itself and a "real life" model. Paris was his city, and his friends and family were his "people", even if he preferred to encounter them primarily in fictional disguises. Indeed, it could probably fairly be said that Truffaut knew everyone in his films, even the protagonists with Balzacian origins. *La Comedie humaine*, after all, teems with thousands of characters, while the director's pre-occupations centered on very few. For Truffaut, making movies was a way of synthesizing what he consumed as a reader/viewer with what he absorbed as a human being. Much of the charm of his work consists in precisely this refusal to distinguish between the "real" and the "imaginary", the pedantic distinctions that so obsess bureaucratic minds of the P'tite Feuille variety. If political commitment played no part in this artistic fusing, that was probably because political involvement for Truffaut was a duty rather than a pleasure, and his cinema is pre-eminently a cinema of both pleasure and of those negative forces which compel pleasure not to be. In the next chapter, we will see how literature was as much a part of the cineaste's universe as were childhood and film. Truffaut, after all, was both critic and creator, father and child. Although he might have changed as he developed as an artist and a person, it was seemingly not part of his makeup to repudiate any stage of his evolution. Like a photomontage, he was the sum of his parts.
Notes on Chapter Three

1. Truffaut was fond of cinematic quotation, but it was seldom central to his narrative technique. Antoine Doinel's double-take when he spots M. Hulot, Jacques Tati's famous comic character, in a train station, for instance, is just one of Domicile conjugale's throwaway gags. Even Julie Christie's double role in Fahrenheit 451, though obviously meant to remind us of the good and bad Marias in Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1926), can be appreciated in its entirety without reference to the earlier film. If anything, self-quotation is employed even less obtrusively. The young man who buys a record in L'Amour en fuite was the same actor who played Charlie's youngest brother in Tirez sur le pianiste (Gillain 385). Stanley Kauffmann suspected that the Saroyan farmhouse was used again in La Sirene de la Mississippi (Kauffmann 255 - 256).
CHAPTER FOUR: LOVE OF LITERATURE

Huit films de Truffaut sont nés de livres. De huit livres? Non. Beaucoup plus. (Fanne 66)

Though cinema was his *metier*, Truffaut loved books as much as he loved movies. Robert Lachenay recalled how his friend would purchase many copies of favourite volumes, a practice which is the closest possible equivalent to seeing favourite features over and over again (Le Roman 11). The director reputedly preferred "spiritual" to "physical" adventures all his life. Even on his deathbed he read Simone de Beauvoir's *La Ceremonie des Adieux*, occasionally pausing from his perusal of this account of the last days of the dying Sartre to quote the late philosopher's dictum that "every man who thinks himself indispensable is a bastard" (Le Roman 58 - 59).

In offhand ways, references to many authors were worked into Truffaut's scripts. The hero of *Fahrenheit 451*, following the custom of the film's "book people", assumes the persona of "Edgar Poe". Goethe's *Elective Affinities* played a key role in creating a triangular situation between Jules, Jim and Catherine, not only thematically, but as a something-to-be-borrowed pretext for hopping into bed. Antoine Doinel ruefully explains how he was "duped" into joining the army by reading *Military Servitude* and *Greatness*. Ten years later, in *L'Amour en fuite*, his perusal of Colette will lead him to
suspect that his wife is having a lesbian affair with her best friend. Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* is mentioned en passant in *Le Dernier métro*, while one of that film's central incidents, the physical chastisement of the fascist critic Daxiat by the Resistance actor Bernard, was inspired by a passage in Jean Marais' memoirs. *La Sirène de la Mississippi*’s dust jacket makes a cameo appearance in *Baisers volés*, a full year before he turned that novel into a film. Although his own films were noted for their sexual modesty, in *The Films in My Life*, Truffaut lavishly praised the "scandalous" writings of Henry Miller and Jean Genet. American humourist William Saroyan provided the last name for the hero of *Tirez sur le pianiste*, perhaps because both men, like star Charles Aznavour, were of Armenian descent. Truffaut claimed there was "a 'Thousand and One Nights' side to *L'Amour en fuite*" (Gillain 385), while he consciously patterned the sisters in *Les Deux anglaises et le continent* after Charlotte and Emily Bronte.

Even when no direct comparisons present themselves, it is often easier to find a literary parallel for the emotions evoked by a particular film than it is to unearth a cinematic one. The bittersweet, anti-climactic tone of *L'Amour en fuite*, for example, has more in common with *Clea*, the concluding volume of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, than it does with any film that I know of.

Truffaut was much more tight-mouthed about his critical influences than he was about his literary enthusiasm. Although Andre Bazin remained his ideal of what a film critic
should be, the film-maker somewhat perversely professed to find American reviewers superior to their French counterparts, "perhaps because they were well paid" (The Films in My Life 9).

Clarity of communication and the promotion of culture were ingredients as central to the director's work as was the search for love (Desjardins 45).

When Truffaut adapted a literary property, his aim was not only to make a good film, but to get the viewers to love the source material as much as he did (Desjardins 47). While novels were generally preferred for this purpose, L'Histoire d'Adèle H, L'Enfant sauvage, and even L'Homme qui aimait les femmes were all distilled from private journals. Perhaps because it reeked of P'tite Feuille's pedantic methods, poetry was not a medium that the film-maker took to.

He was, however, immensely fond of American "hardboiled" fiction:

Chaque fois que j'ai approché un écrivain de Série noire, j'ai été impressionné par sa modestie, son professionalisme mais aussi sa tristesse. Il y a souvent quelque chose de désespiré et de fatal dans la destinée d'un romancier qui gagne sa vie en racontant des histoires criminelles. (Gillain 420)

A close comparison of Down There, the 1956 David Goodis novel with the Huysmanesque title, and Tirez sur le pianiste, the tonally different motion picture culled from a quintessentially American text, affords us numerous
opportunities to observe the ways in which the film-maker "Gallicized" his work. To begin with, he likened it to "a fairy tale by Perrault" (Gillain 112 - 113). Precisely because he is the hero of a fairy tale, Charlie Kohler is much less of a pedigreed man of violence than is Edward Webster Lynn, Goodis's more roughly hewn protagonist. Charlie suffers from the conviction that a fatal moment of indecision on his part led directly to his wife's suicide, and worries that a Zolaesque "family taint" might have pre-disposed him towards criminality, while "Eddie" Lynn's doubts are more firmly grounded.¹ He saw action in Burma "with Merrill's Marauders" (Goodis 70), killing Japanese soldiers and being wounded three times himself, and his wife's suicide prompted him to become a notoriously vicious barroom brawler in Hell's Kitchen (Goodis 82 -83). The "elimination of Lynn's war service" makes "killing more alien" (Braudy 6). It also "justifies" the hero's self-pity, a quality refreshingly absent from Tirez sur le pianiste. In a similar vein, Goodis's take on Lena is much bleaker than his cinematic adapter's would be. She'd stab "roosters where it really hurts" with a hatpin when they pressed in too close (Goodis 13). The original cast of Plyne is likewise a much coarser model, stupider, meaner, and absurdly obsessed with defects in his physical appearance. A note of alcoholic self-pity hangs like a blanket over everyone, especially the pianist himself:

The wild man was gone, annihilated by two old hulks who didn't know they were still in there pitching, the
dull-eyed shrugging mother and the easy smiling, booze-guzzling father (Goodis 87).

Tirez sur le pianiste's bittersweet tone is arrived at by eliminating Goodis's rather ponderous depression, and replacing it with lightness, humour, dexterity, sympathy for everyone, and an iron fist of fatality concealed in the velvet glove of form.

In *Down There*, we find only one comic scene. When a gangster complains that a slow motion procession of smart-talking seven year olds is interrupting the smooth flow of Eddie and Lena's kidnapping, he growls "Goddam juvenile delinquents," to which Lena drily replies, "Yes, it's quite a problem" (Goodis 60). Even here, though, the tone is much more caustic than the one employed throughout Truffaut's film.

Elsewhere, the contrast is even more pronounced. When Eddie's brother runs head-first into a lamp post, he is not rescued by a goodnatured pater familias eager to discuss the erotic nature of the local girls. Similarly, Eddie's enemies are not high-spirited, childlike clowns, and Lena is so cool with men she might well be a lesbian. Their bad ends seem less tragic than those suffered by Truffaut's cinematic equivalents, because their capacity for happiness is so much more limited.

Age probably had a lot to do with this difference in outlook. Although he was still in his late 20s when he made this film, the director suggested that the true subject of *Tirez sur le pianiste* was "the feeling of approaching the age
fifty" (Crisp 44). Charles Aznavour was cast as Charlie not because of his Armenian ancestry, but because he was "the only French artist between 30 and 40...with the weight of 10 adult years behind him...a man from nowhere" (Gillain 114).

Aznavour enjoyed the added advantage of "being vulnerable without being a victim" (Gillain 114). This combination of characteristics connected him to Humphrey Bogart, the epitome of Hollywood nostalgia in every sense of the word. Jean-Paul Belmondo, it should be remembered, was similarly obsessed with that noirish actor, a fact not unconnected to Truffaut's authorship of the original story.

