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The Disappearance of The French New Wave

Emir Kulluk
ekulluk@conncoll.edu

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CISLA SIP: The Disappearance of The French New Wave

Around the start of the 20th century, two French brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière, invented the cinématographe and changed the world of art with the birth of the 7th medium. Screening some of their 20 to 30 second short films on the 28th of December in a cafe in Paris, it was rumored that audiences were screaming in shock because they thought that a train was moving towards them. The Lumière brothers, realizing that film had the potential to show different aspects of life and even different portions of the world, decided to capitalize on this opportunity, recording a whole plethora of short documentaries, showing something as distant as the pyramids or even something as simple as them feeding their child. Hence, was the birth of cinema as we knew it, and it was authentically French, as it displayed the lives of French citizens both within the borders of France, as well as life within its distant colonies. As the interest for this medium kept growing, the Lumière brothers even started sending out people to film landscapes and lives outside of France, allowing the French to learn and keep in touch with their influence outside of mainland France.

In the eyes of many, "...the projection of the first moving images stands at the climax of a period of intense development in visual entertainments" (Gunning, 864). It did not take long for artists to discover the potential of this new medium, and one of the first artists to do so was none other than George Méliès himself, an illusionist who was fascinated by what one could create thanks to the power of cutting and combining frames in addition to the worlds one could create through the cinématographe. He decided to expand the work initiated by the Lumière brothers, moving past documentaries that just documented life as is over to short films that involved fictional landscapes, fictional characters and even a plotline. His efforts lead to the creation of *Voyage dans la lune* (Méliès, 1902) in 1902, where he depicted several astronomers traveling to the surface of the moon and meeting lunar inhabitants, documenting their interactions. From the looks of it, it appeared as if cinema was ever-expanding into new territories, moving on from filming colonies situated far-away from France to filming the colonization of the moon.

However, this dream did not last, as the world was thrown into the chaos of war. It is during this time that the efforts of creatives like Méliès were put aside in order to support wartime efforts. It is during

WW1 where we see the potential of film to be utilized as a propaganda tool, allowing institutions to convey specific ideas and opinions to the masses and shaping their opinions on subjects ranging from politics to war. In France, film as a tool of propaganda was heavily used within the colonies, in order to assert France's power as an empire, reminding its colonies who was still in control. As one could argue, cinema seemed as if it had lost its purity, moving from simple documentaries and stories of travelling to the moon to short bits where an idea or a stereotype was deemed bad and its opposite was deemed to be good.

Although film as a propaganda tool was being utilized, film was also ushering into new ground simultaneously within France: The creation of the *avant-garde*, which in the eyes director and film critic Alexandre Astruc, was "...something of the prophetic" (Astruc). He used *avant-garde* to explain how film was constantly evolving ever since its invention in 1895, because in his eyes cinema was "...becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have been before it, and in particular painting and the novel. After having been successively a fairground attraction, an amusement analogous to boulevard theatre, or a means of preserving the images of an era, it is gradually becoming a language." (Astruc) During this time, French cinema, as implied by Astruc's comments, really started exploring the limits of film by producing a myriad of French experimental films. In these films, filmmakers tried to show that there is no longer the need to be direct in order to convey a message, "In other words, in order to suggest the passing of time, there is no need to show falling leaves and then apple trees in blossom..." (Astruc). One important idea that Astruc helped pioneer was the concept of the "camera stylo", where the camera was compared to a pen, wielded by the director to create the perfect shot.

Nevertheless, this whole aspect of having an underlying message of a story was brought into the world of cinema, and it would be utilized in every single movie afterwards.

Historically at this point in time, France was in a period of trying to gather itself after the costly victory it gained in WW1. It was still trying to retain its image as a vast and powerful empire, and during this time, "...there had been a stress on continuity with its prewar era, when society resisted rather than welcomed dramatic changes to social, cultural, and political order" (Jobs, 24). Therefore the same trends

that existed within French cinema, continued on after WWI, if anything, with more rigor and emphasis on certain aspects of it as well. Whether it was adaptations of famous novels that presented the power and grandeur of France, or explorative films that kept pushing the limits of cinema globally, France was trying to continue what it had started less than two decades ago.

However, A new type of politics was rearing its head in the East, that of communism. The rise of communism in the East fueled the fire for what would be defined as French Socialism, represented by the popular party Front Populaire (Popular Front in english), where the power was returned to and held by the workers through the unions they formed. The idea of having a conscious working blue-collar class definitely started rearing its head within French cinema, as seen by movies such as *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (Renoir, 1936), where the arrogant and sly boss is defeated by one of the employees working for him, Monsieur Lange. However, as much as these ideas were subtly being pushed onto the French populace, there was still an inclination towards big, flashy movies that were mainly adaptations of novels. French Cinema was testing its storytelling capabilities, while also promoting such lavish lifestyles in order to distract from the post war efforts of trying to rebuild what was lost.

As movies like *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* started picking up more and more attention from the general public and as the interest for novel adaptations died down, France, and therefore French Cinema, was hit with another block: WW2. As Nazi Germany progressed through France, occupying more and more territory, French Cinema was shut down for a brief period, as the production of movies were either halted or cancelled altogether, with movies that were slated for release, such as *Le Corbeau* (Clouzot, 1943) were put away permanently, until the war ended. However, despite the initial obstacles to French cinema, unlike what one may assume regarding the value of cinema during wartime, the French film industry kept putting out movies during WW2. Nazi Germany, realizing the power of cinema, came to the conclusion that they could co-produce films with the French in order to show the potential benefits other countries could enjoy by collaborating with Nazis. They formed Continental Films, a German controlled French production company, where French directors who decided to stay in France could produce propagandistic films. Directors who chose not to stay would later flee to the UK or the US.

WW2 was a devastating time period for French society, to the point where decades later, the government and the people, through the utilization of collective memory, decided to promote more of the French resistance efforts rather than French shortcomings such as the Vichy government, where the French cooperated with Nazi Germany.

As WW2 came to a close, France, as it was trying to after the end of WW1, tried to rebuild and restore what was lost once again. This time, however, there was a noticeable difference, which was the context of this rebuilding and the amount of participants in this reconstruction process. The world, through globalization, had become ever more connected, and countries were dependent on each other more than before. This meant that France was bound to receive support as well as influence from external parties, with one of the first and most important being the United States. Under President Truman, the Marshall Plan had been initiated in order to help rebuild Europe, which was left devastated after years of war. This meant that France was to receive guidance and support to industrialize much more, converting from an economic system which mainly focused on agriculture to a new system that gave more weight to industrialization. Alongside this external assistance from the US, France alongside a group of other countries decided that in order to compete on the global stage against countries like the US and the USSR, they needed to form an alliance. The European Union was formed initially under the name of European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, under the Paris Treaty. What first started as an agreement for France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg to build what had been demolished during WW2 grew into an economic alliance to help assist each other in the economic development of their countries.

This period, starting right after WW2 needs to be presented more in depth, as it is vital to both French New Wave cinema as well as French society as we know it today. With such destruction and opportunities to rebuild, “The ruin of war demanded that the nation start over. A new France had to be planned, fashioned, and achieved as an exceptional alternative to the preceding one” (Jobs, 20). It is due to this desire for change, a rupture from the past that resulted in *L'Express*, a French weekly magazine, naming the postwar generation *nouvelle vague*, or new wave as we know it, which “...evoked a sense of

momentum, of volume, of a mounting undercurrent carrying forward an inevitable and unstoppable progression that appropriates and transforms all in its path” (Jobs, 1).

For such an undertaking, one thing was necessary both for France and the rest of Europe. They needed a workforce, a group of people who were energized to carry through with this vision of a post-WW2 era, and this group was the youth that had experienced such drastic changes and was ready to enact change. For the new wave to be realized, incorporating youth into it was necessary, which is why “Youth, as a cultural category and a social group, became a pivotal point around which elements of the new society would be built” (Jobs, 7).

