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Cultural Contexts: Where Did the Wave Begin?

> In 1958 and 1959, my buddies at *Cahiers* and I, having moved into directing, were promoted like a new brand of soap. We were "the nouvelle vague." . . . But if the popular press spoke so much of us it was because they wanted to impose a formula: De Gaulle equals renewal, in the cinema like everywhere else. The general arrives, the Republic changes, France is reborn!
>
> —CLAUDE CHABROL, *Et pourtant je tourne*

> A number of guys arriving from very different places ended up finding one another at *Cahiers du Cinéma*, like metal shavings attracted to and then organized around a magnet.
>
> —PIERRE KAST, in *La nouvelle vague 25 ans après*

THE FRENCH New Wave was much more than a tally of titles or an encyclopedic list of directors. The New Wave was first and foremost a cultural phenomenon, resulting from economic, political, aesthetic, and social trends that developed in the 1950s. Changes in the other arts, including literature and theater, anticipated some of the shifts in cinema, and the role and even domain of art criticism shifted during this time as well. The New Wave cinema was shaped by forces as abstract as the growth of film criticism that stressed mise-en-scène over thematics and as concrete as technological innovations in motion-picture cameras and sound recorders. This chapter investigates some of the most profound mechanisms that influenced the rise of the New Wave. For instance, the excited reception of movies like Louis Malle's *Les amants* (*The Lovers*, 1958) or Claude Chabrol's *Le beau Serge* (*Handsome Serge*, 1958) can only be fully understood in relation to the conditions that fostered and rewarded these unusual productions. France was undergoing unprecedented industrial growth and self-evaluation, both of which put new pressures on the cinema and its place in the larger national sphere. Moreover, the average

moviegoers of 1960 were already quite different from those of 1950. Political conservatism, consumerism, television, *ciné-clubs*, popular film journals, and a new generation of movie producers all affected the stories and styles that would mark this daring movement. To understand what it meant to "be" nouvelle vague, it is essential to consider the social, critical, economic, and technological backgrounds that helped determine the films and their significance. Thus, rather than starting with the cinema, one must begin with the social realm; by getting a clear sense of what French life and culture were like in the 1950s, one can comprehend better why this unique event in world cinema took place when and where it did, while the rest of international cinema could only look on in curious awe at the revival of French cinema.

A New Society, a New Audience

France had changed dramatically in the late 1940s, and these far-reaching transformations continued into the 1960s. Obviously, every nation involved in World War II was deeply affected by it for some time afterward, and France, in particular, came out of the war afflicted with widespread war damage and debt. But the French also shared a strange mixture of national shame for France's military loss and Vichy collaboration and an exaggerated national pride in their country's role in the resistance and ultimate victory over Germany. Further, all the conflicting views of France held by the international community at the war's end—France as a helpless victim, a lazy and ineffective military force, a valued ally, a crippled industrial power—were also felt within its own borders. For historians of this era, it is often tempting to fall into simple personifications of France as a unified, biological entity; it is easy to find articles and books devoted to postwar reconstruction that refer to France "standing up," "awaking from its slumber," or "shaking off its recent past." These sorts of metaphors were common in popular history texts, but they also came directly from the political and cultural discourse of the days. Most political parties struggled quickly after the war to prove that they, more than all the other competitors for power and national respect, had fought for and helped regain France's liberty. The political discourse of the day was built on themes of reviving past glories and moving France triumphantly forward with purpose, unity, and pride. Every politician and newspaper seemed to want to speak to and for a unified France, and the French people were often addressed as a single team that now had to get back to basics in

order to simultaneously make up for lost time and join the modernizing world.

Thus, the years after World War II saw a France desperately trying to assert, or reassert in the eyes of many French citizens, its cultural, political, and even economic clout in Europe and beyond. From the day the Germans were pushed out of Paris, on August 19, 1944, the French film industry literally rushed to reclaim its domain from the collaborators and to foster a newly reborn cinema that would regain the glory of the1930s, the golden years of Jean Renoir, René Clair, and Marcel Carné. With the liberation, the famed offices of the Vichy government's Comité d'organisation de l'industrie cinématographique (COIC) were ransacked and claimed by the cinematic arm of the resistance as the last Nazis were being chased from the Paris streets. Legend has it that the omnipresent Henri Langlois, cofounder of the Cinémathèque française, even took over the desk of the former COIC director and pounded his boot on the desktop, calling for executions in the name of French cinema.[1] The era of purification and revitalization of the film industry had begun in earnest.[2]

The tale of the dynamic changes in French cinema, however, cannot begin without first taking time to understand how the demographics, economics, and general cultural climate of France developed during this era. The prospects for the film industry as a whole, as well as for individual filmmakers, writers, and producers, were motivated and also constrained by the larger generating mechanisms of the society at large. France was undergoing a tense era of change with its left-center coalition Fourth Republic, which gradually took shape from 1944 to 1946. And while political infighting forced the nation's overall political trajectory to move in often contradictory fits and starts until Charles De Gaulle's Fifth Republic came to power in 1958, there was nonetheless a real sense of urgency to rebuild every facet of French life, from constructing more electric power plants to exporting more perfume. As Jill Forbes writes, "After the war, Paris was determined to regain its position as the leading center of fashion worldwide, and to counter the growing competition from Britain and the U.S."[3] The various interest groups that desired a stronger cinema fit squarely within this national sense of destiny. As the 1950s progressed, France underwent fundamental, far-reaching changes that would eventually help establish a "New Look" in fashion and, by 1958, favorable conditions for the rise of new faces and production practices in the French film industry; these changes occurred at roughly the same time that the nation was getting its new Fifth Republic—a "coincidence" that was lost on almost no one.