Perhaps because he'd been raised initially by his grandmother and had educated himself primarily by means of precocious reading, he always felt older than he was. At age 29 he intuitively understood David Goodis, an author who was both hopelessly alcoholic and almost fifty by the time *Down There* was published.

On the other hand, *Tirez sur le pianiste* is also a very "youthful" film, and its perennial qualities are best expressed by its sense of "play". "All I wanted was the pleasure of mixing things together," the director claimed, "to see whether or not they were miscible." (Braudy 125) One critic likened the film's construction to "free jazz" (Insdorf 24). In a sense the film is nothing but a series of "riffs", improvised passages played off the novel's original "score".

In this way, Truffaut manages to remain faithful to Goodis, while "playing" him in a totally different "key".
Thus, the "film" Plyne turns on Lena for betraying his naively medieval notions of female purity instead of simply defending his self-image as a brutal athlete. Goodis's piano player is quite capable of defeating Plyne with his fists—an affront the bouncer feels compelled to avenge with death—while Charlie Kohler's mortal wounding of this tormented brawler is a desperate and karmically-determined act of self defence. Indeed, Charlie's very name is ironic, since Kohler is a homonym for colère, the French word for anger, and whatever other emotions the piano player might show, rage isn't one of them. Even in small ways, Charlie is more passive than Eddie. Both piano players cover their brothers escape by spilling a stack of empty beer crates in the gangsters' path, but Truffaut's hero pretends he didn't while Goodis's protagonist doesn't bother.

Charlie is also more sensitive than Eddie. When he belatedly interposes himself between Plyne and Lena, it is primarily because he fears the bouncer's "badmouthing" of his girl might somehow result in Lena's death, just as Theresa's self-description as "a soiled rag" immediately preceded her suicide. History will repeat itself, of course; all Charlie's brief career as a "man of action" accomplishes is the death of Plyne, a tragicomic buffoon. Lena will die anyway.

In a fine stroke of irony, Truffaut's "happiest" film concludes with his saddest ending. Whether slow or fast, the picture's editing rhythms are equally capable of conveying tenderness or horror, joie de vivre or tragedy. Music—which, for once, the director decides to put in the same
artistic "league" as literature and cinema--transmits the same mixed message. Edouard Saroyan's gift for classical piano first fulfills his potential, then it shatters his happiness. Honky tonk tunes in a lowlife bar at first provide solace, but in the final scene, after Lena's death, those same piano keys will fall like mocking prison bars. This dichotomy is duplicated by the film's two "popular" songs--the bouncy, Rabelaisian Bobby Lapointe ballad about carefree lechery, and the soulful Felix Leclerc chanson about love and commitment. That the first of these is bellowed in a crowded cafe, while the second emerges from a car radio in a lonely winter landscape is as significant as the different emphases given to the film's theme song.

The "liberties" that Truffaut took with Goodis's text, an author then still living, showed that in matters of adaptation he was true to the spirit of Bresson, rather than to that of Aurenche and Bost, the hated scriptwriters who would only "mess" with the works of the dead. Still, much as he admired Goodis and other American "tough guy" writers, they were not as central to his artistic world view as were the novels of certain French authors. His admiration for Henri-Pierre Roche and--especially--Honore de Balzac approached idolatry. He could never transmute their writings with such playful insouciance.

For some reason Truffaut never made a screen version of one of Balzac's books, but his ineradicable passion for this other was reflected by his incessant use of Balzacian quotation, first as a critic, and then as a cineaste. While
much of this enthusiasm might have been generated by
"objective" appreciation of the great 19th century novelist's
literary gifts, we know from the film-maker's letters that his
sense of association with Balzac ran deeper than that.

No such spiritual kinship bound him to the author of
**Jules et Jim** and **Les Deux anglaises et le continent**. His
unbounded admiration for these particular texts in no way
inclined him sympathetically towards their creator:

> Je ne me sens pas d'affinités profondes avec Roche, sans doute pour un raison fondamentale: il était né riche, et il ne pouvait donc aborder la vie et les problèmes humains avec l'attitude qui est celle de gens comme Jean-Pierre...ou moi-même. (Gillain 283)

Although Truffaut went so far as to cull **L'Homme qui aimait les femmes** from Roche's private journals, what he felt for the man himself consisted of mixed envy and contempt, perhaps because the privileged author's "mother problems" seemed, to Truffaut, to be on the opposite end of the emotional spectrum. Where the director had been "neglected", Roche had been "smothered". Too much maternal love was as unforgivable a luxury as too much money.

In marked contrast to this "arm's length" attitude, Truffaut delighted in finding parallels between his own life and that of Honore de Balzac. To Robert Lachenay, he once wrote:

What is it you find fault with in my
love life? I may lack Balzac's genius, but my love life is just as complicated as his, the objects of my affection being either sixteen or forty years old, with a few ambiguous relationships between those two ages; young women of good stock and widows: there's nothing else that matters and how heavenly it is to correspond with them, I could show you a collection of letters like no other! (Letters 48)

Important as women were to Balzac, of course, art was even more important. As Truffaut got older, this became true for him as well, a fact which should not surprise when one considers how the perusal of The Human Comedy seems to have consciously steered the director's subjective experience in certain specific directions. He wrote Robert Lachenay, for example, that if his friend were ever to fall in love with a married woman, Truffaut would promptly send him a copy of Le Lys dans la vallee for guidance and instruction (Letters 52).

That novel, in tandem with La Recherche de l'absolu and La Peau de chagrin, were the works that first addicted the filmmaker-to-be to La Comedie humaine. Antoine Doinel, it should be remembered, was inspired to erect his shrine to Balzac by an enthusiastic reading of La Recherche. The boy's challenge to Pitite Feuille--Entre nous ce sera/dent pour dent/oeil pour oeil--is likewise reminiscent of Rastignac's defiance of Paris in Le Pere Goriot: "A nous deux maintenant!" (Le Pere Goriot: 254)

All of the aforementioned works appeared early in Balzac's career: La Peau de Chagrin in 1831, La Recherche de l'absolu in 1834, Le Pere Goriot in 1835, and Le Lys dans la
vallée in 1836. Even "La Messe de l'athée", Balzac's hymn to professional "spiritual fathership", appeared no later than 1837. The more complicated social novels such as Illusions perdues (1843) seem to have played a much less vital role in the formation of Truffaut's imagination. Initially, it was the early works that counted. Youth reaches out to youth.

That Balzac's childhood was in many ways similar to Truffaut's cannot be denied. It also accounts for the filmmaker's special fondness for La Lys dans la vallée, the most autobiographical of Balzac's fictions, even if it is far from being his best. As Roger Pierrot points out in his introduction to the novel, Felix de Vandenesse was very much a stand-in for his creator:

L'enfance de Félix...est celle de Balzac né à Tours, mis en nourrice, incompromis de sa mère, enfermé dans une triste pension de province, envoyé dans la même institution Lepître à Paris.... (Le Lys dans la vallée xii)

Again and again in that novel, we encounter scenes that read like slightly anachronistic outtakes from Les 400 coups. Felix sighs:

Quelle vanité, pouvais-je blesser.
moi nouveau-né? quelle disgrace physique ou morale me valait la froideur de ma mère? étais-je donc l'enfant du devoir, celui dont la vie est une reproche? Mis en nourrice à la campagne, oublié par ma famille pendant trois ans, quand je revins à la maison paternelle, j'y comptai pour si peu de chose que j'y subissais
Like both Antoine and Truffaut himself, Felix sought surcease from his troubles in books (Le Lys dans la vallée 25). Felix's mother made him feel like a bird under the eye of a serpent (Le Lys dans la vallée 21). Crippled by debts necessitated by his parsimonious allowance, Balzac's "alter ego" was obliged to throw himself on the mercy of strangely familiar parents: "Mon père pencha vers l'indulgence. Mais ma mère fut impitoyable, son œil bleu me petrifiia, elle fulmina des terribles prophéties." (Le Lys dans la vallée 18)

Unlike Truffaut, Balzac had three siblings, but Bernard-François Balzac was not the father of Honore's brother, Henry. That function was carried out by Jean de Margonne, Anne Laure Balzac's lover. By all accounts, Honore's father turned a blind eye to his own cuckolding, just like Antoine's putative sire (Pritchett 25). Again one is met by deafening silence relating to unanswered and unasked questions concerning the director's own paternity.

In any event, Felix de Vandenesse's presence can be felt, albeit with diminishing intensity, in all five sections of the Antoine Doinel saga. Perhaps because of his de facto "orphan" status, Felix was an infinitely more attractive character to Truffaut than was, say, Lucien de Rubempré, the passive hero of Illusions perdues and Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes (1844), a youth whose great physical beauty and charm would open undeserved doors for him that would
never yield to the protagonist of *Les 400 coups*.

