their stolen bicycle still missing, their future uncertain. Although ending with the defeat of the Sicilian fishermen's revolt against the merchants, *La Terra Trema* does not cancel the possibility that a later revolt will succeed. Neorealism's tendency toward a slice-of-life plot construction gave many films of the movement an open-ended quality quite opposed to the narrative closure of the Hollywood cinema.

As economic and cultural forces had sustained the Neorealist movement, so they were prime causes of its cessation. When Italy began to prosper after the war, the government looked askance at films so critical of contemporary society. After 1949, censorship and state pressures began to constrain the movement. Large-scale Italian film production began to reappear, and Neorealism no longer had the freedom of the small production company. In addition, the Neorealist directors, now famous, began to pursue more individualized concerns: Rossellini's investigation of Christian humanism and Western history, De Sica's sentimental romances, Luchino Visconti's examination of upper-class milieus. Most historians date the end of the Neorealist movement with the public attacks on De Sica's *Umberto D* (1951). Nevertheless, Neorealist elements are still quite visible in the early works of Federico Fellini (*I. Vitelloni,* 1954, is a good example) and of Michelangelo Antonioni (*Cronaca di un amore,* 1951); both directors had worked on Neorealist films. The movement exercised a very strong influence on individual filmmakers such as Ermanno Olmi and Satyajit Ray, and on groups such as the French New Wave.

THE FRENCH NEW WAVE (1959–1964)

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the rise of a new generation of filmmakers around the world. In country after country there emerged directors born before World War II but grown to adulthood in the postwar era of reconstruction and rising prosperity. Japan, Canada, England, Italy, Spain, Brazil, and the United States all had their "new waves" or "young cinema" groups—some trained in film schools, many allied with specialized film magazines, most in revolt against their elders in the industry. The most generally influential of these groups appeared in France.

In the mid-1950s a group of young men who wrote for the Paris film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* made a habit of attacking the most artistically respected French filmmakers of the day. "I consider an adaptation of value," wrote François Truffaut, "only when written by a *man of the cinema.* Aurenche and Bost [the leading scriptwriters of the time] are essentially literary men and I reproach them here for being contemptuous of the cinema by underestimating it." Addressing 21 major directors, Jean-Luc Godard asserted, "Your camera movements are ugly because your subjects are bad, your casts act badly because your dialogue is worthless; in a word, you don't know how to create cinema because you no longer even know what it is." Truffaut and Godard, along with Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, and Jacques Rivette, championed certain directors considered somewhat outdated (Jean Renoir, Max Ophuls) or eccentric (Robert Bresson, Jacques Tati).

More important, the young men saw no contradiction in rejecting the French filmmaking establishment while loving blatantly commercial Hollywood. The young rebels of *Cahiers* claimed that in the works of certain directors—certain *auteurs* (authors)—artistry existed in the American cinema. An *auteur* usually did not literally write scripts, but managed nonetheless to stamp his or her personality on genre and studio products, transcending the constraints of Hollywood's standardized system. Howard Hawks, Otto Preminger, Samuel Fuller, Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray, Alfred Hitchcock—these were more than craftsmen. Each

> "We were all critics before beginning to make films, and I loved all kinds of cinema—the Russians, the Americans, the neorealists. It was the cinema that made us—or me, at least—want to make films. I knew nothing of life except through the cinema."
>
> Jean-Luc Godard, director

person's total output constituted a coherent world. Truffaut quoted Giraudoux, "There are no works, there are only *auteurs*." Godard remarked later: "We won the day in having it acknowledged in principle that a film by Hitchcock, for example, is as important as a book by Aragon. Film *auteurs,* thanks to us, have finally entered the history of art." And indeed, many of the Hollywood directors these critics and filmmakers praised gained reputations that have persisted up to the present.

Writing criticism did not, however, satisfy these young men. They itched to make movies. Borrowing money from friends and filming on location, each started to shoot short films. By 1959 they had become a force to be reckoned with. In that year Rivette filmed *Paris nous appartient* (*Paris Belongs to Us*); Godard made *À Bout de souffle* (*Breathless*); Chabrol made his second feature, *Les Cousins;* and in April Truffaut's *Les Quatre cent coups* (*The 400 Blows*) won the Grand Prize at the Cannes Festival.

The novelty and youthful vigor of these directors led journalists to nickname them *la nouvelle vague*—the "New Wave." Their output was staggering. All told, the five central directors made 32 feature films between 1959 and 1966; Godard and Chabrol made 11 apiece! So many films must of course be highly disparate, but there are enough similarities for us to identify a broadly distinctive New Wave approach to style and form.