At the close of World War II, France's population was just 39 million people, or nearly the same as it had been in 1900. The two world wars had killed and displaced vast numbers of young men and disrupted innumerable families; the relative drop in the number of children born in France during the 1930s also decreased the number of potential filmgoers during the war years and just after.[4] Between 1945 and 1960, however, the population increased more than it had in France's previous one hundred years. Thus, while the United States, a nation built on immigration and rapid population growth, could lay claim to having undergone a post-World War II baby boom, "le boom" in France was indeed unprecedented. According to Maurice Larkin, the dramatic population increase was not simply a result of a predictable, immediate rise in births among traditional young French families, from new marriages, or from the reunion of young couples separated by the war. Rather, sample maternity hospital surveys in the 1950s "revealed that a third of pregnancies were unwanted, and that without them there would have been no population increase at all."[5] Larkin argues that throughout the 1950s, birth control in France was minimal (paralleling shortcomings in many technical, health, and household commodities), and thus the lack of widely available contraceptives serves to highlight very real tensions between contemporary women's lives and the social norms of traditional France. But a much more telling statistic is that another one-third of the population increase resulted from France's growing immigrant population. The large numbers of Italians, Portuguese, and North Africans living and working in France to help fuel its economic revival accounted for ever higher percentages of the French population. By 1960 an estimated 10 percent of Portugal's entire population was working in France on a seasonal or full-time basis.

Nonetheless, the political discourse of a France getting back to work and moving forward was not entirely hollow campaign rhetoric, for a steady economic boom accompanied "le baby boom." By 1950, France was operating with a perfectly balanced budget (thanks in large part to a devalued franc and war debt that was excused by the United States). In 1951, France's gross national product was only two-thirds that of Great Britain, and its exports only one-half of Britain's. By 1965 (the end of the New Wave period), France had surpassed Britain in every category, including average wages paid. But as Larkin explains, "Contrary to the hopes of many contemporaries, the economic changes of the postwar decades saw no particular upswing in social mobility."[6] The foreign labor force remained at the low end of the pay scale, and France became increasingly

stratified into several distinct social ranks. Even the public education system continued to enforce two very divergent tracks from the earliest grades on: some students were channeled toward professional and intellectual fields, while most were directed toward practical jobs without hope of pursuing education in specialized lycées, much less universities.

Nonetheless, as many institutions within France struggled to modernize and rebuild, the standard of living of all classes improved steadily, thanks in part to strong labor unions and the active roles played by the Socialist and Communist Parties, even though the gap between upper middle class and lower middle class widened. As Forbes and Kelly observe, economic progress brought a new era to France, one borrowed mostly from American and British business models: "The economic boom of the 1950s was a remarkable achievement. . . . Production grew by 41 percent between 1950 and 1958, fulfilling the targets of the [Fourth Republic's] Second Plan a year ahead of schedule. France entered the consumer age of detergents, plastics, private cars, washing machines. . . . The 'jeune cadre dynamique,' or thrusting young executive, was becoming a familiar figure, with a commitment to business success, modern (American) managerial attitudes, and a life-style of personal development and conspicuous consumption."[7] Not only was this new copycat spirit lampooned by Jacques Tati in *Jour de fête* (1949) and *Mon oncle* (1958), but American and British cultural influences provided unsettling backdrops for many of the subsequent New Wave films as France entered into a long era of love-hate obsessions with American and British culture and lifestyles.

If the dramatic changes resulting from this rapidly growing economy produced a general trend for 1950s cinema spectatorship in France, it was, ironically, to create a gradually smaller, more elite audience. This study will investigate the specific economic and industrial changes in the cinema itself later in this chapter, but it must confront here the connections between large changes in French society and the resulting shifts in the audience. While overall economic conditions were improving throughout Europe, there was nonetheless a shared crisis in motion-picture attendance during the 1950s. Immediately after World War II, a boom in exhibition had occurred when American films and other domestic and international motion pictures, long banned from French, German, and Italian screens, came back with a vengeance, allowing Europeans finally to witness such already famous movies as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Wizard of Oz* (1940), and *Casablanca* (1943), as well as the recent films noirs and others. But by the 1950s, as Europe's national industries were

cranking out increasing numbers of high-quality films to compete with American imports, cinema-going ran head-on into other competitors for leisure time. With the expanding economies of the mid-1950s, European film attendance peaked in 1956, a full decade after it did in the United States. France reached its highest box-office numbers in 1957. From 1956 to 1961 Western Europe's film audience declined by 473 million spectators. France alone saw a drop from 412 million tickets sold in 1957 to 328 million by 1961, and this during the largest increase in French population in a century.[8]