Truffaut's abiding fondness for *Le Lys* might well account for Antoine's "salvation" at the hands of "spiritual mothers", in place of fathers. Young Felix is first freed from the horrors of his upbringing by Madame de Mortsauf, a married woman and mother of two who lives unhappily in the country with her vaguely ridiculous aristocratic husband. This novel, it should be remembered, was as much a settling of accounts for Balzac as *Les 400 coups* would be for Truffaut. In the case of the great French novelist, there were no Andre Bazins in his life, only older, well-placed mistresses who advanced his cause in court and elsewhere. Although popular with women, Balzac would never play the role of bourgeois pater familias:

For Balzac, Mme. de Berny became--and was all her life--the Dilecta: the first, most purely and terribly loved (he said), who contained all the elements of woman the artist needs--mother-mistress-sister. The word 'wife' is missing: until the last six months of his life he would not know what a wife was. (Pritchett 67)

How similar these words sound to the expectations of Antoine in *Domicile Conjugale*. To Christine, he says, "You're my little sister, my daughter, my mother," to which his spouse tellingly replies, "I'd hoped to be your wife."

Even in later life, the parallels between Balzac's life and Truffaut's eerily continued. Although technically single until his late marriage to Madame Hanska, Balzac fathered...
several "bastards", an historical circumstance culturally equivalent to the director's divorce-induced separation from his daughters. Even Truffaut's last days with Fanny Ardant beg comparison with Balzac's brief union with Madame Hanska, at least as much as his school days are reminiscent of his literary idol's sufferings among the Oratorian fathers. Because of these perceived similarities, it was only natural that Antoine Doinel should take after Felix Vandenesse.

In his introduction to _Le Lys_, Roger Pierrot points out that the chief difference between Madame de Mortsauf and the Dilecta was that the fictional counterpart was "chaste" (_Le Lys dans la vallée X_). No matter how much this detail is romanticized, it should be kept in mind that Madame de Mortsauf eventually dies from an apparent mixture of jealousy and erotic frustration. Although relatively few years separate her from her platonic admirer, she does everything in her power to imprison their liaison within the conventions of the mother/son relationship. When they are geographically separated for long periods of time, Felix is the one expected to bear the brunt of their correspondence, despite his heavy duties at court. Such lopsided epistolary emphases are typical of the dutiful son's role when "writing home". Even when she grants Felix the unique privilege of calling her "Henriette", this intimacy infantilizes her suitor as much as it empowers him. Its price includes much scolding and "maternal" advice. Essentially, their love affair unfolds in the nursery.

And yet, "Henriette" is perversely jealous. When she
advises her young man to cultivate "influential" older women at court, rather than "egotistical" younger ones, she is surely trying to eliminate beautiful rivals as much as she is practising realpolitik (Le Lys dans la vallée 226 - 227). Her desire to marry Felix off to her own daughter is also transparently seduction by other means (Le Lys dans la vallée 447). The more Henriette must pretend that the artificial rules of this game are genuine, the more her mental health suffers. She tells Felix that she wants to be loved spiritually, like a sister or mother, while her would-be lover replies that he loves her "comme une mère secretement désirée" (Le Lys dans la vallée 259). Later on, after Felix has become physically involved with Lady Dudley, Madame de Mortsauf self-deludingly decides to become her friend, because "Une femme doit aimer la mère de celui qu'elle aime, et je suis votre mère" (Le Lys dans la vallée 362).

Young Monsieur Vandenesse, it cannot be overemphasized, is anything but an unwilling participant in these vaguely Oedipal goings-on. Indeed, he seems to derive more satisfaction from it than does Henriette, despite his on-going complaints. His desire is clearly a wish to return to the womb: "Apres m'ètre assuré que personne ne me voyait, je me plongerai dans ce dos comme un enfant qui se jette dans le sein de la mère, et je baisai toutes ces épaules en y roulant ma tête" (Le Lys dans la vallée 30).

Robert Lachenay has testified to the powerful impression this scene made on his young friend's mind. Clearly, the lack of physical consummation could not help but appeal to a
youthful imagination where carnal desire had not yet been reassessed by the revisionism of experience. This is a theme to which we shall return in the next chapter.

Ironically, when Truffaut conflated Le Lys into one of the sub-plots of Baisers volés, he played its tragedy "for laughs". What's more, he re-distributed the personal characteristics of Madame de Mortsauf and Lady Dudley. Felix's épouse de l'âme and maîtresse de corps (Le Lys dans la vallée 320), with a gleeful abandon that verges on irreverence.

Fabienne Tabard--older than Antoine, wiser, and married to a man very like the Comte de Mortsauf--is first seen speaking English on the telephone, the language of the sensual Lady Dudley. It is she who first offers herself to Antoine, not the younger, stand-offish Christine Darbon. Her husband is as ignorant of his boorishness and bigotry as the Comte de Mortsauf was egotistically blind to the ills that he unwittingly authored (Le Lys dans la vallée 270). Unlike Henriette, though, Fabienne does not feel stifled by her marriage of convenience. Indeed, her decision to sleep with Antoine was annealed by the discovery that the boy was as enamored of Le Lys as she was herself. In both fictional cases, the courtship of the mis-matched lovers is furthered by the exchange of letters, but there the comparison ends. Madame Tabard settles for short term pleasure, while Madame de Mortsauf insists on prolonged and teasing agony to the point of death. Even more strikingly, where Felix's "betrayal" of his chaste sweetheart with the amoral Lady Dudley results in the death of his beloved as well as the blighting
of his marital prospects, Antoine's dalliance with Fabienne finally twiggs Christine's erotic interest, so much so that, by film's end, the young people are engaged to be married.

It is probably pertinent to point out here that Balzacian quotation, though common to Truffaut's oeuvre, is generally even more tangential to the plot than is the case in Baisers volees. Aside from the Antoine Doinel films, it rises to prominence only in La Peau douce. Thus, since the same characters are constantly crossing paths in the Doinel saga, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that the director intended these five motion pictures to constitute his own mini-Comedie humaine:

As we have already seen, the film-maker's passion for Roche was considerably cooler than was his love for Balzac. On the other hand, the services he provided that lesser writer were considerably more assiduous. Claiming to admire the "prodigious refinement" that permitted Roche to employ the "vocabulary of a peasant" (Gillain 436), Truffaut was well aware of the temperamental complexities of their "collaboration". When making Jules et Jim, for instance, he was a 29 year old film-maker with the "effrontery" to adapt the first novel of a septuagenarian (Desjardins 52 - 53).

Fortunately, this "generation gap" proved bridgeable, partially thanks to the director's precocious sense of impending mortality, and partially because he responded strongly to Roche's "delicious", pain-free descriptions of sex (Gillain 436).
**Jules et Jim** is a novel about a turn-of-the-century love affair between two men and one woman, while **Les Deux anglaises et le continent**, Roche's second novel, is the tale of a liaison between two women and one man. That they collectively constitute a sort of diptych goes without saying, and Truffaut is so aware of this fact he freely transfers scenes from one book to the other. At times, he even inserts brief snippets of biography and autobiography. Pauline Kael was quite right when she worried that Truffaut might "be out of his depth" in the second novel, "that he would be caught between Roche's reminiscences and his own" (Reeling 42 - 43).

Even so, these books are so picaresque they needed a great deal of cinematic pruning. During the opening chapters of **Jules et Jim**, for example, the text's eponymous heroes encounter a much wider selection of potential female companions than the film can comfortably include. Thus, it is Odile rather than Catherine who brandishes the vitriol in Roche's novel. Most of these women make brief appearances, but their images are sharply etched: "Lucie était une beauté gothique ... Fille de grande bourgeoisie, elle étudiait la peinture" (**Jules et Jim** 15). In the book, as well as in the film, Gilberte is Jim's long-suffering mistress, but in the former instance it is with Michele that he hopes to have a child. As "apron-string-bound" as Roche, the literary Jim can't receive women at home because he still lives with his mother, while Jules's female parent--like Jim's, a cinematic non-entity--interferes constantly in his marriage to Kathe, proferring much unasked-for advice on the upbringing of their
two daughters. Besides doubling Jules's progeny, Truffaut also took the liberty of making Catherine three years older than Jim, whereas Kathe was eight years his junior. The director also eliminated the book's racial tensions:

Kathe et Jules non plus n'étaient pas de la même race. Kathe était une pure Germanique, une "poule de combat." Jules était un Juif qui sauf quelques grands amis, évitait en général avec des Juifs. (Jules et Jim 168)

Superficially, the director's "fiddling" with Jules et Jim would seem to be more extensive than his tampering with Les Deux anglaises et le continent, but the changes he worked on the latter book were actually more profound. Chief among these were the extra-textual deaths of Claire, Claude's fiercely possessive mother, and Anne Brown, the older of the two sisters with whom "le continent" becomes involved. By killing off Claire quite early on, Truffaut dilutes his hero's "momma's boy" reluctance to marry and assume adult responsibilities; by burying Anne, he renders Claude's subsequent loneliness less classically Freudian. No doubt to clear the stage of obstructional minor characters, the director eliminated the Brown brothers from the script, as well as Pilar, the inscrutable Andalusian beauty who takes Claude's innocence. That Truffaut identified with "le continent" in some way is made clear by his placement of Claude in the artillery, the same branch of the army in which the film-maker had served so unhappily.
Even more significantly, Claude's amatory modus operandi is strikingly similar to that of Antoine Doinel. The young, turn-of-the-century Frenchman "falls" first for Mrs. Brown's family before his affections vacillate between one daughter and the next. Elective affinities seem to be at work here, since all of Roche's heroes have an ingratiating desire to please as well as a decidedly "Doinelish" cast of phrase: "J'aime Magda. Mais c'est un habitude. Ce n'est pas le grand amour. Elle est à la fois ma jeune mere et ma fille attentive" (Jules et Jim 38).