Once the main focus of this new reconstruction was identified, the next point was to specify exactly what needed to be developed. Amidst the list of things for France to undertake, the main ideas involved “...increasing the birthrate, modernizing the economy, reorganizing the empire, and restructuring the government” (Jobs, 21). For increasing the birthrate, France was successful in doing so since the end of WWII, as it experienced what the French have coined *le baby boom*, where France “...experiences a jump in fertility rates, with more than 11 million new births between 1944 and 1958” (Jobs, 23). Combined with the fact that “...the infant mortality rate was cut in half...” (Jobs, 23), France kept on experiencing a population boom that could also be attributed to the fact that contraception tools for preventing such pregnancies were not common or regularly available.

The second item on the list, modernizing the economy, was also in progress. Just 6 years after the end of WWII, “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)” (Neupert, 6). Combined with the Marshall Plan, which provided financial support to western European countries, as well as the formation of the aforementioned European Coal and Steel Community, France had the fundamental necessities to start transforming its agriculture-based economy into an industrialized one. Two items become prominent when it comes to said industrialization: Televisions and automobiles. Once deemed a luxurious purchase, cars started to spread pretty quickly, to the point where it “...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” (Neupert, 9). Even though televisions had a slower spread due 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” (Neupert, 11), they still continued to grow in number. France was fully embracing its consumerist culture, as it kept on finding new ways for consumers to spend money, resulting in a “...a rush for more household appliances (vacuums, washing machines, refrigerators)...” (Neupert, 13). As the numbers kept increasing and the European Union kept reinforcing the ties between its member countries, it seemed that France had its economy under control.

In addition to the modernization and industrialization of the country, reorienting its economy from a colonial one to a European one, France, in addition to what it had to offer, had another good to export: its films.

The third point, reorganizing the empire, however, could not be resolved purely through a refocus onto the youth of France. Throughout both World Wars and even before, France’s image as a vast and strong empire took a hit, specifically “After the bungling of the Ruhr Occupation in 1923, the quick defeat by Nazi blitzkrieg in 1940, the embarrassing loss to a rag-tag guerrilla army in 1954, and the perplexing faux pas of the Suez Crisis in 1956...” (Jobs, 128). These back-to-back losses of land and authority meant that the only way in which France could reassert its dominance as a strong empire was to enact another military operation, one which was successful. This desire to reassert dominance inevitably led to one of France’s last pieces of land: Algeria.

Algeria was different from the rest of France’s colonies, as it was “...considered an integral part of metropolitan France...” and “Many people in France had relatives living there, or had worked or visited Algeria themselves” (Jobs, 128). The connection to France combined with the military’s desire to prove their competency resulted with a full-scale military occupation of Algeria that would require “...a permanent force of 500,000 young conscripts...” (Jobs, 129) and a continuous influx of new young soldiers, which led to the war for Algeria becoming unpopular, especially amongst the youth in France.

The final point on the list was restructuring the government and that point was not so difficult to enact, however, the consequences of the actions of the previous government would still be felt amidst French society. During WWII, once the Nazis managed to breach French borders, the Third Republic did not put up that much of a fight, as “Marshal Philippe Pétain, with the full approval of the French parliament, dissolved the Third Republic and established his new French government in the empty hotels of the spa town of Vichy” (Jobs, 5). The dissolution of the Third Republic meant that after WWII and after the Vichy government was removed from power, it was open to new influences, such as members of the Resistance, which led to the formation of the Fourth Republic.

Throughout all of these developments, French Cinema was also being revived, and it was questioning the changes all of these external parties were causing to the fabric of French society. This critique is no more apparent than films made by Jacques Tati, with one of the most prominent being *Mon Oncle* (Tati, 1958). It was clear that people such as Tati were not happy that French society was giving way to new factories that lacked personality, soul, and were out of touch with what was happening in the damaged streets of France. Figures such as Tati and Albert Camus voiced this concern of France losing its essence, and turning into another western power that was too similarly modeled after the United States. This does not mean that the French did not appreciate the support of western powers and neighboring countries, but they wanted to create and reconstruct the way they wanted to. This can also be seen in Albert Camus’ statement in the resistance newspaper *Combat*, where he wrote: “The Allies have made our liberation possible. But our freedom is our own; it is we who must shape it” (Jobs, 20).

After all these developments, starting all the way back from 1895 to post-WWII, it is evident that French Cinema has always been connected to French history, whether it is what is being depicted in these movies, or the cinematic elements being brought into these films. When it comes to the New Wave, it is clear that this movement has taken everything from its essence and purpose to even its name due to the developments happening around it. The refocusing around youth allowed young up-and-coming directors to make the movies that they wanted to make, all the while breaking the boundaries set by previous periods within French cinema.

However, even though French New Wave has been deemed as this revolutionary period within cinema on a global scale, one has to also keep in mind how cinema as an industry was doing in general. The aforementioned changes regarding France's economy meant that "Movies were losing nearly one-third of their audience..." (Neupert, 8), and despite all of this "...the New Wave was bringing renewed attention and respect to the French industry as perhaps the most exciting place on earth for making movies" (Neupert, 12).

Therefore, one has to ask the question, what were the factors that created such a unique and memorable phase within French Cinema that went on to affect the rest of the world? How are these historical events within French history being presented within French New Wave films that were being made at the time, if at all? One has to wonder how French Cinema, which previously seemed to have a simple evolution, slowly moving from documentaries to fiction to movies with political subtexts went on to have such drastic changes within film form, the types of stories being presented, as well as inventing new concepts along the way.

The French New Wave, amidst this new wave of everything such as "...New Novel, New Look, New Cuisine, New Europe, New Wave and New Generation..." (Jobs, 2) started to take shape starting in the 1950s, thanks to Hollywood. Throughout WW2, Hollywood was still producing a variety of films, and even though these movies were being released in the US, their distribution was being restricted overseas, as Nazi Germany did not want American influence to spread throughout the countries it was occupying such as France. Therefore, when the war ended and the US started helping Europe industrialize, while also americanizing it, all the movies that had not been released during the war, were released synchronously, as France did not have a restriction or law regarding film imports. This meant that the French were having a constant influx of new American films to watch and be influenced by.

Despite the fact that French cinema was still producing films in the form of adaptations, the growing youth population of France was not interested in these types of films, which led them to embrace American films even further and start to analyze them. One of the leaders within this movement of embracing American films was the specialized weekly film magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*, which

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“...embraced certain elements of pop culture and used them as a weapon to attack bourgeois values; it published manifestos (such as François Truffaut’s “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema”); and it served as a kind of banner to help publicize the early work of its own adherents” (Naremore, 10). Led by André Bazin, the editor of the journal, the critics writing for *Cahiers du Cinema*, Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette were also directors who wanted to test their theories and ideas through filmmaking. Inspired by Alexandre Astruc’s article where he explained the *avant-garde* and how it was prominent during the 1920s, the critics writing for *Cahiers* thought of the “...camera as a pen, the screen as a piece of paper, and the director as an author” (Naremore, 11).

This breakdown of American films, the expression of desire to make movies with the new ideas they had in mind, in addition to the development of Italian Neorealism, a wave of cinema developing in Italy where films were made on the streets rather than meticulously crafted studio sets all led to the ushering of the French New Wave. With the influence of US cinema declining around the globe, the stage was set for the new wave of cinema.

The core of the French New Wave, as described by Bazin, is imbued with “...a spirit of existential humanism, which placed great emphasis on the cinema’s ability to view the world from an objective standpoint...He and the auterists repeatedly favored “realistic”, “democratic”, or untendentious uses of the camera...” (Naremore, 12). This was a full embodiment of the camera-stylo ideology, which imbued the director with the power to wield the camera in a manner that had not been seen before. Instead of montage that allowed previous filmmakers to create a fictional space and move within a set without breaking the illusion that it was a set, the directors of the new wave “...used invisible editing, long takes, or sequence shots...” (Naremore, 12).

This desire to create a realistic experience through the use of the camera also resulted with the directors of the new wave to let go of large, elaborate, constructed studio sets, choosing to shoot their movies on location, on the streets of Paris or the French countryside. This also allowed the directors to utilize natural lighting rather than studio lighting, amplifying the sense of realism presented in their

movies. Directors also routinely utilized average citizens who were not used to acting in order to extract a more natural performance that was less inspired by French theatre.