Movies were losing nearly one-third of their audience for a variety of reasons, but the most important competitors were two consumer products: the automobile and the television. The number of people buying automobiles in particular was a "marker of changes in lifestyles and spending habits," according to Jean-Claude Batz.[9] He does not propose that people who bought a car were simply too busy driving around to stop for a movie, nor that they were necessarily so broke from buying a Citroën that they could not afford to see *M. Hulot's Holiday*. Rather these new purchases indicated an upwardly mobile family with many more options for leisure time, beyond watching TV or driving. The potential film audience was able to go on more frequent and longer vacations, attend more sports events, or spend more evenings in restaurants and nightclubs. Increased disposable income and the parallel increase in manufacturing and imports also led to people spending additional money on new appliances, ranging from radios for every family member to washers and dryers, or even on a second home in the country. As Colin Crisp argues, "The period of the fifties saw a dramatic increase in all forms of consumer spending related to the individual and to the home and it was those forms of spending related to public or community activities which showed decreases. This move away from a population which expects to go out for its services and entertainment, and toward a population which expects services and entertainment to be delivered to the home . . . was one of the essential factors in the steadily growing pressure on cinema throughout this period to transform itself."[10] The trade paper *Variety* concisely summed up the problems confronting Europe's film industry in the title of a 1963 article: "Box Office Foes: Cars, TV, Prosperity."[11]

Studies in both England and the United States in the late 1940s, when film attendance in these countries began to drop rapidly, showed a perfect symmetry between the increase in automobile ownership and the decline in film attendance. American studies suggested that 42 percent of the decline in attendance was attributable to car purchases, which was almost as much as for television. Accordingly, Italy, with the smallest percentage of cars per citizen in Western Europe, saw the smallest decline in film attendance during the 1950s. France, by contrast, which saw the number of automobiles and drive-in campgrounds double between 1955 and 1960 (reaching nine people per car in 1961 versus twenty-four in Italy, but only three in the United States), followed the American example by losing movie attendance swiftly after 1957. In fact, France's concerned film industry spent a great deal of time looking over the border at Germany, whose fascination with the automobile was quickly becoming a national craze. Germany provided an example of what France was trying to avoid: over two hundred German theaters closed in 1960, another three hundred in 1961, and twenty-five hundred more were considered near bankruptcy.[12] A 1960 front-page editorial in *Le Film français* titled "Autos et 'deux roues' concurrent no 1 de cinéma" ("Autos and Mopeds Are Cinema's Number 1 Competitor") argued that the French film industry needed new initiatives to ensure that this newly "motorized public" would remain faithful to the cinema in winter and summer alike.[13] The authors realized that new affluence, unfortunately, did not necessarily translate into more money for the cinema's coffers. The automobile had a dramatic impact on France; in 1963, Roland Barthes wrote that the French were so obsessed with the automobile that within popular discourse and family relations in France, it ranked as the second most common topic, trailing only the more traditional debates concerning food. Barthes even suggested that Oedipal struggles between father and son were now being played out over selection and control of the family's automobile purchase![14]

Television, however, became an even more direct competitor for the cinema's audience and the family's attention. American box-office receipts dropped 23 percent between the peak years of 1946 and 1956, even though ticket prices increased 40 percent over those same ten years. According to Tino Balio, the profits for Hollywood's ten leading movie studios dropped 76 percent while over four thousand theaters closed their doors.[15] Already in 1953, André Bazin warned in *Esprit* about the dire economic circumstances in Hollywood and how newly unemployed actors and technicians, laid off by the major studios, were struggling to retool and find work in the new television boom.[16] Thus, it should come as no surprise that French film professionals and critics alike were worried about how post-World War II changes that had an economic powerhouse like Hollywood on the ropes would affect their own, weaker national cinema.

Television did not burst into French homes as rapidly as it had in the United States and England, but it did make steady inroads, especially during the late 1950s and early 1960s, as movie attendance dropped accordingly and also began its biggest shift in demographics. Television's gradual pace was attributable in part to the slower economic expansion in the late forties and early fifties in France but also to the government's heavy user tax on sales of television sets and the relatively slim offerings of broadcast shows. In 1950, for instance, France had just one state-run television channel, and it broadcast a mere twenty hours per week. Only in 1964 did the second channel appear; not until 1967 was color available in France. According to Jill Forbes, "The survival of the French film industry benefited enormously from the slow spread of television."[17] For instance, in 1949 the United States already had 1 million television sets while France had only several thousand. In 1958 that number had increased to 683,000 sets; by 1959 it had climbed to just under 1 million (versus 55 million for the United States), and by 1962 there were 2.5 million sets in France. Nonetheless, one of the more pathetic signifiers of the new crisis for French film was cited in a front-page editorial by *Le Film français* titled "La recherche d'un public" ("In Search of a Public"), which mentioned that only one in thirty people in France went to a movie theater in 1959, the same ratio as people owning a television.[18] By the end of 1960, the balance between going to the movies and owning a television shifted permanently in television's favor.

While French television offered much less made-for-television entertainment than did American commercial networks, the French did augment their news, documentaries, and variety shows by airing motion pictures on television almost from the start. Television thereby directly cut into the perceived need or desire to go out to movie theaters in a way that other consumer distractions did not. Moreover, as television became more widespread among the lower middle class and middle class, it affected family disposable income for leisure activities more dramatically than did automobiles, which tended to be owned by upper middle class, urban families. As Batz explained, "TV is not only a huge family expense, cutting into other entertainment purchases; it tends to keep the head of the household home, so families no longer go to the movies together as often. It therefore changes audience behavior patterns permanently."[19] France would have to learn, as American motion picture and even radio producers had, that the days of a mass, generalized family audience were ending, and their products would have to be pitched more keenly at increasingly

fragmented segments of the population (children, teenagers, college students, and women). The New Wave could obviously appeal to a specific niche audience in a way that many of the earlier "tradition of quality" historical epics or literary adaptations would not. The cinema's entire function within a new society was changing, and the rise of affluence, education, television, and other consumer products provided tough new challenges to an industry that had always remained rather decentralized, undercapitalized, and artisanal. One unpleasant but necessary option for the French, as will be examined in detail later, was to enter into more international coproductions with American producers. But to many this alternative seemed like a fast track to oblivion, leading toward the demise of the spirit and independence of France's national cinema. As Batz lamented in 1963, "If tomorrow our European film market finds itself submerged by the flood of televisions, as most of the current warning signs suggest, the companies already allied with Hollywood will become, for better or worse, islands where everyone will try to find refuge."[20]