The most obviously revolutionary quality of the New Wave films was their casual look. To proponents of the carefully polished French "cinema of quality," the young directors must have seemed hopelessly sloppy. The New Wave directors had admired the Neorealists (especially Rossellini) and in opposition to studio filmmaking, took as their mise-en-scene actual locales in and around Paris. Shooting on location became the norm. Similarly, glossy studio lighting was replaced by available light and simply supplemental sources. Few postwar French films would have shown the dim, grimy apartments and corridors featured in *Paris Belongs to Us* **(Fig. 12.33).**

Figure 12.33 *Paris Belongs to Us:* Location shooting gives a deliberately unglamorous look.

Cinematography changed too. The New Wave camera moves a great deal, panning and tracking to follow characters or trace out relations within a locale. Furthermore, shooting cheaply on location demanded flexible, portable equipment. Fortunately, Eclair had recently developed a lightweight camera that could be handheld. (That the Eclair had been used primarily for documentary work accorded perfectly with the "realistic" mise-en-scene of the New Wave.) New Wave films were intoxicated with the new freedom offered by the hand-held camera. In *The 400 Blows* the camera explores a cramped apartment and rides a carnival centrifuge. In *Breathless* the cinematographer held the camera while seated in a wheelchair to follow the hero along a complex path in a travel agency's office (Fig. 11.36, p. 369).

One of the most salient features of New Wave films is their casual humor. These young men deliberately played with the medium. In Godard's *Band of Outsiders* the three main characters resolve to be silent for a minute, and Godard dutifully shuts off *all* the sound. In Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player,* a character swears that he's not lying: "May my mother drop dead if I'm not telling the truth." Cut to a shot of an old lady keeling over. But most often the humor lies in esoteric references to other films, Hollywood or European. There are homages to admired *auteurs:* Godard characters allude to *Johnny Guitar* (Ray), *Some Came Running* (Minnelli), and "Arizona Jim" (from Renoir's *Crime of M. Lange*). In *Les Carabiniers* Godard parodies Lumière, and in *Vivre sa vie* he "quotes" *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc.* Hitchcock is frequently cited in Chabrol's films, and Truffaut's *Les Mistons* recreates a shot from a Lumière short; compare **Figure 12.34**

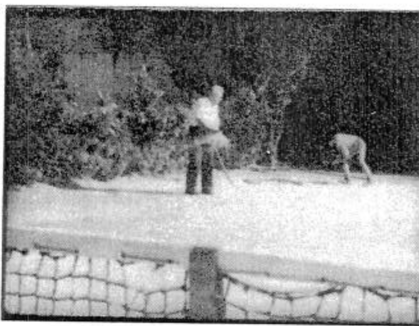

Figure 12.34 Truffaut's homage to the Lumière brothers in *Les Mistons.*

with the frame from *L'Arroseur arosé* (Fig. 6.6). Such homages even became in-jokes, as when New Wave actors Jean-Claude Brialy and Jeanne Moreau "walk on" in *The 400 Blows* or when a Godard character mentions "Arizona Jules" (combining names from *Crime of M. Lange* and *Jules and Jim*). Such gags, the New Wave directors felt, took some of the solemnity out of filmmaking and film viewing.

New Wave films also pushed further the Neorealist experimentation with plot construction. In general, causal connections became quite loose. Is there actually a political conspiracy going on in *Paris Belongs to Us?* Why is Nana shot at the end of *Vivre sa vie?* In *Shoot the Piano Player* the first sequence consists mainly of a conversation between the hero's brother and a man he accidentally meets on the street; the latter tells of his marital problems at some length, even though he has nothing to do with the film's narrative.

Moreover, the films often lack goal-oriented protagonists. The heroes may drift aimlessly, engage in actions on the spur of the moment, spend their time talking and drinking in a café or going to movies. New Wave narratives often introduce startling shifts in tone, jolting our expectations. When two gangsters kidnap the hero and his girlfriend in *Shoot the Piano Player,* the whole group begins a comic discussion of sex. Discontinuous editing further disturbs narrative continuity; this tendency reaches its limit in Godard's jump cuts (pp. 281, 370).