One other defining characteristic of the French New Wave was how the directors acknowledged American films and built their story around them, representing their "...delirious style of...cinophilia..." (Naremore, 13). Whether it was the protagonist being inspired by a certain American film or just a film being watched by the protagonist, these directors wanted to show their influences and what led them to make their movie.

Even though some argue the first French New Wave films to be the 1955 film *La Pointe Courte* by Agnes Varda and the 1958 film *Le Beau Serge* by Claude Chabrol, the 1959 film titled *400 Coups* by François Truffaut is generally considered to be the film which fully embodies the spirit of the French New Wave.

400 Coups by François Truffaut is quintessential French New Wave Cinema from the very first scene. Leaving the large and intricate sets of past movies or movies about a group of people or a specific class of people, *400 Coups* is about one single character: a 14 year old boy named Antoine Doinel. The opening montage of the movie reinforces that we are restricted to Antoine's perspective, as the montage consists of low-angle shots of the streets of Paris, mirroring the perspective of a kid moving through them.

Being a semi-autobiographical movie, *400 Coups* is a movie about adolescence and how it is just a period of being lost, with no sense of purpose or direction. Antoine has no idea what he wants to pursue or what he needs to do in order to succeed in life. Throughout the film, he is constantly punished for wrongdoings he commits within the classroom, in front of his parents, or even illegal acts, such as stealing a typewriter. However, after each of these punishments, he is never told what the correct way of doing things are, which only pushes him to commit further wrongdoings. It is this chain of wrongdoings combined with a desire for self-discovery and freedom that keeps pushing Antoine to try out new things in order to reach the vague goal of attaining freedom.

There are four key scenes within the movie that show this sense of feeling lost, unwanted or tossed away, and it is through this scenes that we get to understand Antoine's motives, even if they do not

completely make sense. Although some of these motives may not make sense for everybody, they do not have to, as Antoine is not depicted as this character who knows everything and always makes the right decisions. He is just a boy trying to survive and find some recognition and acceptance within society.

The very first scene of *400 Coups* illustrates this idea perfectly. The scene opens up with a high angle tracking shot of kids in a classroom handing a pinup from one kid to another, as it ends up in the hands of Antoine. Antoine, trying to write something on the pinup, gets caught red handed by the teacher, Sourpuss, and is sent to the corner of the classroom, behind a blackboard as punishment. As the teacher refocuses his attention onto the class full of students, the camera moves along on a dolly to reveal rows and rows of students, all in the same position, with the professor looking over them. Antoine seems to be singled out, as he is the only one who appears to be not doing what everybody else is doing, even though later in the scene, the audience will learn that Antoine is not the only one who seems to be dismissive of the teacher. Despite it being recess, the teacher holds Antoine back, stating that recess “is a reward”. Here, Antoine is not provided with an explanation as to why his punishment is being extended, or what he should do to avoid the punishment in the future. The severity of this punishment in the eyes of Antoine is further emphasized once we see high angle shots of kids playing in the school yard.

Once the kids return from recess, all of them pool into Antoine’s corner, which draws the teacher’s attention, which all is represented through a long shot, showing how the little kids pool out of the corner once they realize they may be punished, showing this sense of unity within the classroom against the teacher. It is revealed soon that Antoine has written a verse, explaining his discontent about his punishment. This poem is disregarded by the teacher, as he mocks Antoine’s poem, pointing out that Antoine “can’t tell an Alexandrine from a decasyllabic verse”. From this point onwards, the audience is presented with the main issue that is found throughout the entire film. Authoritative figures, exemplified by but not only relegated to the teacher, seem to have expectations that are too unrealistic out of the younger generations, if not entirely impossible. Figures such as Sourpuss view this new generation as something more than youth, as they try to guide it and fit it into a certain societal mould. In the process of doing so, they are either ignorant of what is happening behind the scenes, when they are not actively

watching these kids, or they cannot comprehend why the kids are acting the way they are. Their two main modes of interaction seem to be either educating these kids or punishing them. This shows the institutional mismatch between the teachers and the kids, who are being taught in a very rigid, if not dated manner, which was what actually took place in France at the time, since the model elaborated on in the film had been initiated around the late 19th century.

This is shown through the rest of the scene, as the teacher starts dictating a paragraph to the entire class, writing out the paragraph as he does so. As he is writing the paragraph, the film cuts back and forth between the teacher and a student in the front of the class, failing to keep up with the teacher, ripping out pages from his notebook until he has no blank pages left. The kid's act of loudly ripping out the papers is ignored by the teacher, as he continues on to dictate the rest of the paragraph. It clearly goes to show that the student is trying to keep up and trying to produce something that is decent in the eyes of the teacher, but in the process of trying to do so, fails to produce anything of value, depleting his resources in the process.

The only instance where the kids are able to get a reaction out of the teacher is when the content of the dictation starts to become more and more romantic, which prompts the kids to hug one another, blow kisses and make kissing noises. The entire classroom takes part in this, as seen by a wide shot from the back of the classroom. Only when the noise gets too loud does the teacher turn around and start berating the students, going so far as to chuck his chalk at a kid in the back of the classroom. The majority of the scene is filmed using the wide shot as it goes to show that the student body, or the youth, is not so different from one another and is more or less going through the same experiences together, as they endure a strict authoritative figure, that being the teacher, who does not change his approach to suit every individual in a unique way. The way the scene ends, by the teacher stating how France will have a poor future, only goes on to prove this point, as he seems to despise the entire youth of France because of what has happened in that classroom. The main way the authoritative figures try to guide the youth of France seems to be mainly through discipline and punishment, as none of them seem to be willing to explain or show some sort of affection to help guide the students.

It seems as if authority only reacts to actions when they become really disturbing to the surrounding environment and not before. It seems to be reactive, not proactive. The teacher never tries to understand the students, but only punishes them when things seem to be getting out of control. This type of oversight is prominent throughout the movie, which is why Antoine feels like he is being restrained.

This restraint seems to be relaxed in only one scene within the movie, which is when Antoine and his family, consisting of his mother and stepfather, go to the cinema. After almost burning the house down while trying to honor Balzac with a small shrine and getting berated by his stepfather, Antoine is given the opportunity to go to the cinema by her mother, which results in all of them going out. This little discussion in home transitions to the family exiting the cinema by a fade, as the audience can hear the giggles of the entire family. They discuss the movie and laugh about it as they drive through the streets of Paris, giving the audience a sense of hope that not everything may be doomed for this family and that they still have the potential to grow and become the ideal, loving family.. This positive attitude continues all the way into their apartment, as the stepfather and Antoine laugh along and the two parents get flirtatious with each other, implying that it is thanks to the arts and cinema that one is able to feel and express passion and love.

No matter how bad the situation seems to be, cinema is shown to be the cure to mend relationships, as this is one of the only scenes where Antoine seems to be genuinely happy. For the rest of the film, the audience does not see Antoine having a positive dialogue or relationship with his family. Cinema is an escape from reality for Antoine as well as his friend René, as they go to see movie as they skip school. *400 Coups* highlights this aspect of the movies through Antoine's actions and mood, as compared to the rest of the movie where he seems frustrated and confused, he is seen to be joyous and hopeful.

Perhaps the scene that helps tie all of these ideas together and allows the audience to get to know Antoine even further is the scene where he sits down with the psychologist at the observation center for troubled youths that he gets sent to after his parents believe they can no longer discipline him themselves. Here the audience gets to see what Antoine's thought process looks like, as he admits that he returned the

typewriter because he couldn't sell it, he stole money from his grandmother because he thought she wouldn't notice, and he lies because he thinks his parents would not believe him. Connecting to the earlier idea of guidance solely through discipline and punishment, when observed, Antoine's logic seems to address the flaws of such guidance. If there is no reward for doing something good and if doing something bad will always be met with severe punishment, then this will motivate a kid like Antoine to lie and avoid admitting his error.