In his influential book, *Le cinéma exploité*, René Bonnell examines the industry's cynicism and frustration. Bonnell argues that French cinema had faced nearly endless crises since the 1930s, but the decline of audiences by 1960 deepened the problem: "Film has gradually changed from the dominant popular form of entertainment to its current status as another form of artistic and cultural activity. The decline in attendance has not been universal, but rather has affected most the lower end of the scale, as the audience becomes more elite."[21] He also cites the sobering conclusion of a study of the French cinema's relative health by the Société d'études et de mathémathiques (SEMA) covering the years of 1957 to 1964: "'Cinema is no longer the art of the masses or the popular entertainment it was. The social profile of the film audience is nearing that of live theater. The young, well-educated 'enlightened fanatic' is replacing the average spectator.'"[22] This new dependence on a concentrated core of young, urban moviegoers made the industry as a whole especially vulnerable, because by the early 1960s, roughly 20 percent of the audience provided 80 percent of the annual box-office revenue, while the working class's attendance dropped over 60 percent during that decade. And although the largest portion of the audience remained fifteen to twenty-four year olds, Bonnell points out that even that previously reliable group's attendance depended largely on socioeconomic status: "Overall demand for movies shifts toward an increasingly selective audience. Higher than average income, a privileged professional background, and solid educa-

tion increase one's attendance. . . . Even the attendance of young people fits these traits."[23]

By the early 1960s, study after study was confirming the French industry's worst fears: like England, the United States, and most of Western Europe, France's motion-picture industry, which had long been a source of national pride and export income (like fashion, wine, and perfume), no longer served the average citizen. By 1961, the commercial French cinema was clearly feeling the financial pinch from these changes in demographics. Two of every three film technicians were unemployed for some or all of 1961; this fact also explains why the unions were so quick to condemn New Wave location shooting practices, which further channeled the decreasing production money away from underutilized studio space. Batz explains that national Film Aid, which accounted for roughly 20 percent of French production budgets, kept France in the international production business: "French . . . productions would be condemned to failure if their subventions, which assure the economic feasibility of the majority of their films, were removed without some other form of compensation."[24]

Consequently, the late 1950s and early 1960s must be seen as a complex and contradictory time for the French film industry and its spectators: On the one hand, the New Wave was bringing renewed attention and respect to the French industry as perhaps the most exciting place on the earth for making movies. On the other hand, the traditional bases for the French and European cinemas were nonetheless crumbling, and as this study will demonstrate, the notion of a truly national cinema was being weakened even as the power of the individual auteur seemed to be on the rise.

The Cultural and Aesthetic Setting

Transformations in demand deeply affected the nature of the cinema's clientele, as an ever more elite audience comprised the most active moviegoers, but these changes also were part of shifts in the larger cultural sphere of 1950s France. The lively and occasionally vicious aesthetic debates in film circles were part of a general rethinking of the connections between various arts, critical models, and political commitments. World War II had demonstrated on many levels that aesthetics, education, sociology, economics, and politics played parallel and competing roles in modern society; the war had reminded everyone of the high stakes involved in ideology, cultural theory, and media practice. The rise of a wide array of popular media after World War II contributed to a monumental reshaping

of the cultural realm; this phenomenon, plus the expansion of France's universities, motivated traditionally isolated "high culture" critics to rethink their place in the modern world. Many contemporary sociologists, art critics, and philosophers began to write more consistently of "changing intellectual landscapes" and "broken academic barriers" as they tried to map out this new cultural terrain. From the halls of the Sorbonne to the pages of weekly news magazines, recurring motifs of a rapidly changing face of France gradually developed, and the popular media were always cited as catalysts of these changes. The rising status of aesthetic and cultural criticism as a significant factor in French intellectual and political life helped in turn fuel "French Theory" as an up-and-coming international export.

In the media, the 1950s saw a definitive breakdown of conventional divisions between high and low cultural products and the ways they were interpreted. One striking development was the emergence of mass circulation weekly magazines, such as *Elle* (1945), *Paris-Match* (1949), and *L'Express* (1953), that replaced smaller, more specialized reviews and journals as barometers of social and intellectual change. *L'Express*, in particular, strove to represent this new, transitional France by combining coverage of contemporary lifestyle issues with an academic, or cultural studies, stance. Cover stories often focused on "high art" figures such as Samuel Beckett and the twenty-eight-year-old "painting sensation" Bernard Buffet, but one also featured thirteen-year-old Jean-Pierre Léaud, star of *The 400 Blows*, just before the film's premiere at the 1959 Cannes Film Festival. Meanwhile, these magazines' articles covered topics ranging from the war in Algeria to Camus's novels to the latest women's fashions.