Nonetheless, Claude's amours are more self-consciously Oedipal than are Antoine's. In the film, he tells Claire, "I love Muriel; she reminds me of you." Anne, a woman with maternal problems of her own, describes Claude's mother as "the most demanding of his women." It seems more than contextually possible that Truffaut's feelings of separation from Roche permitted him to explore some of his own obsessions with greater candour than he allowed himself in his more overtly autobiographical works.

Both Les Deux anglaises et le continent and Jules et Jim are "instinctive" melanges of past and present imagery. "Dayglo" 1970s-style sweaters rub shoulders with black frock coats in cafes that might have been visited by Renoir or Degas. Elliptical editing cheerfully subverts the anchoring qualities of documentary footage. Far from being historical films, they are actually celebrations of what the director loved in the present translated to a time that he knew from books, that he had transmuted by the powers of imagination.
That many of the events in *Les Deux anglaises et le continent* were related by means of letters and journal entries was an added plus. Finding cinematic equivalents for correspondence was a challenge Truffaut was willing to rise to throughout his career.

Of Roche’s two novels, the film-maker found the second one sadder, because its sensibility was so young (Gillain 270). It was also the hardest to block out, because the characters spent so much time apart (Desjardins 69).

Thus, the characters were “iconized” in very different ways:

...if Anne tends to share her space, seen usually in two-shots and interacting with people around her, Muriel’s personality insists upon the close-up. The only other face she allows into frame is her reflection in the mirror. (Insdorf 128)

In both films, voice-over commentary is essential to maintaining the mood of bittersweet nostalgia. Even *Jules et Jim*, with its delerious hand-held camera shots and staccato bursts of elliptical editing, depends heavily on an unseen narrator’s voice. Truffaut loved Roche’s words, and tried to preserve as many as possible.

Seemingly, the director’s “ideal” adaptation was a sort of wide-screen *cine-roman*:

Je préfère à l’adaptation classique, transformant de gré ou de force un livre en pièce de théâtre, une forme intermédiaire qui fait alterner dialogues et lecture à haute voix.
qui correspond en quelque sorte au roman filmé. Je pense d'ailleurs que Jules et Jim est plutôt un livre cinématographique que le prétexte à un film littéraire. (Gillain 128)

In *Les Deux anglaises et le continent*, both Muriel and Claude have their own "inner" voices, while Mrs. Brown and her Welsh friend Mr. Flint are frequently heard in voice-off. This device contributes to a feeling of nostalgia, especially when the audio is accompanied by deliberately anachronistic iris-outs. One is frequently aware of image and sound as isolated elements, especially during the tight close-up wherein Muriel guiltily confesses to the "sin" of masturbation. In combination, these effects create the illusion of historical double exposure. 8

Love of literature, film and his own past were always present in the films Truffaut made from favourite literary texts. The joys of conjugal love and the constant threat of their being annulled in an instant were also central to his art, however, as was the individual's relationship to the heedless surge of time. The final ingredients in the recipe for the director's tragicomic "pleasure package" will be examined in the next two chapters.
Notes to Chapter Four

1 Uncoincidentally, this Zolaesque notion of criminal heredity is at the heart of Jean Renoir's *La Bête humaine* (1938).

2 Unlike Julie Kohler, the avenging "fury" of *La Mariée était en noir*.

3 In this novella, an atheist doctor is put through medical school by a pious but illiterate workingman. Out of gratitude to this "spiritual father", the thankful surgeon pays to have masses sung for the repose of his late benefactor's soul, despite his lack of personal faith.

4 La Dilecta was 22 years Balzac's senior.

5 Balzac was likewise invited to marry La Dilecta's daughter, though her mother was more to his taste.

6 In some respects, Catherine is reminiscent of Frau Chauchat, Thomas Mann's fictional take on Alma Mahler. It is interesting to recall that Marion Delorme, the actress-heroine of *Le Dernier métro*, played that role onscreen, while Catherine Deneuve, Marion's interpreter, is probably the most "Aryan" of all French actresses.

7 In a crucial scene, Claude is made the "core" in a game of "citron pressé", being entirely surrounded by all three Brown women, ostensibly to keep warm. If the Browns are Claude's second family, to them he is "le continent", the key to the European culture and sophistication which they crave despite their stolid British backgrounds. In this split, one can perhaps recognize Truffaut's own complicated feelings
vis-a-vis the United States.

Truffaut was well aware of the problems attendant on using flashy camera techniques in period films. "Je veux bien admettre," he once joked, "que le cinéma existait à l'époque de Jesus-Christ, mais pas le zoom!" (Giliain 285)
CHAPTER FIVE: LOVE OF LOVE

From reading Francois Truffaut's film criticism, it would be easy to conclude that movies were, for him, just romance by other means. In this regard, there is no difference between the "mellow" author of The Films in My Life and the "Young Turk" whose polemics got him banned from the Cannes Film Festival. Nicholas Ray's motion pictures, for instance, were all said to "tell the same story, the story of a violent man who wants to stop being violent and his relationship with a woman who has more moral strength than himself" (Hillier 107).

In those words, we have Tirez sur le pianiste in embryo. What's more, Truffaut felt no qualms about a film-maker telling the same story over and over again:

Je crois que les films essentiels pour chacun, ce sont certainement les trois premiers, ceux que l'on fait au début, surtout quand on a la chance de les faire en toute liberté, mais ce n'est pas un raison pour arrêter. (Desjardins 63)

When talking about women, literature and film in the same sentence, the director sometimes made their relationship sound like a menage a trois:
Les films d'Ophuls sont un plaidoyer balzacien en faveur de l'héroïne que l'auteur examine amoureusement à la loupe jusque sans la déchéance....
(Fanne 28)

Like Ophuls, Truffaut often claimed to take his heroines' side against that of his heroes: for him, "les deux anglaises" were morally more admirable than "le continent" (Gillain 284).

In his book, love was "le sujet des sujets" (Gillain 138). The "absence of women in a film" bothered him "more than anything else" (The Films in My Life 167). He loved actresses because "cinema is an art of the woman... The director's work consists in getting pretty women to do pretty things" (The Films in My Life 138). Elective affinities seemingly bound certain actresses and directors together:

Pour moi les grands moment du cinéma sont le coinidence entre les dons d'un metteur en scène et ceux d'une comédiennne dirigée par lui: Griffith et Lilian [sic] Gish...Renoir et Simone Simon, Hitchcock et Joan Fontaine, Rossellini et Magnani...Vadim et BB. (Fanne 25)

Despite the obvious sexual overtones of Truffaut's attitude, it did distance him considerably from the "actors-are-cattle" outlook of an Alfred Hitchcock. In any case, whether women were presented in a "favourable" or an "unfavourable" light was less important to the director than that they be presented at all. It has been observed of
Antoine Doinel's young wife, "Christine proves to be one of the few wives in Truffaut's work who is not a killer" (Insdorf 118). The film-maker/critic wrote of Jean Renoir's "loving misogyny", a feeling "that grows from year to year --the idea that the only thing that counts is the soft skin of the woman you love" (The Films in My Life 218). In a similar vein, Truffaut approvingly quoted Ingmar Bergman's scabrous encomium to the "Eternal Feminine", a threnody that embraced "cows, she-monkeys, sows, bitches," that did not discriminate against "wild beasts and dangerous reptiles", that did not deny the erotic possibilities of being killed by one's beloved or of being killed by her in turn. "The world of women is my universe," the Swedish cineaste concluded (The Films in My Life 255).

Bergman's relationship to his mother, if The Magic Lantern is anything to go by, was at least as stormy and turbulent as Truffaut's was with his, the only possible difference residing in the level of overt violence. Like Balzac and Roche, Bergman suffered through an unhappy childhood, and that was more than enough to place him permanently on Truffaut's "shelf":

Je classe mes livres par auteur. Mais je voudrais reservé un rayon de ma bibliothèque aux livres sur les mères. C'est le meilleur livre de chaque écrivain... Si on n'avait qu'un sujet, ce serait celui-là. (Gillain 386 - 387)

Absent fathers and "insane" mothers figure prominently
in Truffaut's brief panegyrics to Chaplin and Vigo in The Films in My Life. In the director's world view, literature, film, childhood and sex all converged at a single point: the mother.