This is also where we get to learn more about Antoine's mother as well, as we learn that she sold a book gifted to Antoine, took the money he stole from his grandmother away, put him in a foster home and even wanted to abort him before he was born. This point goes on to show the hypocrisy that the authoritative figures within society seem to have, and more importantly, that the youth are aware of. The authoritative figures within French society do not seem to be obeying the very rules that they have created and that they push onto the youth of France, which only causes more backlash from people like Antoine.

The questioning takes an interesting turn after, when the psychologist asks whether Antoine has ever slept with a girl before, which results in Antoine going silent and smiling for a while, after explaining that he tried to but he was not lucky to do so.

This scene goes on to show that kids such as Antoine, the youth of France, is not idiotic or ignorant or arrogant, but in fact fully aware of what is happening to them. Whether it is Antoine's mother putting him into a foster home or the mother selling his book, Antoine is not oblivious to these actions, and tries to react to them accordingly. However, as this reaction occurs, there is a disconnect in communication between Antoine and the parents, as the parents think that Antoine is not talking to them at all, while Antoine thinks his parents would never believe him even if he did tell the truth, and he'd rather tell lie than tell the truth and get punished. It is the disconnect between the older generations and the youth that has caused such drastic measures to be taken, such as Antoine being sent to the observational center.

However, even after all of this, the movie also presents Antoine to still be a boy who has a lot to experience, and does not know a lot, with the final question regarding whether he has slept with a girl

before. The fact that Antoine can understand the intricacies regarding adults and learn about what they are doing while they are not around kids, does not warrant the fact that Antoine should be viewed and treated as an adult. He is still a kid who has not yet seen the sea. In a way, the movie puts this burden of understanding onto the adults, the older generations watching this movie. They are the ones who should try more to understand what the youth is going through, what it is experiencing, and they are also the ones who should start believing in what the youth is doing and saying. Or else, they will destroy their youth, and therefore the future.

Perhaps this is no better explained than the final scene within *400 Coups*, which involves Antoine escaping from the observational center in order to find his freedom. While playing a game of soccer with the other kids at the center, Antoine decides to sneak under the fence and start running. He continues on running for what seems like an eternity, as the camera follows him in a single long shot, revealing the varying scenery of the French countryside. It is also during this scene we get to observe Antoine. It can be seen through his running that he is still very fragile and young, but he also has the courage and desire to pursue what he wants to pursue. After an extreme wide shot panning to reveal the sea, the theme of the film kicks in that harkens back to the beginning of the movie, implying that Antoine is once again in awe, but this time it is for the sea and the countryside of France, rather than a city like Paris. As he runs towards the sea, the music starts shifting into a more somber note, slowing down even further as he steps into the sea and starts slowly walking back, towards the camera. The film ends by freezing on and zooming into Antoine's face, directly looking into the camera and the audience.

What started as the desire to free oneself from authoritative figures such as a teacher, the police or even a family succeeds, as Antoine has reached the sea, which he previously mentioned as really wanting to see. However, the end of the movie, focusing on Antoine's face filled with confusion questions this desire? Where will it lead? Was it worth it? Will Antoine be truly happy?

Similar questions were being asked of French cinema. In fact, one can view Antoine in this final scene as French cinema itself. Thanks to Truffaut's efforts, *400 Coups* has broken free of what had held the majority of French cinema back for decades, whether it was a simpler, more restricted form of

filmmaking, not truly utilizing the concept of the *camera stylo*. *400 Coups* embodies the French New Wave in a every single way possible. The way it utilizes longshots, the way it utilizes the French countryside and natural, in-person sets, and most importantly, the way it focuses on and develops one individual, in this case, Antoine. Hailed as a triumph by both the Cannes Film Festival and cineastes, *400 Coups* helped usher French cinema into a brand new era of filmmaking, however, as seen by its ending, the film itself did not know where this new era of filmmaking would go to. It just took the first difficult step in defining and presenting a brand new way of filmmaking, proving what Truffaut and the fellow writers at the *Cahiers* had been talking about all along.

With the future of French cinema deemed to be freed from the restrictions and ideas of the past, it makes perfect sense that the next milestone within the French New Wave is *À bout de souffle* by Jean-Luc Godard in 1960. *À bout de souffle*, in several ways, perfectly embodies France during that period; it mentions and seems to be in awe of American culture, which was being discovered in France at the time, thanks to the post-WW2 commitment of American presence within Europe. In fact, *À bout de souffle* takes one step further, as the main character of the film, Michel Poiccard, says that he is in love with Patricia, an American, several times throughout the movie.

One aspect that has to be mentioned, before the film itself is further analyzed, is that *À bout de souffle* is not a French New Wave film in the way that the French New Wave was being defined by the critics and theorists at the *Cahiers du Cinema*, specifically by Bazin. Rather than long shots which are meant to emphasize the deeper meaning of a scene or allow the audience to observe the mise-en-scene for a longer period of time, Jean-Luc Godard ushered the use of jump cuts, cutting the silence out of the movie, creating a pace that does not slow down, which supports the title of the film. Although *À bout de souffle* may not be a French New Wave film in the way that is defined by *Cahiers du Cinema*, it is still a French New Wave in the sense of the period it was made in and its aim of bringing something new to French Cinema that had not been seen before, which was also supported and initiated by Truffaut himself.

When it comes to the movie itself, *À bout de souffle* can be described as the search for a French film identity amongst all these American influences. After Truffaut shattered the presumptions about

French cinema with *400 Coups*, Godard explored a plethora of options when it came to creating an authentic cinematic language within *À bout de souffle*, trying to take what he saw from American movies and build on them, improving them, or creating something brand new out of them. As Dudley Andrews would word it best, “Authentic art comes from sincere artists who extend the sacred tradition only when they forget tradition and forge the present with contemporary tools of expression” (Andrews, 5). Godard took the present tools provided with him through his time at the *Cahiers*, and decided to forge the future of French cinema by creating something that had never been seen before.

À bout de souffle is a movie about Michel Poiccard, a small-time crook who steals cars in order to get by. After being chased by cops for speeding through a red light and being chased down by the police, he ends up killing one of them and escapes to Paris, where he meets up with Patricia, an American in France who is also his lover. Throughout the movie the audience follows Michel around as he tries to hide from authorities while also trying to convince Patricia to run away with her. Plot-wise, it is very reminiscent of an American film-noir, as there are two cops running around trying to find Michel, very similar to their more serious American counterparts regarding their mannerisms and outfits. There are three crucial scenes within *À bout de souffle* which clearly show Godard’s desire to discover a new French identity, with the first scene being the first 5 minutes of the movie.

After the brief title card, we are greeted with our protagonist, Michel, who is looking at pictures in a newspaper. As soon as he lowers the newspaper, we see the American influence within *À bout de souffle*, as Michel is dressed within a classic suit and tie, with a hat, heavily slanted to cover his eyes as he smokes his cigarette. This influence becomes even more apparent when he removes his cigarette to hover his thumb over his lips, something that has been identified to be a tick of Humphrey Bogart, a classical Hollywood actor of the time who portrayed characters embodying the independent, manly protagonist stereotype. From the very beginning, Godard has created a character under severe American influence, created by the breakneck pace of the introduction of American culture and American goods thanks to the Marshall Plan, and placed him in a foreign environment, which will prove to present Michel with several obstacles throughout the movie as we will see later in the analysis.

The movie then continues on to show Michel stealing an American car from a military officer, hitting the road right after. This drive is when we get to learn a lot more about Michel and his personality, as we see him swear at a Renault trying to pass him, implying Michel's allegiance to American cars and his distancing from French products. He has truly embodied the American persona. During this drive, Michel also breaks the fourth wall, as he directly addresses the camera, talking about how he loves France and the countryside, as well as the city. Here we understand that Michel really is a cross between French and American. On the outside, with his clothing and mannerisms, he resembles the classic American gangster figure, however, on the inside, he is still French.

This crossing of American and French is also present within the cinematography of *À bout de souffle* within this scene. Godard has increased the pace of the film by introducing jump cuts, as both the visual and the sound abruptly cut to fast forward the scene, move it forward, without taking a breath, an homage to the name of the movie. It is apparent that Godard is augmenting the American way of filming. He has taken the already fast pace of American movies and made it even faster, by cutting anything deemed unnecessary, as Michel seems to be non-stop talking and interacting with his environment. In his eyes, the defining characteristics of modern life, and therefore *À bout de souffle*, "...had to be speed, boldness, and ingenuity" (Andrews, 6).