A telling example of this fascinating mixture of consumerism and culture can be seen in the March 1, 1957, issue of *L'Express*, which featured an article titled "La Machine à laver tourne-t-elle dans le sens de l'histoire?" ("Is the Washing Machine Spinning in History's Direction?"). This article highlighted France's rush for more household appliances (vacuums, washing machines, refrigerators) and noted with concern that consumer spending on them had doubled from 68 million francs in 1954 to 121 million in 1956. "This rise in comfort has interesting industrial and economic implications. But is it sane for our nation? It also touches on serious sociological and psychological issues. How does increased comfort affect a person's mindset? How does it modify our social behavior?"[25] The magazine then enriched the discussion by featuring an interview with a number of sociologists and cultural experts, including Edgar Morin, of the Centre

national de la recherche scientifique, author of sociological anthropology books such as *Stars* and *Le cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire*.[26] Another contributor to this discussion, Colette Audry, a home economist, pointed out that washing laundry by hand had the advantage of creating a shared bond between French women and hardworking women in Africa and the rest of the world: "Once this continuity is removed, we lose a feminine connection. . . . That is a significant issue."[27] It is hard to imagine *Time* magazine, on which *L'Express* was modeled, inviting social scientists from Harvard to debate the national and international cultural consequences of buying vacuums and washing machines during the 1950s.

It was, of course, *L'Express* that launched the term "nouvelle vague" and used it almost relentlessly during the late 1950s as its own battle cry. In the fall of 1957, *L'Express*'s Françoise Giroud initiated a national survey of "the generation who will create France's future": "We have prepared a vast questionnaire for young people from all locales, all social classes, designed to reveal for the first time, in depth, just what our new French generation—*la nouvelle vague*—is like. Their ideals, their beliefs, their education, their desires . . . what are they? *L'Express*, which has a large audience among those who make up this 'nouvelle vague' is well positioned to distribute and evaluate this survey."[28] *L'Express* asked young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty to respond to twenty-four questions ranging from "What is France's number one problem?" to "Are you happy?" and "Do you think people like you will have any real influence over France's fate?" The responses, published on December 5 and 12, 1957, included both the raw data (25 percent wished France had a socialist society, 69 percent thought women should concentrate on home and family) and selected comments from the surveys ("In modern life today, we have no god. . . . We are isolated and independent.")

Professional social scientists evaluating the data offered cautionary conclusions. They pointed out, for instance, that the majority of young people felt unable to influence current events and that only a few people in their twenties were interested in the top literary figures of the era. Rather, contemporary youth were preoccupied with more accessible sources like detective novels and the sports page, and their immediate goals were to establish their own families and careers. Such a survey is important today not because it gives any clear sense of a unified generation but because it reveals how deeply France's popular press believed that younger people lived and thought differently than previous generations. These observations paralleled the research and theories of American sociologists, who were also busy studying and documenting "youth culture" after World War II. It is startling to recall that the term "teenager" first entered everyday language in 1945, and it was really the 1950s that saw young people identified as a separate, definable age group falling between childhood and adulthood. According to *A History of Young People in the West*, "The fifties saw the appearance of 'teenagers,' who were different from their predecessors due to their numbers, their high level of resources, and their group consciousness."[29] Young people constituted a distinct community, and as American sociologist James Coleman wrote in 1955, "a youth subculture in industrial society" had emerged: "These young people speak a different language . . . and the language they speak is becoming more and more different."[30] While sociologists, psychologists, and community leaders debated the potential social dangers of this new lifestyle, its perceived existence and differences helped fuel a widespread fascination with all things young and new. In addition, older people suddenly tried to learn about this generation to appear "hip" themselves; marketing powers shifted into high gear, trying to gauge and exploit the newfound subculture. The topic was so lively in France that Giroud published an expanded version of the *Express* articles in book form, titled, *La nouvelle vague: Portraits de la jeunesse*.[31]

L'Express's initial response to its groundbreaking survey was an opportunistic attempt to summarize and speak to this new market audience—"the eight million French people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five who make up the *nouvelle vague*"[32]—but it also offered a cautionary warning that France's future lay with a generation that might not respect or follow the established rules and rituals of France's past. In the process, a new generation, whether it really was all that different or not, was being defined and represented. Now the emphasis in advertising, fashion, literature, and cinema would be on novelty, change, and breaks from the past, while the cultural observers would create a new business of combing the horizon for concrete signs of any major upheavals. As French historian Jacques Siclier wrote in 1961, "For a press that has to uncover striking new trends, all that was young and animated by a new spirit became part of *la nouvelle vague*."[33] But everyone seemed to agree that the mid-1950s was indeed a challenging new era where new detergents were needed for new washing machines, new shopping routines were determined by new cars and new refrigerators, and a new generation was reading new novels and watching new, sexier films like *And God Created Woman* (Vadim, 1956). Even older, long established directors like Marcel

A second determining factor in the rise of the New Novel was the accelerated growth of colleges and universities in the 1950s, not only in France but also in England and in the United States. Comparative literature and French language departments taught more contemporary literature, and the *nouveau roman* provided a daring, coherent literary movement that new faculty and graduate students could easily build into the expanding twentieth-century literature canon. Thus, the New Novel gained from the considerable cultural attention on all things "youthful." Publishing houses picked up on this sudden interest quickly; they were helped along by the rapid expansion of academia, where more courses meant more book sales, and more book sales in turn meant more public attention and validation of a youthful export from France, as Robbe-Grillet became a new, highly exportable, cultural icon.[39]