The origins of Truffaut's inner conflicts are probably best expressed in Les 400 coups. One key aspect of the film that seems never to have been properly recognized is the veracity of Antoine's claim that his mother is "dead". While she is unquestionably a discrete biological organism, and though for others she might exist, as Antoine's mother she is effectively deceased. Since the boy's father is a weak domestic non-entity with no genetic connection to his "son", to all intents and purposes, Antoine is an orphan. Paradoxically, his sense of emotional rejection increases his susceptibility to Oedipal attraction. Madame Doinel's youth and beauty become "fair game" in the absence of a substantive relationship between mother and child.

Hapless cuckold that he is, Antoine's father unwittingly promotes this unhealthy attachment: "Look what pretty legs your mother has," he smirks to his son (The 400 Blows 80). Little does he know that Antoine is already well on his way to becoming a "leg man":

En rapportant les mules à sa mère dans le couloir, il la surprit en train d'enlever ses bas, les jupes relevées à mi-cuisses. Mais elle ne réagit nullement, habituée à considérer "le gosse" comme un petit martenin absolument étranger aux impulsions humaines, alors même que la puberté le tracassait chaque nuit.
That Truffaut seems never to have entertained the possibility that his mother might have been very much aware of the impact her sexual presence was having on her son is evidenced by one striking "fetish" in what is otherwise a remarkably "chaste" body of work: legs. Five years after ogling his mother in secret, Antoine will be attracted to Colette primarily because of her neatly nyloned limbs. During the opening shots of Domicile conjugal, the camera doubles for Antoine's gaze when it follows Christine's legs through the streets of Paris. And of course, Antoine Doinel is far from being the only leg fetishist in Truffaut's Comédie humaine. Even so peripheral a character as Monsieur Tabard is characterized by his tendency to stare up his employees' skirts, while Bertrand, the hero of L'Homme qui aimait les femmes, is so infatuated with that portion of the female anatomy, women, in his eyes, are virtual appendages of their legs. Bertrand's mother parades in front of him in a manner virtually indistinguishable from that of Antoine's; rejection at her hands prevents him from seeing them "as whole people" (Alien 187 - 183).

While Truffaut emphasizes each "rejecting female's" insensitivity in these primal circumstances, he seems to assume that they don't derive any perverted pleasure from the same. Even his "cock-teasers" and femmes fatales are still basically
"nice girls".

The Madame de Mortsauf/Lady Dudley split in Le Lys dans la vallee epitomizes the Truffautian hero's inability to find erotic satisfaction in just one woman. Maternal love and carnal union are irreconcilable opposites.

In a rare moment of candor, Henriette laments the social differences separating 19th century French men from 19th century French women:

À vous l'orient, à moi l'occident,
dit-elle. Vous vivez heureux, je
mourrai de douleur! Les hommes font
eux-mêmes les événements de leur vie,
et la mienne est à jamais fixée.
(Le Lys dans la vallee 110 - 111)

While Madame de Mortsauf's complaints are objectively true, they obscure the fact that institutionalized female inequality permits her to manipulate the men in her life who take her seriously. The consolation prize of moral superiority keeps both her husband and her platonic lover on invisible leads of guilt. Thus, when Felix complains that Henriette is treating her spouse like a spoiled child (Le Lys dans la vallee 277), he fails to see that that is the secret of her power. To be loved, all her men must be infants, beginning with her frail son and ending with Felix (Le Lys dans la vallee 260).

In other words, Madame de Mortsauf is a classic Freudian castrator, a fact which Truffaut seems only semi-aware of, although he responded with considerable heat to
this "archetype" when he met it in real life. To Robert Lachenay, for instance, he once wrote:

This morning I received the letter your mother sent me. If I felt sure of myself, I'd sue her for slander for calling me a homosexual, but I can't do it. All that is required is for you to send her a letter bawling her out and I'll do the same.... (Letters 20)

Considering the miseries attendant on his filial relationships and the extreme emotional volatility experienced in his early manhood, it does seem surprising that Truffaut did not turn into either a homosexual or a misogynist. In his films, wariness of women co-exists with a frank awareness of "male" foibles, just as the cinematic celebration of the sensual pleasures of life is counterbalanced by the omnipresent spectre of grief, and the glorious promise of friendship between the sexes is constantly undermined by the unstable chemistry of the romantic couple. Lady Dudley and Madame de Mortsauf were not the only Balzacian women the director was drawn to, after all. He was equally entranced by Josephine de Temminck, a diamond in the rough whose "apparent imperfections" hid the "spiritual grandeur" of a beautiful soul (La Recherche de l'absolu 51). With great sympathy and understanding, Balzac realized that:

Une femme belle peut à son aise être elle-même, le monde lui fait toujours credit d'une sottise ou d'une gaucherie; tandis qu'un seul regard arrête
l'expression la plus magnifique sur les lèvres d'une femme laide....
(La Recherche de l'absolu 52)

As always, Balzac was unblinkingly aware of the ways in which looks, money and pedigree determined one's future in 19th century France. Because Josephine lacks all these qualities, she initially feels overwhelmingly fortunate to have married a husband as distinguished as Claes. After her spouse becomes obsessed with alchemy, however, and dissipates the family fortune in a vain attempt to turn lead into gold, it soon becomes apparent that the most precious ore in the family must be mined from the hearts of first Josephine, and then her daughter, Marguerite. Indeed, it is up to the latter to repair the damage done by Claes's obsession, and this she does with supremely competent panache. No matter how much the Temninck women proclaim the importance of "patriarchal" values, even the dimmest reader must notice that they are better "men" than Claes.

Like many 19th century writers, Balzac felt that it was delicacy of feeling and not mental incapacity that rendered most women unfit for masculine occupations. If he did not feel--as did his near-contemporary, Stendhal--that sexual stereotypes cost the human race "half its geniuses", the author was by no means a vulgar male supremacist. One can easily see why his attitudes appealed so strongly to Truffaut. Balzac is as pre-Freudian as he is pre-Marxist, and yet much grist for both philosophies can be ground in his mill. Truffaut's backwards-looking personality loved The Human
Comedy because it represented a transitional phase of human development. Balzac was both a romantic and a realist. Characters such as Madame de Mortsauf can be read in an almost infinite number of ways, depending on the age and gender of the reader, as well as his or her awareness of the last 200 years of socio-cultural history. When reading Le Lys dans la Vallée, Truffaut did not have to decisively choose between this century and the last.

With Roche, one experiences the same sense of historical double exposure. Kathe, Gertrude, Gilberte, and all the other women who populate his texts for greater or lesser periods of time, are Janus-faced creatures who simultaneously stare backwards and forwards through time.

We have already seen how Truffaut believed that a director's first three films were the most important; in his case, the influence of favourite tomes by Balzac and Roche proved even more long lasting.

Perhaps because the books that exercised the most profound influence on his imagination were either read in adolescence or else aimed at the adolescent mind, the director's heroes tend to be equally immature. As one feminist critic wrote:

Like the adolescent heroes of his own and other films, Truffaut's artistic weakness, in refusing to grow up, expresses itself in an insistence on preserving his own innocence and purity--a compulsion to which his women become, very subtly, sacrificial scapegoats. They die or surrender, that innocence may
live. (Raskell 302)

Elsewhere, this hunger for "innocence" is judged even more harshly:

In Shoot the Piano Player all the men are dangerous babies including Charlie, who manages to commit murder without dropping the role of kid brother. (Kinder and Huston 7)

It is further alleged that:

In Truffaut's films, the basic polarities are developed along sexual lines: the men rely on will, civilization and reason; the women are the wild, natural creatures who rely on chance. But paradoxically, the rational men are more susceptible to fantasy, and the women, who are the romantic objects, are more capable of cynical irony. The primary problem for most of Truffaut's men is that they never quite grow out of adolescence. (Kinder and Huston 7)

This is a problem that Felix de Vandenesse and his creator could easily understand.

Even critics who are overtly critical of Truffaut's sexual politics refrain from accusing him of the acid-edged misogyny that one finds in the cinema of Hitchcock, Godard and de Palma:

Where Godard's awe of women is tinged with hatred, Truffaut's is all admiration, but one attitude can be
as inhibiting in creating a fully rounded portrait as the other. (Haskell 302)

Truffaut's published comments on love, marriage, and domestic life were so numerous, it is painfully easy to quote him out of context. He did, after all, liken cooking to making babies (Desjardins 54), and claimed never to have had a serious conversation with his daughters because they were girls. He professed not to be fond of women who reminded him of men (Desjardins 51). Such comments make the filmmaker seem not only sexist, but silly.

When reading these remarks, it is important to remember, however, that the women in Truffaut's films were generally stronger than the men. Even so, he was very careful to strip this characteristic of ideological colouration. Thus, he could say of Catherine that she wanted to live like a man though she was neither feminist nor vengeful (Gillain 129 - 130). Despite his "instinctive" anarchist sentiments, Truffaut remained wary of "isms", even when propounding such of their tenets as he shared might have advanced his cause. His criticism of Godard's undemocratic treatment of actresses was rooted in the fact that his fellow cinéaste would juxtapose "X's arse" with "Anne Wiazemsky's pretty hands," because he did not seem to "know that not only all men but all women are equal, including actresses," because he created a hierarchy of "whores" and "poetic young women" (Letters 388).