This is no better illustrated than when Michel is confronted by the police who had been chasing him for speeding by a red light. In just six shots that last barely twenty seconds, Michel is confronted by the police and shoots him, resulting in the police officer falling backwards into a bush. There is no room for suspense or dramatic build up. Godard frantically cuts between the action to get to the conclusion. One other element within this confrontation is how it is framed. It is nearly all close-ups or extreme close-ups, as the camera moves from Michel's face to his hand and to the gun. During this face-off, the audience does not even get to see the police officer and his reaction. We just witness the gun firing and the movie confirms that the police officer is dead by briefly showing him tumbling backwards. Godard has taken the classic confrontation scene seen within American movies and has augmented it, experimented with it, stripping it down to its core, which is just the action and its consequence. It seems like Godard is taking

what he has consumed for so long and has deconstructed it to see how it could be reincorporated in building a new French identity.

The second scene within *À bout de souffle* where Godard explores a new identity and language for French cinema is when Michel and Patricia hang out in Patricia's apartment. Compared to the breakneck pace of the rest of *À bout de souffle*, this apartment scene takes up nearly a quarter of the movie, as Michel and Patricia have a constant back and forth about a myriad of different subjects, trying to understand each other and discover their own identity as they move throughout the apartment. Patricia says that she is thinking, but does not know what she is thinking about, showing her sense of being lost and not having an identity herself yet. Michel, on the other hand, fluctuates between questioning his identity while also trying to determine the ideals of his American persona. He asks why Patricia does not want to sleep with him, saying that he loves her, while also rejecting Patricia's idea of becoming Romeo and Juliet, at which the camera cuts to a small pinned photo on the wall, helping visualize Patricia's idea. Michel seems to possess the loving and caring aspects of someone who is French, while also carrying the persona of an American gangster who acts like a lone wolf, not committing to any relationships. These two identities constantly go back and forth, best illustrated by this scene in the apartment. Patricia also hints at this idea later in their discussion, when she points out how the French say things are the same when they don't seem to be the same at all.

Throughout this scene the audience also gets to see a whole series of art pieces, whether it's Patricia rolling up a Renoir poster to look at Michel, or Michel himself looking at a booklet filled with nude models. Godard seems to have had two uses for this collage of art being presented, with the first one being deepening "...the aesthetic and philosophical thrust of his own effort by linking it to the low-art film noir with its excruciating ruminations about death and love" (Andrews, 17). Godard has taken the traditional works of the past and incorporated them into his *À bout de souffle*, giving them a brand new meaning while also utilizing them to elaborate on the messaging of the movie. The second use for the artwork being presented in such a manner was for a much more practical reason, as Godard needed to "...vary the tone and interest of his scenes, to keep his drama within a live and lively cultural space"

(Andrews, 17). Due to the very fact that Michel and Patricia spend nearly 20 minutes within Patricia's apartment, Godard needed to keep the visuals interesting to a certain extent, as he is trying to build towards the moment that defines Michel's character the most.

The utilization of art also serves the purpose of making *À bout de souffle* something that is authentically Jean-Luc Godard's work, and this is no better illustrated than the scene where Patricia goes to interview Parvulesco the writer. Parvulesco is portrayed by Jean-Pierre Melville, another director who made a movie called *Bob le Flambeur* (Melville, 1956), where an aging gambler decides to rob a casino, but is faced by various obstacles in trying to do so. By connecting *À bout de souffle* to *Bob le Flambeur* through Melville portraying Parvulesco, Godard acknowledges works that have come before him in the same genre, building on top of them, assuming his position within the chronology of such French crime films. This helps solidify his place within the French genre and declares *À bout de souffle* to fully be presented as his work.

The moment that dooms Michel within this apartment scene is when Patricia asks whether Michel would choose grief or nothing. Patricia herself chooses grief, while Michel goes on to explain why he would choose nothing, as he believes grief is a compromise. It is right here that we understand how Michel is not compatible with the world he lives in and how the American cinema language cannot be directly copied onto French cinema culture. Michel himself is not willing to make a compromise to continue his existence, as he believes that a compromise is a loss that should not be taken. He says that he wants all or nothing. One can see this argument also being made by Godard himself regarding French cinema, as he does not want to settle for a cinematic language that is heavily compromised by American cinema. He is interested in creating something that is uniquely French, hence all the jump cuts and abrupt camera movements. This is visible especially when Godard decides to play the role of the French citizen who informs the police on Michel's whereabouts. One may wonder why the director of a movie would play a minor role in initiating the demise of their protagonist, but in the case of *À bout de souffle*, it is apparent. Michel sticks out like a sore thumb amidst French society, whether it is his mannerisms, his outfit, or his actions, and as he refuses to compromise by potentially changing his disguise or just leave

without Patricia, he consciously puts himself on a path to his self-destruction, which is presented in the last scene of the movie.

The third scene of importance within *À bout de souffle* is Michel's half-hearted attempt to run away from the cops, as he picks up his cash from Berutti, but refuses to take the gun he is initially offered. Before he even starts running, he is shot by one of the police officers, which is then followed by a long tracking shot of Michel running through the street, his hand on his back, stumbling. Unlike American film noir, Godard does not provide his protagonist a highly dramaticized, climactic death. Instead, the audience is subjected to Michel running aimlessly, not even shooting back, knowing that Michel will die at the hands of these officers. There is no suspense or nothing to make the scene attractive. Even Patricia running after Michel seems to be uninteresting, as she does not even yell after Michel or prevent the police officers from shooting him.

It is also of note that Michel brought this conclusion unto himself, as he refused to get into Berutti's car, which may have resulted in him successfully escaping from the cops. Michel himself chooses this outcome, saying that he is tired and has had enough. This complaint is the verbalization of Michel's discomfort of not being able to fit in and always being punished for it, as it is also Godard's criticism of how a French cinema that heavily borrows from American cinema will not work. In the eyes of both Godard and Michel, something so American cannot exist within French culture, as it will either get killed by authorities, or given up on by the public, just like when Godard revealed Michel's position.

As the scene nears its end, Michel is surrounded by both officers, as well as Patricia, all looking down on him. Before he dies, he says "C'est vraiment dégueulasse", meaning "It's really disgusting", which is then translated by the cops to Patricia as "Vous êtes dégueulasse", meaning "You are very disgusting". This is immediately followed by Patricia looking directly into the camera, asking for the meaning of "dégueulasse", all the while repeating Michel's movement of his thumb over his lips, reminding the audience of Humphrey Bogart. Michel is protesting his life experiences and the society that rejected him, while the cops seem to take this statement and shift it over to Patricia, the only American within the movie, made clear by her adoption of Michel's tick. Godard has clearly concluded that it is

unnatural and unsustainable to have a cinema that is so heavily influenced by American culture, as it goes against so much of what French culture and society stands for. Patricia appears to be the embodiment of this message, as the camera ends on her, the American, repeating the American tick that previously belonged to a Frenchman trying to act like an American.

If *400 Coups* broke all the presumptions about French cinema and made space for something new, *À bout de souffle* showed French audiences that this space should not and could not be occupied by something that is merely a duplicate of American cinema. It can be inspired by American cinema, just like the critics at the *Cahiers*, however, it cannot be a mere copy. It has to be augmented, built upon, and improved, as traditional American cinema does not make sense within French society. In this way, Godard could be perceived as a shepherd within French cinema, trying to dissuade people from copying American cinema, guiding them towards the creation of an authentic French cinema that truly belongs to France and its people. This reinvention of French cinema could best be explained as “...the reappropriation of the history of cinema as one’s own: the *authentic* laying down of the lessons of the past for the present” (Andrews, 20).