Robbe-Grillet became particularly significant as a representative of the New Novel because, in addition to his personal flair for public relations, including interviews, lecture tours, and visiting professorships, he was both a novelist and a narrative theorist. He wrote a number of essays, beginning in 1955, which were collected in his *Pour un nouveau roman* (published in English in 1965 under the title *For a New Novel*), providing critics with a sort of manifesto outlining the spirit of change in literature. For instance, at the very beginning of *For a New Novel* Robbe-Grillet writes that one thing that surprised him in the many reviews of his novels, whether the reviewer was praising or attacking books such as *Les gommes* or *Le voyeur*, "was to encounter in almost every case an implicit—or even explicit—reference to the great novels of the past, which were always held up as the model on which the young writer should keep his eyes fixed."[40] The influence of Robbe-Grillet was felt beyond French language classes or specialized literary reviews such as *La Nouvelle revue française*, however, as he was interviewed and even wrote a series of essays for *L'Express* in the mid-1950s. In fact, *L'Express*'s desire to be equated with "newness" is clear in its interview with him in October 1959: "Two thousand copies of your most recent book, *In the Labyrinth*, were sold in its first two days alone. We are happy for you since we had recommended it to our readers interested in 'pure literature.'"[41] The popularity of *In the Labyrinth* thus validated the cultural power of both the New Novel and *L'Express* as voices of the New Wave generation.

Interestingly for this study, Robbe-Grillet complained that his theoretical arguments caused many popular and serious critics alike to crown him king of a new literary youth movement that they variously labeled the New Novel, the Objective Novel, the School of Minuit, and *ecole du regard* (school of the glance). Robbe-Grillet, however, wrote that he did not believe any unified school or movement existed. He was troubled when critics began to lump him together with any young writer whose work did not seem traditional, discussing Robbe-Grillet's novels alongside others that shared nothing except their unconventionality. Similarly, some *Cahiers du cinéma* filmmakers would later complain about the tendency to group together Vadim, Truffaut, and Resnais under the same New Wave heading. The unsatisfactory and uneven reception of Robbe-Grillet's novels and essays motivated him to rework some of his essays in an attempt to clarify his own positions on contemporary literature and the *nouveaux romans de Robbe-Grillet*: "These reflections in no way constitute a theory of the novel; they merely attempt to clarify several key lines of development which seem to me crucial in contemporary literature. If in many of the pages that follow, I readily employ the term New Novel, it is not to designate a school, nor even a specific and constituted group of writers working in the same direction; the expression is merely a convenient label, applicable to all those seeking new forms for the novel, forms capable of expressing (or of creating) new relations between man and the world."[42]

Here one finds additional justifications for discussing the New Novel in a book on the New Wave: both movements are loosely organized around youthful searches for new ways to tell new stories that engage the modern world. As Robbe-Grillet argues, New Novelists "know that the systematic repetition of the forms of the past is not only absurd and futile, but it can even become harmful: by blinding us to our real situation in the world today, it keeps us, ultimately, from constructing the world and man of tomorrow."[43] Those critics championing the New Novel argued convincingly that Balzac's era involved traits such as faith in cause-effect and individuality that were missing in the modern world. Just as modern notions of space, time, and the human condition had changed by the mid-twentieth century, humanity's modes of representation and inquiry should change as well. Modern man and modern fictions no longer belonged to the world of Balzac and Dickens, so there was no point in retelling the tales that Balzac and Dickens had told. Many of these arguments resurface in debates over the French New Wave as well, since, in large part, these films are about renovating cinematic *écriture* or the very process and difficulty of narrating something unexpected. Modern novelists wanted to break free of the links to nineteenth-century literature just as the New Wave filmmakers

needed to isolate themselves from literary adaptations and the traditional conventions of classical cinema.

Further, both New Novel and New Wave are handy historical terms that conjure up immediate, if exaggerated, images of unified movements creating groundbreaking books and movies that were changing French culture daily. Unlike earlier modernist movements, such as Symbol*ism*, Impression*ism*, or Surreal*ism*, which each suggested itself as a sort of variation or fine tuning of modern art, "New" movements suggested vast ramifications for the future, producing connotations of irreversible, revolutionary change. Even the occasional designations of "young novel" or "young French cinema" suggested a passing moment that would soon mature like all others. But to be "New" gave novels and films a very real degree of cultural power, especially in an age transformed by marketing and a distrust of or even disgust with some of humanity's past. Rather than offering a range of optional artistic camps (for example, Existentialism, Expressionism, Minimalism) France now had only two options: there was the "New," and there was everyone else. For instance, in response to novelist Henri Clouard's complaint that New Novelists "want to saw off the branch we are sitting on," Robbe-Grillet replied, "The branch in question is already dead of natural causes (and the passing of time); it is not our fault if it is now rotting."[44] The battle cry of innovation and youth became so dominant that eventually cigarette maker Peter Stuyvesant adopted the slogan "*Jeune, dynamique, et international!*" which grew out of this frenzy for novelty that not only helped sell cigarettes but also helped launch both the New Novelists and the New Wave.

Because of the boom in popular and specialized magazines, radio, and eventually television, artists and writers saw their visibility and social role change in the 1950s. Moreover, the New Novel was closely connected with other new trends in literary and cultural criticism, partly because writers such as Robbe-Grillet were rapidly becoming public figures. Culture was being revived as a French national treasure and an important intellectual export. Cultural figures, from Sartre and Picasso to Sagan and anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, saw unprecedented wealth and celebrity heaped upon them as they became part of the new "culture industry," which carried them far beyond the traditional intellectual circles more common to 1930s and 1940s artists and academics.[45] The ideological ramifications of such large-scale gaps between lived experience and representation, in rhetoric, novels, cinema, and even advertisements, came to the center of intellectual activity in the decade after World War II. Lévi-Strauss in par-

Figure 1.1. Cartoon from *L'Express,* April 30, 1959, 29; unborn child kicking elderly gentleman

ticular helped bring together the study of literature and social science by combining his study of myths with an enlivened brand of anthropology.