Those who wish to perceive Truffaut as either a "wissy-washy liberal" or an out-and-out reactionary, could
doubtless make a much stronger case if they could cite even one instance where the director defended economic privilege. From his early days as a critic in Stalinist intellectual circles to his final years as a film-maker among the structuralists, Truffaut's principal complaint against the politically committed was that they used abstract ideology to disguise their bad personal behaviour and human failings. Truffaut's world view was uncompromisingly all-inclusive: "tout le monde a besoin d'être aimé, tout le monde a droit à l'amour, à commencer par les bourgeois et les flics" (Gillain 135). To arrive at this "1789" of the spirit:

...il faut renoncer à tout ce qui divise. J'ai une profonde méfiance vis-à-vis de tout ce qui sépare le monde en deux: les bons et les mauvais, les bourgeois et les artistes, les flics et les aventuriers. (Gillain 135)

While it could be argued that this populist viewpoint is small "i" liberalism par excellence, the rigour with which it was maintained smacks of sterner political stuff. It also explains why Truffaut's cinema's could win hearts and minds that excluded--and were excluded by--the less emotional, more intellectual films of Godard, Resnais and Rivette. Good, bad, or indifferent, Truffaut's work always had "heart".

What's more, it took it for granted that male and female viewers were equally interested in love. If the director wanted to make the men laugh and the women cry with *Tirez sur le pianiste* (Gillain 113), he also insisted the
film was about "nothing but love: sexual, sentimental, physical, moral, social, conjugal, extra, etc." (Gillain 112).

When reading Le Lys dans la vallée and Les Deux anglaises et le continent, one is constantly struck by expressions that sound as if they were expressly written for one of Truffaut's films. In the former, we encounter the rhetorical question:

```
Existe t-il une heure, une conjunction d'astres, une réunion des circonstances expresses, une certaine femme entre toutes, pour déterminer une passion exclusive, au temps où la passion embrasse le sexe entier? (Le Lys dans la vallée 32)
```

It didn't seem to matter to Truffaut whether these high-flown sentiments were expressed by a male or a female narrator, as we learn from a similar passage in Roche's second novel:

```
Je crois que pour chaque femme a été créé un homme qui est son époux. Bien qu'il puisse exister plusieurs hommes avec lesquels elle pourrait avoir une vie paisible, utile et même agréable, il n'y en a qu'un qui soit l'époux parfait. (Les Deux anglaises et le continent 55)
```

Romance was clearly a subject which Truffaut felt to be universal, not a topic to be confined to a gender ghetto. His enthusiasm for this side of life was, as always, bounded by long-term pessimism vis-a-vis its prospects of success.
On the other hand, the very transience of sensual joy contributed to its bittersweet beauty. Truffaut's couples are as tangibly mutable as any of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's uncommitted dancers. The film-maker's romantic "Impressionism" accounts in large measure for the difficulty some critics have in classifying Truffaut's later films as either "art" or "entertainment".

Still, despite the director's growing indifference to "form" after his first three features, one looks in vain for a "commissioned" work in his filmography. Even when he was most "slack", Truffaut was never a pompier.

The same motifs appear repeatedly in the Antoine Doinel films, for example, regardless of their quality. One is struck in particular by the parallels drawn between love of women and love of writing. From his mother onwards, the females in Antoine's life alternately urge him to put pen to paper and to shut up. In one of her rare warm moments with her 13 year old son, Madame Doinel informs this poor student that it makes sense to master French composition, since writing is always important, if only for letters. By the same token, she is the silent force behind Antoine's physical chastisement when his shrine to Balzac goes up in smoke. A double message is thus delivered: writing is fine so long as it doesn't result in social disturbance.

Similar conflicts attend Antoine's relations with Christine and Colette. The would-be novelist's disenchanted wife is primly dismissive of her husband's autobiographical novel:
Don't send me a copy. I won't read it. I don't like the idea of telling all about your youth, of blaming your parents, of washing dirty linen in public... I'm not an intellectual, but I know this: writing a book to settle old scores isn't art! (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 309)

Antoine is caught in a classic double bind; because he is attracted only to "nice middle class girls", he is naturally condemned to meeting precisely those women who can't understand his inner conflicts. Antoine and Christine want to give their son different names; they read different books in bed. When, during their courtship, Antoine explains that, because of his detective work, they will have to go to a cabaret rather than a movie. Christine seems delighted by this change.

Of course, being pillars of the Parisian bourgeoisie, the Darbon family is no stranger to middle class hypocrisy. Thus, when Antoine encounters his father-in-law on the steps of a brothel, the latter smirks, "There's nothing like a good house to complete a happy home."

Interestingly enough, the women from families other than his own, are often the most like Antoine's mother. Colette in particular surrounds herself with unbreachable froideur. In Antoine et Colette, she is barely aware of her comically determined suitor's existence. Later on, in Baisers volés, when Colette bumps into Antoine on the street with her new husband and baby in tow, she greets him as if he were just some dimly remembered school chum from long ago.
Finally, when she follows Antoine onto the train in *L'Amour en fuite*, her principal urge is to set him straight about the "inaccuracies" concerning their relationship which he set down in his novel. Instead of calling him an "idiot" and a "pain in the neck", the more spontaneous expletives of her youth, Colette can now use her lawyer's training to deconstruct Antoine's lies in a systematic way. Far from being the victim of circumstance, she argues, he was usually the author of his own misfortunes. All Antoine can do in his own defence is to weakly sputter, "Oui, c'est vrai. Mais probablement pour des raisons d'équilibre, j'ai inversé les situations" (*L'Amour en fuite* 22). Clearly feeling uncomfortable about being so expertly cornered, Antoine adds that he now plans to write "an entirely invented novel" about a romance that begins with a torn photograph and an overheard telephone call. Naturally, this "invention" turns out to be the origin of his latest affair. To win Sabine back, he must tell this story again: "une première fois qu'Antoine aurait inventée et une deuxièmre fois en racontant la vérité vraie" (Gillain 385).

In *L'Amour en fuite*, we see how much Antoine has relied on the "bitchiness" of his women to anchor him to reality. Colette accuses him of being interested only in the pursuit of women, and not in relationships per se. She refuses to let him kiss her because "it takes two for that." Before Sabine agrees to take him back, he must expose the "client dragueur" side of his personality.

In general, Antoine is not interested in women who
accept him easily and without reservation. The sole exception to this rule would seem to be Fabienne Tabard, and that, uncoincidentally, proves to be the most fleeting relationship of his life. It is also the most literary. Lasting all of one afternoon, it probably never would have transpired at all if not for the participants' shared love for *Le Lys dans la vallée*. Fabienne is summoned to Antoine’s bedside by a romantic letter sent whistling through the Parisian pneumatique. Despite its extreme brevity, this liaison manages to remain essentially epistolary in nature.

Whenever he can, Antoine prefers to avoid face-to-face encounters, even in matters of the heart. On the night when his extramarital affair with Koko abruptly ends, he constantly excuses himself from dinner to talk to Christine on the phone, eventually returning to the table that his Japanese lover has left after scrawling the words "DROP DEAD" on the back of her table napkin.

By the same token, words are often more important to Antoine than the things they represent. Whereas most men are content to name their own penises, Antoine goes one step further when he expresses the wish to individually identify each of his wife’s different-sized breasts. Aside from extending a male fetish into the realm of the feminine, this obsession with nomenclature, like so many of this "alter ego’s" traits, enjoys a Balzacian precedent. Felix de Vandenesse, as we have already seen, was uniquely privileged to address *Madame de Mortsauf* as "Henriette". According to Roger Pierrot, "Ce jeu du prénom exclusif était cher à Balzac..."
pour qui Laure d'Abrantes et Hélène de Valette étaient Marie, Frances Guidoboni-Visconti, Sarah" (Le Lys dans la vallée x). Antoine surrenders most abjectly to the joy of naming when, in Baisers volés, he stands before the bathroom mirror, touches his face in amazement, and chants the name "Fabienne Tabard" six times in succession, then "Christine Darbon", then finally his own. It was doubtless this scene which prompted Jean Collet to observe that, "Dans le miroir, ce n'est pas Antoine qu'on cherche. C'est sa mère." (Collet 45)

While there is no evidence in either the director's published letters or his major interviews that he was a student of Jacques Lacan, there is enough mirror imagery in his films to suggest that he was influenced by the psychologist's seminal essay, "The Mirror Stage" (1949).

Lacan wrote:

We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification...the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image...

This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the infans stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other (Lacan 2).