In comparison to Godard’s fast and to-the-point editing in *À bout de souffle* filled with a variety of different filmmaking techniques, Agnès Varda decided to go the opposite route, trying to adhere to an unaltered version of time, while exploring what soul-searching followed by self-discovery looks like in her 1961 film *Cléo de 5 à 7*. Featuring Cléo Victoire, a singer with three popular songs to her name, the film focuses on her life from 5pm to 7pm, where Cléo is awaiting the results of a series of tests that will reveal whether she has cancer or not. During this period, Cléo has a myriad of interactions, both with her friends, her assistant, as well as a complete stranger, which conclude with her having a fundamental self-discovery and reassessment of her own life, proving those two hours to be some of the most important in her life.

Preceded by *400 Coups* and *À bout de souffle*, *Cléo de 5 à 7* starts to utilize this new cinematic space created by the previous two films and pushes the limits with regards the types of stories that could be told within this new era of French cinema. Rather than make something that mainly focuses on

cinematic techniques, *Cléo de 5 à 7* decides to focus on a story that analyzes and at times critiques French society. In this manner, *Cléo de 5 à 7* can be viewed as a more in-depth exploration of post-WWII French society more than anything else. Similar to how Cléo goes through a revolutionary transformation, French society has gone through its own transformation and reassessment, altering its values and focusing on itself, more than anything else. Varda elaborates on this transformation Cléo goes through several scenes, however, there are three scenes that really stand out, with the first one being her preparation and performance in her apartment, approximately covered through chapter V to VII.

As soon as Cléo enters her apartment, the camera is fixated onto wide long shot, showing almost the entirety of Cléo's apartment, which seems to be quite barren, as seen by the tiny bed in the corner, with the sparse furniture spread here and there, as well as the white infrastructure and flooring. Through this camera positioning, the audience is strictly placed into the position of voyeur, watching Cléo's every movement, as she puts on a new outfit, stretches, and complains about her health. She is presented to be this spectacle, prepared and presented for the audience, as well as everybody around her. This is further emphasized through close-ups on her hands, showing her jewelry, and close-up shots of her hair being done. She is meticulously prepared to put on a performance, in a manner that is meant to be pleasing for others.

Cléo's dissatisfaction with being treated this way becomes immediately apparent, based on her reactions to José, her lover. He only seems to admire Cléo, saying how she just dropped in to get a kiss from his Cleopatra, and is in a hurry. Cléo retorts by saying how José always seems to be in a hurry, and does not know anything about what Cléo is going through on a daily basis, not even about her illness. José, through her mannerisms and dialogue, does not even seem to be taking Cléo's illness seriously. He seems to be purely interested in Cléo for her looks and image, however, the film goes even further to show that José is interested in possessing Cléo, more so than also pleasing himself with Cléo's looks, as at the end of their conversation, when Cléo offers to present him with the dress she got for the premiere of a new film, José responds by saying that he does not have the time. At this point, Cléo is presented as

something to be possessed by José and enjoyed here and there, implying that this is a one-way relationship, ignoring Cléo. Cléo is merely a doll for people like José to enjoy.

However, it is not just José and the relationship Cléo is in where she is objectified and reduced to a doll, but rather her entire surrounding seems to be viewing her the same way. Cléo's assistant, Angèle, reinforces the illusion that this world is what Cléo should want and is best for her, as she defends José and his interactions with Cléo by stating that José is a good lover. For a brief moment, it seems as if Cléo and Angèle are having a genuine intimate moment, shown by the zoom-in on the two, creating a tight medium shot, where Cléo questions how Angèle knows José's intentions. She then proceeds to leave the frame, leaving Angèle by herself, as Cléo realizes that Angèle is not somebody who she could consider as a genuine friend who would honestly respond to her inquiries, instead reinforcing this world that has been created to simplify and reduce Cléo.

Chapter VI only goes on to reinforce this idea that Cléo has been simplified to be a doll and the people she is surrounded by do not really care about her wellbeing by the introduction of the two artists that come to Cléo's apartment for rehearsal. The two musicians that come in, Bob and Maurice, decide to joke about Cléo's condition by dressing up like doctors, and walking up to her, pretending that they are approaching to cure her. As the camera moves backwards, revealing the duo's movements, they are shown to be exaggerating their movements, showing how in reality, they are not genuinely interested in Cléo's condition. The very entrance of these two characters show that Bob and Maurice do not take Cléo seriously, and they mostly seem to value her looks. This is only further elaborated by Bob, who states that being sick is a mistake.

Perhaps the moment which is most critical amidst the interaction between Bob, Cléo, and Maurice occurs at the beginning of Chapter VII, when Bob and Maurice recommend a new song titled "Cry of Love", but don't think that Cléo can sing it. In addition to this, Bob and Maurice do not want to teach Cléo how to read music, keeping Cléo dependent on them, stripping her of the potential to become independent. Cléo retorts to this as she states that the two are deriding her talent, only viewing her as somebody who can sing but is mainly popular because she is pretty, reducing her once again to the

position of a doll. As she starts performing the song, with the camera moving in on Cléo, isolating her from the other characters within the apartment, the audience realizes that Cléo is voicing all of her frustrations through the song, as she talks about her isolation, the loss and frustration caused by such isolation and her desire for a connection. The camera that had started to move into Cléo now has her in a close-up, with her now directly facing and looking into the camera. She does not need to look at the lyrics of the song because this is not merely a performance, but a genuine cry of desperation by Cléo. She is singing lyrics which evoke “...absence, lack, and death...” which “...force Cleo into a sudden recognition of her identity, a recognition concomitant with both a new social awareness and rejection of established definitions of her” (Flitterman-Lewis, 270). This is further dramatized as Cléo starts tearing up and the contrast within lighting increases, revealing the depth and expanse of this pain experienced by Cléo. It is also through this increase in contrast through lighting that the background becomes fully black, transporting Cléo out of her all-white apartment into a more personal, more intimate space, rid of any of the other people in her apartment. She is truly in her own space, questioning and reflecting on her life. It is the performance of this song, that kickstarts Cléo’s refusal of the world she has been placed in, as the camera quickly zooms out, placing her once against in this world which she now clearly despises, allowing her to tear off her wig, reveal her true hair and natural appearance, leave the apartment and explore the world which has been hidden from her. It is through these chapters that Cléo has placed herself on a path to self-exploration and self-empowerment.

The next set of chapters that build on this path of self-exploration come with the introduction of Dorothée, the first person we meet who does not work for starting Cléo, with Chapter IX, named after her. Cléo meets up with Dorothée during a sculpture class, in which Dorothée is the nude model all the sculptors are trying to imitate. The camera assumes a point-of-view shot, with the perspective being that of Cléo’s as she moves through the classroom, with her trying to get a better look at Dorothée, but being faced with the gaze of the other students. Cléo is still aware of all the eyes that are on her, which clearly have an impact on her and how she carries herself. Dorothée, on the other hand, does not seem to have a similar problem, as she comfortably poses nude in the classroom, implied by her glance and smile over to

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Cléo. this is further brought up as they are walking together, when Cléo says that she would be afraid to pose as she believes people would eventually find a fault. Dorothée responds by saying that her body makes her happy, not proud, and that people are staring at her and seeing something more, like a shape or an idea. She also adds onto this list by saying that she gets paid for it, further emphasizing that she chose to get looked.

It is clear from this interaction that the main difference between Cléo and Dorothée is that Cléo is dependent on others in a myriad of ways while Dorothée is not. Cléo focuses on what others think about her and how they view her, whereas Dorothée does not really care about what others think and has embraced her image, even going as far as to get paid for doing so.

Dorothée also seems to be supportive of Cléo and a true friend, as she is the first person to genuinely react and question Cléo about her illness, questioning Cléo more about her condition, what others think and more.

The second important interaction that happens between Cléo and Dorothée is during the beginning of Chapter XI, when Dorothée drops her purse, resulting in a mirror shattering. Immediately, Dorothée responds to this accident by laughing as she bends down to pick up her belongings, while Cléo lets out an audible gasp, talking about how the shattered mirror is an omen of death, as the close-up shot of the mirror reveals Cléo's face looking at it. There is a brief exchange between the two, where Dorothée states that it is not important, since breaking a mirror is like breaking a plate. This is another difference between the two characters, which connects back to whether they are dependent or not. From the beginning of the movie, opening with the tarot reading, Cléo has also been dependent on superstitions regarding her life, as well as being dependent on people. She seems to let these superstitions influence how she views and experiences life, which is the main cause of her frustration. Dorothée, on the other hand, does not believe in such superstitions, which allows her to lead an independent and satisfactory life, as emphasized by the contrast between her and Cléo, both within their attitudes and appearances.