Perhaps most important, the New Wave film typically ends ambiguously. We have seen this already in *Breathless* (p. 364). Antoine in *The 400 Blows* reaches the sea in the last shot, but as he moves forward, Truffaut zooms in and freezes the frame, ending the film with the question of where Antoine will go from there (see Fig. 3.7, p. 65). In Chabrol's *Les Bonnes Femmes* and *Ophelia,* in Rivette's *Paris Belongs to Us,* and in nearly all the work of Godard and Truffaut in this period, the looseness of the causal chain leads to endings that remain defiantly open and uncertain.

Curiously, despite the demands that the films placed on the viewer and despite the critical rampages of the filmmakers, the French film industry was not hostile to the New Wave. The decade 1947–1957 had been good to film production: The government supported the industry through enforced quotas, banks had invested heavily, and there was a flourishing business of international coproductions. But in 1957 cinema attendance fell off drastically, chiefly because television became more widespread. By 1959 the industry was in a crisis. The independent financing of low-budget films seemed to offer a good solution. New Wave directors shot films much more quickly and cheaply than did reigning directors. Moreover, the young directors helped one another out and thus reduced the financial risk by the established companies. Thus the French industry supported the New Wave through distribution, exhibition, and eventually production.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that by 1964, although each New Wave director had his or her own production company, the group had become absorbed into the French film industry. Godard made *Le Mépris* (*Contempt,* 1963) for a major commercial producer, Carlo Ponti; Truffaut made *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) in England for Universal; and Chabrol began turning out parodies of James Bond thrillers.

Dating the exact end of the movement is difficult, but most historians select 1964, when the characteristic New Wave form and style had already become diffused and imitated (by, for instance, Tony Richardson in his 1963 English film *Tom Jones*). Certainly, after 1968 the political upheavals in France drastically altered the personal relations among the directors. Chabrol, Truffaut, and Rohmer became firmly entrenched in the French film industry, whereas Godard set up an experimental film and video studio in Switzerland, and Rivette began to create narratives

of staggering complexity and length (such as *Out One,* originally about twelve hours long!). By the mid-1980s, Truffaut had died, Chabrol's films were often unseen outside France, and Rivette's output had become esoteric. Rohmer retained international attention with his ironic tales of love and self-deception among the upper-middle class [*Pauline at the Beach* (1982) and *Full Moon over Paris* (1984)]. Godard continued to attract notoriety with such films as *Passion* (1981) and his controversial retelling of the Old and New Testaments, *Hail Mary* (1983). In 1990 he released an elegant, enigmatic film ironically entitled *Nouvelle vague*—which bears little relationship to the original tendency. In retrospect, the New Wave not only offered several original and valuable films but also demonstrated that renewal in the film industry could come from talented, aggressive young people inspired in large part by the sheer love of cinema.

THE NEW HOLLYWOOD AND INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING

Midway through the 1960s, the Hollywood industry seemed very healthy, with blockbusters like *The Sound of Music* (1965) and *Dr. Zhivago* (1965) yielding huge profits. But soon problems arose. Expensive studio pictures failed miserably. Television networks, which had paid high prices for broadcasting films after theatrical release, stopped bidding for pictures. American movie attendance flattened out at around one billion tickets per year (a figure that, despite home video, has remained fairly constant ever since). By 1969 Hollywood companies were losing over $200 million annually.

Producers fought back. One strategy was to produce counterculture-flavored films aimed at young people. The most popular and influential were Dennis Hopper's low-budget *Easy Rider* (1969) and Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* (1970). By and large, however, other "youthpix" about campus revolution and unorthodox lifestyles proved not to be big box-office attractions. What did help lift the industry's fortunes was a series of immense hits made by young directors. The most successful were Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972); William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973); Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977); John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978); and George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973), *Star Wars* (1977), and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). In addition, films by Brian De Palma (*Obsession,* 1976) and Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver,* 1976; *Raging Bull,* 1980) attracted critical praise.

These and other directors came to be known as the "movie brats." Instead of coming up through the ranks of the studio system, most had gone to film schools. At New York University, the University of Southern California, and the University of California at Los Angeles, they had not only mastered the mechanics of production but also learned about film aesthetics and history. Unlike earlier Hollywood directors, the movie brats often had an encyclopedic knowledge of great movies and directors. Even those who did not attend film school were admirers of the classical Hollywood tradition.

As had been the case with the French New Wave, these movie-mad directors produced some personal, highly self-conscious films. The movie brats worked in traditional genres, but they also tried to give them an autobiographical coloring. Thus *American Graffiti* was not only a teenage musical but also Lucas's reflection on growing up in California in the 1960s. Coppola imbued both *Godfather* films with a vivacious and melancholy sense of the intense bonds within the Italian-