This "Gestalt" which symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, "at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination" (Lacan 2) is both a great leap forward for the
self and a premonition of sadder things to come:

This moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the imago of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy...the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations. (Lacan 5)

In a moment of nervousness, Antoine addresses Fabienne as "Monsieur", while he customarily refers to Madame Darbon as "Mother". One can't help wondering, in the first instance, which "M" word his tongue tripped over: "Madame" or "Mère". Madame Tabard might profess to see in this verbal awkwardness nothing but charming tact, but less interested viewers will surely realize that "Ce que désire Antoine, c'est se perdre--et se retrouver--dans l'être aimé" (Collet 147). Antoine's libido was shaped, after all, by his mother's casual disrobing in his presence; the same could be said for Bertrand, the womanizing hero of L'Homme qui aimait les femmes. Adele Hugo, it should be recalled, inscribed the name of her famous father in a mirror with her finger, while in Fahrenheit 451 Julie Christie played two different women, each the mirror image of the other. When Antoine's mother stared into the glass, all she saw was the narcissistic reflection of her own beauty; her little boy was just a background blur. It could be said, that in all his subsequent relations with women Antoine Doinel attempts to reverse this polarity, to foreground himself at the expense
of the "other". Because he was never "seen" himself, Antoine
generally looks at women with eyes that are almost equally
blind. This is the same "véritable et définitive castration"
(Collet 213) which one French critic has seen as the defining
principle in Claude's relationship to the two sisters in *Les
Deux anglaises et le continent*.

Perhaps Truffaut's aversion to Roche the man can be
partially explained by the semi-conscious fear that he and
the late-blooming author were, at bottom, very much alike,
and that if he had been similarly cosseted by a doting mother
and surfeited with unearned wealth, he might well have wound
up equally "castrated" in his relationships with women. It
was only his absolute leisure, after all, his income-fuelled
ability to disappear into the stacks of the Bibliothèque
Nationale for unlimited periods of time, that freed Claude
from the necessity of making any sexual demands at all (*Les
Deux anglaises et le continent*). For, despite the rapturous
montage of book spines "hot off the presses" in Truffaut's
screen version of Roche's second novel, words alone were not
enough to satisfy the film-maker's emotional needs. Books,
films and people were equally important to his sense of
personal well-being.

In his personal relations with women, Truffaut seems
to have been neither as infantile as Antoine nor as
obsessively promiscuous as Bertrand. Molly Haskell, for
instance, though quite harsh on Truffaut's failure to
understand "a woman's point of view" (Haskell 304), seems to
have found him thoroughly engaging as a human being:
Francois Truffaut came over in 1968, just after having disrupted the Cannes Film Festival. I was his guardian. Truffaut being a great lover of women both on- and offscreen, we had a wonderful time, exchanging looks and giggles and talking movies. We went to see Stanley Kubrick's 2001 (Truffaut insisted on getting there half an hour ahead of time) and held hands as we watched the ships waltzing through space. (Premiere Dec. 1989 154)

To enjoy "exchanging looks and giggles", one must paradoxically have an "adult" personality, because overt demonstrations of childlike behaviour are too threatening to the genuinely infantile. Both Marie-France Pisier (Pisier 53) and Jeanne Moreau (Fanne 47) recalled the director's childlike laugh. With the exception of Julia Philips, the Hollywood producer whose cocaine-induced decline is pungently described in her memoir, You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again, virtually all of the film-maker's female collaborators maintained fond memories of their working experiences. Even after his divorce, Truffaut managed to remain on good terms with his ex-wife because "our friendship is absolutely indispensable, above all because of the children" (Letters 231).

Actors in particular were the beneficiaries of the film-maker's "responsible" affections. Agnes Guillemot, the editor of several of Truffaut's films, observed that "Il est impertinent avec le monde entier, mais il a un respect sublime pour les acteurs" (Fanne 26). When Francoise Dorleac died tragically young, Truffaut published a moving
tribute to the star of La Peau douce in a 1968 number of Cahiers du cinéma. Balzac wrote that the skill of actors is akin to that of surgeons, since both talents are condemned to exist in the immediate present (La Recherche de l’absolu 303). While the invention of celluloid has expanded the range of thespian immortality somewhat, Truffaut unquestionably shared the novelist’s sentiments in this regard.

What’s more, this fondness was not a cynical excuse for Pygmalion-like sexual predation. Although a practising heterosexual, Truffaut was as fond of male actors as he was of their female counterparts. Indeed, he was probably most “protective” of Jean-Pierre Leaud, his onscreen alter ego. Affinity of “spirit” accounted for this more than commonality of interest: “...he was not much of a reader; while he undoubtedly had an inner life of his own, he was already a child of the audio-visual era; he would sooner steal some Ray Charles records than literary works of the French classics” (The Adventures of Antoine Doinel 8). Leaud’s “rejection” by the French public bothered this “spiritual father” deeply; they “prefer Lino Ventura,” he complained (Gillain 322). When he felt that his “spiritual son” had been slighted by Jean-Luc Godard, he took his former friend to task in a famous letter:

As regards Jean Pierre...I think it’s obnoxious of you to kick him when he’s down, obnoxious to extort money by intimidation from someone who is fifteen years younger than you and whom you used to pay less than a million when he was the lead
in films that were earning thirty times as much.

Yes, Jean-Pierre has changed since *Les 400 Coups*, but I can tell you it was in *Masculin-Feminin*, that I noticed for the first time that he could be filled with anxiety rather than pleasure at the notion of finding himself in front of a camera. The film was good and he was good in the film, but that first scene, in the cafe, was a painful experience for anyone looking at him with affection and not with an entomologist's eye. *(Letters 385)*

In fine fighting form, Truffaut sounds here like an over-protective "mother hen".

Despite his expressed preference for "feminine" women, the film-maker clearly did not feel that femininity equalled cinematic incompetence. He was as willing and eager to work with women as he was with men, and not just in the director/actress mode either. Suzanne Schiffman worked her way up from production assistant to assistant director and co-writer status. Agnes Guillemot cut many of his films. A former journalist himself, Truffaut seemed to harbour a special fondness for female scribes, describing Annette Insdorf's book on him as "the best", giving his most revealing interviews to Aline Desjardins, and agitating tirelessly on behalf of Janine Bazin's various projects. His closest confidante in later life was Helen Scott, an ex-Communist and former employee of the French Film Office in New York, who interpreted for Truffaut during the course of his interviews with Alfred Hitchcock, and supervised the translation of all texts. For Truffaut, the ideal female friend balanced
Henriette's attentiveness and savoir-faire with Lady Dudley's practical competence and joie de vivre.

Even the people with the most reason to hate him, such as Jean Aurenche, the principal target of "A Certain Tendency in the French Cinema", came to think equably of him at the end of his life, with the notable exception of Claude Autant-Lara "qui...continuait à insulter Truffaut sur son lit de mort" (Le Roman 20).

Truffaut's hates, like his loves, were never abstract. As Jean-Luc Godard ruefully commented, "il n'hésita pas à jeter aux autres sa première pierre" (Le Roman 20). Since personal relations were paramount in Truffaut's eyes, he would not allow intellectual posturing as an excuse for bad behaviour. Unlike Antoine Doinel, the director related to others on as "personal" a plane as possible. Friendship was an essential pre-requisite for anything of intimate value. If his unhappy childhood made him doubt the permanence and validity of the romantic couple, he never lost faith in the joys and pleasures of sensual love, no matter how high the price this indulgence might eventually exact. Friends, lovers, books and films were artistically translated into friends, lovers, books and films within his own films. In the cinema he didn't have to "compete" with the most important of his "spiritual fathers": Honore de Balzac died 45 years before Fred Ott's Sneeze first flickered. Truffaut's films are the completion of the novel he abandoned so early in his career.
Notes to Chapter Five

1 Although it has been said that "Une sorte d'ambivalence habite les personnages de Truffaut, qui leur donne leur ambiguïté" (Fanne 101), suggestions of homosexuality are remarkably rare in Truffaut's work. Even the director's "Don Juans" owe their primary allegiance to women, however warped that loyalty might be. Not even in *Jules et Jim* did he deign to explore the inversion latent in Hollywood-style "buddy films". If interest was absent, though, so was hostility. The distraught homosexual who is told by the head of the detective agency in *Baisers volés* that his former boyfriend has gotten married is treated no differently than any other Truffaut-crossed lover. Antoine's suspicion of Christine's lesbian tendencies was aroused primarily by a serendipitous reading of Colette's fiction. The gay stage director and lesbian costume designer in *Le Dernier métro* are presented without condescension. According to Jean Gruault, Truffaut's frequent script collaborator, "Il...avait beaucoup de sympathie pour les amours saphiques à qui il attribuait plus de douceur, de tendresse qu'aux amours homosexuelles entre hommes" (Gruault 1991: 86). Lesbians, after all, were also obsessed with women.