If Dorothée shows Cléo that being dependent on such superstitions and letting them dictate oneself is taxing and frustrating for the individual, the introduction of Antoine shows what is possible

when one really sets foot on the path to self-exploration as well as self-liberation. It can be said that Antoine is the male counterpart of Dorothée, as he “...is secure in his identity” (Flitterman-Lewis, 279). What starts off as a small chat about the sound of water at the end of Chapter XI kicks into gear with Chapter XII, named after Antoine. After a brief shot-reverse shot of close-ups of Antoine and Cléo talking about how it is the longest day of the year, allowing the audience to see Antoine’s excitement and happiness, compared to Cléo’s anxiety, they go on to talk about men and women. This is also where Antoine mentions that he is half in uniform and on leave, hinting that he is a French soldier sent to Algeria, something that Varda hints at and simply glances over.

Throughout Chapter XII, Antoine and Cléo are filmed through a variety of medium shots, placing the two exactly in the center of each frame, presenting the two getting intimate with one another. It is also during these compositions that Antoine really gets to talk to Cléo about the true things that matter in life according to him, which start with love. Unlike Cléo, who seems to be drowning in her troubles, Antoine seems to appreciate his troubles but still sees what matters through all of them, which is the main distinguishing factor between the two. Antoine’s outlook on life is further amplified by the very fact that he is a soldier, a man utilized for war, and despite this very fact, he still approaches life with such optimism.

Another distinguishing feature between the two is how Antoine wants to interact with his surroundings, regardless of how foreign they are, whereas Cléo mainly prefers to be isolated, seen through their preferred mode of transportation. When Cléo says that they should go to the hospital by cab, Antoine says that they should use the bus, since it is more fun. Cléo, as seen throughout the whole movie, has mainly restricted herself to isolated environments where either she is the only one present, or there are people who know who she is and these people are people she is dependent on. Whereas the first half of *Cléo de 5 à 7* “...installs and reinforces a conventional, fetishized image of female beauty in ways that objectify Cleo as a spectacle for erotic contemplation”, the second half shows Cléo’s image “...progressively inserted into a social context” (Flitterman-Lewis, 272). Antoine, on the other hand, seems to be a lot more connected with and comfortable in the external world, inhabited by others.

It is during Chapter XIII, on the bus, where Cléo and Antoine truly start to understand and learn more about each other, talking about nudity, birth and nature, as the variety of medium and close-up shots reveal the change in Cléo's mood and enjoyment. She is starting to observe, enjoy and expand out of the previous confines of her controlled world. This is clearly stated by Cléo herself, when she says how today everything amazes her, giving the example of seeing people's faces next to her, which implies that previously, she had not seen people in such a manner, further elaborating on her life presented during the first handful chapters of the movie.

The introduction of Antoine also seems to have affected Cléo in one more significant way, which is learning the value of time. As she is not able to find the doctor to get her results back, she seems to be frustrated at first, expressing the urge to go out and find him. However, Antoine and Cléo walk hand in hand, tightly framed once again through another medium shot, she expresses the lack of time the two have together and why looking for the doctor would be a waste of said time. Even after the doctor stops by and tells them that Cléo is in fact ill but will be fine with two months of treatment, Cléo does not seem to be as anxious as before. As she and Antoine walk together, Cléo says that her fears are gone, also implying that she is happy to be with Antoine. She has truly embraced who she is, independent of what others think, completing her self-liberation, deciding to set her own path independent of what others think. It is implied that this path involves Antoine, as the movie cuts to black as the two look at each other.

If *400 Coups* and *À bout de souffle* broke the boundaries of and explored the technical features of this new era of French cinema, *Cléo de 5 à 7* placed this cinema in real-time French society, within the political and social concerns of that specific moment, while also expanding the field of what one can talk about within this new era of cinema. It does not have to only be a fictional story focusing on a child's journey as seen in *400 Coups* or a French crime film as seen through *À bout de souffle*. Varda, realized a story that took the documentary aspects of the Rive Gauche movement and combined it with a setting and time that reflected France at the time, which is why there are a plethora of shots showing the streets and cafes of France, with radio channels, as well as characters like Antoine alluding to the war going on in Algeria at the time. *Cléo de 5 à 7* embraced the society which helped influence and create it, weaving

French society into itself, truly connecting the French New Wave to post-WWII France, further legitimizing the French New Wave as a society-defining cinematic era within France.

If *Cléo de 5 à 7* is viewed as this moment where this newly created cinema is truly becoming one with the society which created it, then Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film, *Le Petit Soldat*, is the next possible step for such a cinema, where it starts utilizing its voice to highlight and critique various aspects of French society. Inherently, such an action was not really appreciated by the French government of the time, which is why the movie, despite being filmed in 1960, was banned and not released until 1963. Jean-Luc Godard must have sensed this backlash even before it happened, which is why the movie takes place in Geneva, Switzerland, despite featuring French characters and a French story. Even Godard must have been aware that such a movie would not be welcome by the authorities within France, which resulted in this displacement.

Le Petit Soldat is a movie about Bruno Forestier, a French citizen who is working for French intelligence within Geneva. The plot revolves around Bruno being tasked with the assassination of Palivoda, a member of the FLN, which stands for the National Liberation Front of Algeria. However, Bruno is hesitant to kill Palivoda, straining his ties with French intelligence, all the while falling in love with Véronica, who is later revealed to have ties to the FLN herself. A simple glance at the plot already shows why French authorities were not fond of such a film being made and why they eventually censored it for several years. Especially within the historical context of the ongoing and failing Algerian war, France was trying to recreate its image as a European power, trying to move away from its colonial roots. A film such as *Le Petit Soldat* brings all of these points that France has been trying to move away from and hide back to the forefront, whether it is France's colonies or the methods utilized by the French government to enforce its presence upon weaker powers. *Le Petit Soldat* does not simply just bring these events to the forefront, but in addition, it questions how governments and politics work in general, really questioning the new France being built post-WWII, and whether it is just the same ideas being repackaged. The film highlights ideas of governmental aggression, espionage, and authorities stifling

ideas even amongst its ranks, fueling the very resistance it is trying to resolve, creating a downward spiral through three key scenes.

The first scene within *Le Petit Soldat* that illustrates the stifling of ideas within the government's own ranks, creating a dominant, authoritarian state happens when he gets in a car with Jacques and Paul, and where he is first tasked with assassinating Palivoda. The entire scene is filmed with a shot-reverse shot between the characters, all tightly framed within the car, creating this sense that there is nowhere to go, no way for Bruno to escape, trapping him in place, as the tension keeps building throughout the scene. After Bruno's inquiry about the book Jacques has, Jacques reveals that it is *Thomas the Impostor* by Jean Cocteau. Jacques directly reads the ending, where the main character dies. Bruno says that he would like to die like that someday, which then goes on to reveal the tension between Jacques and Bruno, as Jacques claims Bruno to be a pain in his backside.

The utilization of literature and other forms of art is something that Godard is used to, as seen during the analysis of *À bout de souffle*. Here, Godard uses the book by Cocteau for a variety of reasons, with the first being providing Bruno with character depth, and the second being positioning him within the film. Bruno himself, similar to the protagonist of the book, feels like the lines between fact and fiction are blurred, which is apparent in how he reacts to things happening around him, whether it is his relationship with Véronica or his struggle to kill Palivoda. It is also through the mentioning of this novel that Godard establishes Bruno within the web of characters within *Le Petit Soldat*. Bruno, despite the image he gives off to strangers and Véronica, is still quite vulnerable and open to a variety of threats, that could even result in him getting shot in the back, by the very people he works for, which is what Jacques seems to be implying when he describes Bruno as a pain.