Lévi-Strauss argued that language lays the foundations for culture since both are made of the same material: structural relations, systems of difference, signs, and relations of exchange. Lévi-Strauss played a crucial role in the 1950s for igniting a new era of structural and semiotic analysis that sought to understand how language determined the human mind,

which in turn determined culture and history. His inspiration came from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure argued that linguistic structures, including the sign, made of a signifier and its signifieds and combined in codes, were the bases of all human activity. The belief that linguistics was essential in studying other cultural phenomena was rooted in two fundamental insights: first, society is not simply a collection of material events, but consists of events with meaning or signs; and second, that lived events do not have essences, but are defined by systematic internal and external networks of relations, or signifying code systems, that the analyst must work to uncover and understand.[46] As Rosalind Coward and John Ellis explain, "Structuralist thought bases its analysis of the social process upon this analogy between society and language. . . . For Lévi-Strauss, linguistics presents itself as a systematic science, whose methods are exemplary for the human sciences."[47]

The significance of Lévi-Strauss and of the rise of structuralist and semiotic analysis, both of which were fueled by the impact of his 1958 book, *Structural Anthropology*, was far reaching. Suddenly, the novel's social function went beyond Sartre's engaged literature to become part of the fabric of social formation. If language provided the rules and production of meaning and was made concrete in social structures, then all language was worthy of careful study and all modes of communication could be analyzed in linguistic terms. The world was a rich network of sign systems, and social scientists, art historians, film critics, and literature professors could all share common vocabulary, methodology, and goals. Everyone's task was to evaluate signification in all its forms; as Roland Barthes, the most influential cultural critic of them all, would prove, "reading" a spaghetti advertisement or a wrestling match was as valid for professors at the Sorbonne as analyzing the novels of Flaubert or even Robbe-Grillet.

Barthes argued that all literary and cultural history was really a history of signs. Beginning in 1947 until his death in 1980, his criticism moved gracefully from discussing Flaubert's *écriture*, to the New Novel, to images from Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, to the excessive qualities of the 1950s Citroën automobile, and back to the codes at work in Balzac. His object of study was the entire cultural world that literary theory opened up for structural, semiotic, and eventually poststructural analysis (as seen in his *The Pleasure of the Text*). One of his most amazing collections was *Mythologies*, published in 1957 from articles written over the preceding several years. As he explained, *Mythologies* was "an ideological critique bearing on the language of so-called mass-culture" that unmasked the

very real, mystifying signs that work to naturalize bourgeois culture via mass culture *myths*, which people accept as universal.[48] Lévi-Strauss had burst on the scenes writing about distant cultures and their myths; Barthes brought myth and its functions full circle, turning them back upon French culture and discourse. By the early 1960s, Barthes was an international sensation, leading a new generation of theorists to prominence. As Forbes and Kelly write, "Critics such as Roland Barthes, Jean Starobinski, Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean Ricardou, Serge Dubrovski, and Gerard Genette sought to replace the traditional humanist approaches to literature with new ones drawing on the theoretical resources of the human and social sciences. . . . The role of the critic is therefore not to narrow down the possible meanings, but rather to multiply them . . . and to analyze the textual structures which make meaning possible."[49] A new sense of significance, as well as of poetics, inspired novelists and filmmakers to think in terms of the history, connotations, and multiple functions of the signifiers they used. Not surprisingly, the French New Wave regularly referred to past film practice (via irises, direct camera address, pantomime, and so on), allusions inspired in part by a renewed desire to reassess current and past arsenals of "cinematic signs."

Barthes wrote for many specialized journals, such as *Communications*, where his influential "Elements of Semiology" and "Rhetoric of the Image" first appeared in 1964, in the same issue in which film theorist Christian Metz launched his study of the semiotics of cinema with "The Cinema: Language or Language System?" Thus, literary and cultural criticism expanded during the late 1950s and early 1960s, not just because of lively new novels and growing universities, but because a whole new generation of scholars was bringing "high" art criticism to bear on every aspect of daily life, including the cinema. As French departments in the American and British universities had seized on the New Novel, their English departments now followed suit, studying French literary theory, if not literature. Everyone's life was suddenly part of innumerable cultural codes, and every "text," whether a Native American folk tale, a 1930s Pagnol film, or a striptease act at a local club, was seemingly worth analyzing for what it could reveal about the societies human beings built around themselves. Readers, too, were now walking sign systems, living according to codes they did not always perceive or acknowledge. Artists, as the creators of representations, became newly aware of their cultural power and the constant danger of being coopted by unseen "bourgeois conventions." Thus, it became more imperative for artists to work critically to anticipate and

shape the many potential significations their work could evoke. The job of the critic was to decode modern culture in all its forms. George Duby acknowledged this revolutionary scholarly attention to culture in the final volume of his *Histoire de la France*. Duby explained that the mere presence of his chapter on culture in a survey history of France marks a shift in the significance of culture in contemporary life and a redefinition of history itself: "Here substituted for [revolutions, wars, and social crises] in this history text is the vast and vague term *culture*."[50]

Nor surprisingly, literature and cinema were not the only arts undergoing rapid and radical changes in the 1950s. All the critical, cultural, and economic factors that affected these art forms held true for live theater in France as well. French theater of the 1940s was very popular, but right after the war few top dramatists seemed to break any new cultural or representational ground. Gradually, however, new playwrights and the so-called Theater of the Absurd began to fill in the intellectual gap. Sartre and Camus had written plays to point out social crises, but they also had illustrated the correct direction for positive action. In contrast, the Absurd dramas held out no such hope for action, positive or negative. New theater was more engaged in the formal investigation of the medium than in the conventions of an engaged or epic theater of the earlier twentieth century.