2 In *La Peau douce*, the title of Pierre Lachenay's book on the great 19th century novelist is *Balzac et l'argent*. 
According to one biographer, each of Balzac's many love affairs "always began with the declaration: 'I never had a mother. I never had a mother's love.'" (Pritchett 25)

Even Truffaut's philo-Semitism, one of his motivations for making Le Dernier métro, owed more to personal affection than it did to philosophical commitment. Helen Scott, Suzanne Schiffman and his first wife were all Jewish, as was Pierre Braunberger, the uniquely supportive producer who bankrolled Tirez sur le pianiste. Truffaut's first two daughters were Halachically Jewish. As a non-believer, the religious tenets of the community meant little to him, but its traditional "family warmth" was immensely appealing.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

All of Francois Truffaut's loves were bounded by time. He understood "how much is dependent upon time, that it is not so much what we do as when we do it" (Insdorf 30). To a certain extent, what was said about Baisers volés could apply to all of the director's movies, that "the film's rather dated air is due to the fact that the corresponding events in Truffaut's life took place in 1950 - 5" (Crisp 105). Although he probably had more to do with the foundation of the Nouvelle Vague's "present tense" ideology than anybody else, he was paradoxically the practising theorist most in love with "period" films. His autobiographical experience was always at odds with the time frame he chose to work in.

"Datedness" is ubiquitous in the Doinel films. Baisers volé's eponymous theme song was originally recorded in 1942. Andre Falcon, the actor portraying the head of Antoine's detective agency, was once the reigning jeune premier at the Comedie Francaise. Even Antoine's "sleuth" persona is somewhat inexact since, according to the director, "À son âge j'avais été journaliste et je voulais m'éloigner de l'autobiographie. Detective privé, cela rejoignait indirectement le journalisme" (Cillain 196).

Elsewhere, he elaborated:
If the audience expected *Stolen Kisses* to be a statement of modern youth, they were bound to be disappointed, for it is precisely because of his anachronistic romanticism that I found Jean-Pierre so appealing...

As for myself, I am a nostalgic; I am not tuned in on what is modern, it is in the past that I find my inspiration.... *(The Adventures of Antoine Doinel II)*

When Antoine says, "I never blow my nose in paper," this dandyish retort speaks from the heart of the 19th century.

Art works can transcend time, but artists cannot. Like everyone else, they age and expire at a relatively fixed rate. Despite the director's brave deathbed assertion that only *salauds* think they're indispensable, that cannot have removed all of mortality's sting for a man so fond of the simple pleasures of life, even if motion pictures, like children, are a means of insuring one's posterity.

In some respects, Truffaut's final days seem almost absurdly redolent of "artistic closure". When thinking of the tumor that killed him in the early days of 1984, one can't help but recall that he had to give up a commission to make a short documentary on cancer in order to shoot his first feature. Only slightly older than Balzac had been at the time of his death, Truffaut had recently remarried and was anticipating the birth of his third child. While he had been married before, unlike the great 19th century novelist at the time of his late nuptuals with Madame Hanska, this domestic change must have seemed equally momentous.

Old friends were constantly amazed by the film-maker's
unflagging interest in others, despite the gravity of his own illness. Roberto Rossellini was touched that Truffaut had expressed concern about an operation recently undergone by one of the Italian director's daughters (Le Roman 135).

Of course, it could be argued that Truffaut had always felt "old". His formative years were spent with his grandmother, where he was expected to behave like a particularly perspicacious adult. It was not for nothing that he made a film about "the feeling of turning fifty" when he was still in his late 20s. A couple of years after that, the director would wonder if he would live long enough to complete the editing of Jules et Jim. "Le bonheur des autres est la consolation de ceux qui ne peuvent plus être heureux" (Le Lys dans la valée 437) was a Balzacian dictum that Truffaut clearly took to heart at a precociously early age.

Increasingly, his screen characters would comment on the passage of time. At the end of Les Deux anglaises et le continent, Alphonse wonders if a passing English school girl might be his daughter, sighing "I seem old today" when he catches his reflection in a glass. Four years later, Adele Hugo would comment, "Despite my youth, I sometimes feel I am in the autumn of my life" (Adele H 84).

The "flaccidity" of which Truffaut’s later works were often accused might well be nothing more than increased concern about mortality. This might explain why the director began to employ big name male stars on a regular basis after 1980; their "clout" at the boxoffice might also help extend the films’ longevity.
As he got older, Truffaut saw fewer movies, but this moderation paradoxically seemed to increase his preference for cinema over real life. In 1982, he compared the aftermath of a terrorist bombing attack to Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (Letters 544). Never an avid traveller, his appreciation of the outside world grew increasingly dim. According to Jean Gruault, who worked on a script with Truffaut in Belgium, the director would never leave his hotel room "except to visit the bookstores." For him, this was the ideal life. (Gruault 1991: 88)

In the end, Gruault seems to have played a similar role to the one played by Robert Lachenay in the beginning. For Truffaut, time might have been the ultimate killer, but its chronological circularity also helped to "square" things in the end. Thus, the memory of Antoine's mother is sweetened somewhat by the knowledge that she is buried in the Cimetiere de Montparnasse, not far from the grave of *La Dame aux camélias*. That both the deceased are "fictional" characters based on real women deepens the bittersweet irony.

Nostalgia can likewise be perceived in the period photographs included in *Le Dernier métro*, and in the 1940s-style anachronisms adhering to *Vivement dimanche*, a sort of love letter to the romantic Hollywood thrillers contemporaneous with the director's own youth. Even *La Petite voleuse*, the Truffaut screenplay that would be directed by Claude Miller several years after the author's death, was far more than just a "distaff" re-make of *Les 400 coups*. As early as 1965, Truffaut described how "I saw my very first mistress again,
the first girl I ever lived with:

She's no longer much to look at, just like me, and she's been in prison, 3 children, street walking and a bit of everything. She lives in Marseille. I'll go and see her in October to tape an interview with her on which I will base the scenario of *La Petite Voleuse*. (Letters 289)

It seems as if this old girlfriend functioned as a sort of doppelganger for Truffaut, as a reminder of what could have happened to him if he hadn't been rescued from his misery by love, "spiritual fathers", and art. By the same token, his feeling for children never evaporated. The director was still writing about them on his deathbed:

...Des enfants chantent "Sur nos monts...tous puissants..." C'est la fin du synopsis de ce qui aurait le 22e long métrage de François Truffaut... Ces lignes ont été écrites quelques heures avant qu'un éclate dans sa tête la première explosion causé par une tumeur. (Le Roman 56 - 57)

While Truffaut once commissioned Jean Grualt to write a script dealing with brother and sister incest in the Middle Ages, he was far more interested in a project set in the recent past:

Of the three projects on the drawing board, an untitled work on France from 1900 was by far the most ambitious and demanding... The idea
was to make a saga showing the lives of a group of characters both real and imaginary, between 1900 and the outbreak of World War One. The characters would have children who would themselves be the subject of subsequent films set in the Twenties and Thirties and the cycle would terminate in the Forties with *Le Dernier Metro*.

It's easy to see why this project, which the director solemnly assured Jean Gruault "would keep us in work till the end of our days" (Gruault 1991: 85), should have appealed so strongly to Truffaut. He had, after all, been gradually retreating from the experiential aspects of existence all his life. The actual physical presence of people creates tension, regardless of whether they happen to be parents, lovers, children or friends. Only in memory are relationships without pain, and masochism is one sin of which Truffaut has never been accused. To vicariously enjoy the love pangs of others, or to reconstruct one's own emotional entanglements on a fictional basis, had always appealed to Truffaut, and this appeal expanded with the years. During the last decade of his life, Truffaut, following in the footsteps of his idol Jean Renoir, frequently visited Hollywood, the world's most famous "shrine" to the dreams of his youth. His studies of English became more serious, if no more successful, than his earlier struggles with the language of Hitchcock, and he married Fanny Ardant. Little else of a contemporary nature seems to have had much bearing on the director's work.

It should be remembered here that, after Balzac, Marcel
Proust was Truffaut's favourite French author. If part of the allure of the director's work rests on its Comédie humaine affinities, its intense nostalgia and obsession with past time also owes something to A la recherche du temps perdu, the novel cycle which begins when the narrator sees his childhood reflected by a pastry, a childhood spent impatiently awaiting a mother's kisses. In Truffaut's "non-travels" to foreign cities in order to write screenplays, it is easy to perceive a direct approximation of Proust's famous cork-lined room.

Time gives and time takes away. For this, it must be both loved and feared. In Truffaut's proposed new "novel", generations of children would be born, countless affairs would be consummated, and the cycle would conclude in the years of Truffaut's own boyhood. Symbolically, the film-maker would return to the womb he so passionately adored, the first locus of his love, the paradise from which he had been expelled long before he was born.
Notes to Chapter Six

1. In his youth, Truffaut had worked as a messenger boy, storeman, office worker, and welder, but he did not incorporate these professions in Baisers volés. Instead, he had his co-scenarists interview practitioners of all the métiers, performed by his "alter ego", Antoine Doinel.

2. In L'Amour en fuite, Antoine refers to children's literature as the most difficult of genres.
TRUFFAUT FILMOGRAPHY


*Les Deux anglaises et le continent/The Two English Girls.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Screenplays


**Articles**