Writing in 1960, Wallace Fowlie called attention to this dramatic revival of French theater after World War II and especially during the 1950s: "During the past ten or fifteen years, the number of successes, both literary and commercial, almost warrants the use of the new term *Ecole de Paris*. Pichette, Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, Schehadé, and Ghelderode are writing new types of plays, so opposed to the successes of the first part of the century that it is possible to see in their work a renaissance of the theater. . . . Already during the 1940s the very marked commercial successes of Sartre and Anouilh and Montherlant threw into disrepute the older fixed formulas of the thesis play and the adultery play of Henry Bernstein and Henri Becque. But in the 1950s, the successes of Ghelderode, Beckett, and Ionesco made the Bernstein play the product of an era that is over."[51] Other drama historians, including Jacques Guicharnaud, would go on to label these 1950s experiments "new theater."

With plays like *The Bald Soprano*, *The Chairs*, and *Rhinoceros*, Eugene Ionesco broke away from the conventionalized "committed" drama of Brecht and Sartre. His plays helped Martin Esslin define the essence of Theater of the Absurd. Others labeled them "antitheater," to parallel the "antinovels" of Robbe-Grillet. By the early 1960s, Ionesco's avant-garde works of the 1950s were already part of a new canon. As Guicharnaud writes: "'Anti-theater of the 1950s has quite simply become the theater of our times. Sketchy characters being carried away by words, changing identities, having three noses, laying eggs, talking without communicating, become preys to organized disorder . . . being brainwashed by monks who are not really monks—none of that seems baffling any longer."[52] Theater of the Absurd, defined as tragicomic, joyously pessimistic plays evoking godless worlds with no pertinent answers or guidelines to help the surreally lost characters, is most closely identified with Samuel Beckett's 1953 premiere of *Waiting for Godot*, considered by many historians the most important play of the twentieth century.

Theater of the Absurd became the immediate catchphrase for many of these plays, but subsequent historians have tended to retain the label New Theater. Forbes and Kelly define this era concisely: "'*Le nouveau théâtre* serves both to recall the pervasive concern with the new, and to indicate a parallelism with the contemporaneous emergence of the *nouveau roman*. The radical developments in both genres were animated by common concerns, in particular to challenge the concept of unitary meaning."[53] Thus, these new plays not only fit the New Novel's notion of radical youthful forms pushing aside respected traditions (here Sartre and Brecht were being surpassed instead of Balzac and Proust), but they also proved that experimentation could make money. Just as specialized presses such as Editions de Minuit or Editions du Seuil were successfully marketing new novels and critics, the New Theater began in tiny Latin Quarter theaters in Paris, where low overhead decreased initial financial risks. Moreover, these small theaters, located near the Paris universities La Sorbonne, Jussieu, and Censier as well as tourist sites, proved there was a strong new audience made up of urban, educated young people—the same sort of audience that bought Robbe-Grillet novels and would frequent new films by young New Wave directors. By 1960, *Waiting for Godot*, which initially premiered at the Théâtre de Babylone, had moved to the large state-run Odéon Theater, and, as Forbes and Kelly point out, "The success of the new theater in displacing a dominant cultural form heralded a new wave of experimentation in dramatic styles and practices which was to gather momentum throughout the 1960s."[54] New forms, new modes of production, and new audiences proved that French culture was indeed undergoing what *L'Express* called a nouvelle vague, and that Wave was now proving significant to every aspect of Parisian life. No medium of this new activity would prove more exciting or marketable than the French New Wave cinema.

From *Ciné-Clubs* to Film Journals

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

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

France has a long history of critical and historical writing about the

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

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

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

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

While *Cahiers du cinéma* is typically identified as Bazin's venture, and he certainly did dominate its aesthetic range in the 1950s and help determine the apprenticeship and directions for many of its young critics, the journal owed its initial success and even its existence most heavily to Jacques Doniol-Valcroze's efforts. Bazin, already ill with tuberculosis in 1950, relied on Doniol-Valcroze to put together the initial financing and the original team of critics. Doniol-Valcroze wanted to continue the work begun by Jean George Auriol at *Revue du cinéma*. With his postwar experience as a journalist and critic for *Cinémonde* and *Revue du cinéma* and simultaneously as editor-in-chief for the fashion magazine *Messieurs*, Doniol-Valcroze had learned well the tasks of organizing a journal, locating sponsors, and preserving harmony among the contributors.[58] He was also actively involved with Jean Cocteau in organizing Objectif 49, where he met Léonide Keigel, then an exhibitor, who would provide the initial financing for a small publishing company, Editions de l'Etoile, to prepare the new cinema review. Bazin was resting in a sanitarium and Doniol-Valcroze retained his principal job at *Messieurs*, so they hired Joseph-Marie Lo Duca, also a "new critic" from *Revue du cinéma*, to organize the first issues. Not only did Lo Duca prove an excellent writer, with access to the latest American films guaranteed by Keigel, but he also designed the format and "look" for the first yellow *Cahiers du cinéma*, though Doniol-Valcroze chose the name (over Bazin's suggested *Cinématographe*).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Modes of Film Production

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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