The scene then continues on as Jacques and Paul present Bruno with his target, Palivoda, who seems to be talking on a radio, spreading pro-FLN ideas. Throughout their discussion of how to kill Palivoda and why Bruno should do so, as the camera goes back and forth, Jacques and Paul are portrayed to be patronizing, looking down on Bruno. This is apparent both by how they look at Bruno and how they do not give proper responses to his questions, leaving him in the dark. They just tell Bruno that the orders

came from Paris and that Palivoda is not brave, because he is just talking on the radio. Paul then goes on to criticize Swiss people in general, saying how they have never been brave. As a representative of French intelligence, Paul and Jacques acting in such a manner goes to show how the French government views itself higher than the rest of Europe, as a country that is brave and ready to make sacrifices. Even though the idea of making sacrifices may sound noble at first, the idea of assassinating a radio host and forcing a French intelligence agent to do so contradicts this nobility, portraying the French government as aggressive, sly, and arrogant, and "...the French agents as nearly as cold-blooded as the terrorists" (Vicari, 5).

It is this portrayal of the French conflict that is at conflict with Bruno. Bruno does not want to kill Palivoda, believing that he would feel defeated if he killed him, as he later implies that it is not honorable. By presenting the Spanish Republicans' salute as non-threatening and honorable, Bruno implies that France and the intelligence he is working for, is not. It is his gesture, amplified via close-up, with his eyes directly staring at Jacques that solidifies this idea that France and the methods it uses to conduct its affairs is not honorable.

Having presented the ideas and personalities within French intelligence, Godard also provides a look into the resistance, the FLN and how they function as well. After being forced directly by Paul to kill Palivoda and failing again to do so, Bruno is captured by two FLN agents and brought into an apartment, being prepared to be tortured. Despite admitting he is afraid, he does not scream and instead makes a joke about Middle-Easterners, harkening back to the Cocteau book where the main character was blurring together fact and fiction, losing grasp on what is real. Bruno does not react in any drastic way throughout the entirety of the torture session, whether its getting his hands burnt, being waterboarded or getting maimed. He seems to endure the torture quite well, even at one point asking whether he cried, startling his kidnapers.

It is also during these torture sessions that the audience gets to understand Bruno's thought process more, hearing what he is thinking on a moment-to-moment basis. He talks about how torture is monotonous and sad, and how when kidnapped, people are soon forgotten, unable to die. Bruno's torture

filmed through medium shots and close-ups is intercut with panning shots of buildings, providing a contrast between what is seen on the outside and what is actually happening within the inside. When looked at from the outside, the audience cannot predict which apartment Bruno and his captors are in, which connects to the overarching idea of government-conducted espionage and aggression. Such acts and the resistance to said acts do not always take place publicly, available for everyone to see and witness, but rather they may be conducted under the guise of normalcy. It is also during these shots of the outside that Bruno “is still always “talking to the world” and, by implication, trying to change it, following radical 60s imperatives. He corresponds to a wider, more public environment” (Vicari, 12).

As the torture continues within the tiny bathroom, Bruno then mentions how between torture sessions he and his captors discussed politics. He talks about how his captors tried to convert him, dismissing his ideals, but most importantly how his captors brought up the fact that the French tortured people as well. One of his captors in fact goes into great detail about how the French tortured people, talking about how the prisoners were kept in the dark or in prisons, getting shot if they made any attempt to escape. Despite the audience only seeing how Bruno gets tortured, they are also told about the horrors being committed by the French with regards to imprisonment and torture, which implicitly makes France look even worse, as in the case of Bruno, he at least still gets to discuss and talk to his captors about things like politics and emotions and dignity without facing fatal repercussions.

Bruno’s torture comes to an end with a lengthy speech being given by Bruno, about Pierre Brossolette, a French citizen who died at the Paris Gestapo headquarters. Similar to the *Thomas the Impostor* parallel being made with Bruno, Godard once again uses another story to provide more depth and backstory to Bruno. Similar to Pierre, Bruno is tortured, thinking he might crack the whole time. Bruno also mentions how his eyes had been put out, which starts building tension within the scene, as the audience thinks something similar may happen to Bruno, as his captor is watching him pace around the room, pointing a gun at him in the process. The harsh lighting clearly defining shadows further elevates the tension within the scene, presenting the interaction between Bruno and his captor to be a serious black and white dichotomy, with the confrontation either ending in the escape of Bruno or the death of him. The

camera, constantly tracking Bruno as he paces around the room, helps build up to the climax within the scene as well. Bruno manages to escape by jumping out the window at the end, however, this interaction between him and his captors is crucial both to the audience and Bruno himself. For the audience, they are presented with the horrors of such espionage work, with a plethora of different forms of torture. The audience is presented with the truth, which is that, even if they cannot see the government acting publicly, the government is always active, working behind the scenes to stifle, shut down and punish those who are fighting against it. For Bruno, he himself is completely detached from the French intelligence both regarding the purpose for the organization as well as his desire to work for such a group. The idea of escaping to Brazil has become solidified in his mind.

Even though Bruno is certain of what to do next and escape, Véronica does not seem to be just as certain. Bruno says that Véronica has agreed to escape with him, however, there have been several scenes showing Véronica's uncertainty on the subject. The third scene which truly presents *Le Petit Soldat's* criticisms about the French government and its politics come with Bruno's monologue after his brief exchange with Véronica.

Véronica initiates the conversation by saying that the French do not have ideals, especially against Algeria, finishing off by saying that everybody hates the French. Bruno retorts, by saying that we should defend ideals, not borders, approaching Véronica, allowing Godard to frame both of them in a tight medium shot. Bruno then walks away from Véronica, with the camera following along the way, turning Bruno's monologue towards Véronica into a monologue towards the audience. Bruno talks about ideas that he attaches to various countries and which ones he likes or not. He talks about how the system and society we are in pushes us to do things, even if we do not believe in them, as a lack of action will result in punishment. He talks about how doing things we do not believe in is shameful, alluding to his own actions, regarding his assignment to kill Palivoda. Bruno has been forced into the current position he is in, working for the French intelligence, doing things that he does not want to, or else he will be punished by his very own government. More importantly, Bruno gets into the politics behind the ideas, talking about how the Vatican and communism have the same ideas, and yet they are still at conflict with

one another. The importance or similarities of ideas are not important, but where they come from seem to be valued more, which is what Bruno criticizes. Bruno keeps pacing around the apartment throughout his monologue, with the camera always on him, forcing the audience to listen to what Bruno is saying without distraction, while also providing some movement to the scene and keeping it from being monotonous.

This scene is the essence of *Le Petit Soldat*. Bruno voices all of his complaints with the society that has pushed him into this position. Capitalism and greed enacted by governments through exploitative politics in order to improve finances, extort less powerful demographics, and oppress those who disagree with them take their toll on the individuals that represent the government, such as Bruno. Whether it is Jacques and Paul, representing the French intelligence who is forcing him to kill a man, threatening him with taking away his passport, or the pro-FLN resistance, who captured and tortured him in various ways, Bruno has been enduring a lot of pressure. Specifically, he has been faced with all these obstacles, despite the fact that he does not want to do any of it. His surroundings do not allow him to exist without doing nothing. It is this scene which shows the disdain of a French citizen of his own government and the environment it has created for its citizens. As Véronica says to Bruno, the French government has changed from its WWII era, implying that it has sacrificed its ideals for political gains within the modern world, and Bruno is the physical embodiment of the consequences of these efforts. It is this irreplaceable path that Bruno is placed on that results in *Le Petit Soldat* insisting “...that all political conflicts are insoluble problems that distort and contaminate not only society as a whole, but the most intimate of personal relationships” (Vicari, 15).

Le Petit Soldat is the culmination of years of French New Wave cinema. After breaking the barriers of what was known to be French cinema with *400 Coups*, utilizing other cinemas as an influence to find its own voice with *À bout de souffle*, and starting to weave this voice into the struggles and ideas of contemporary French society with *Cléo de 5 à 7*, the New Wave ushered into its final stage, of actively utilizing this voice to critique French society and provide a unique standpoint on contemporary issues, with *Le Petit Soldat*. It is because of Godard’s film reaching this final stage that it was censored by the

French government and not filmed in France, being displaced to Switzerland. Within the French New Wave, Godard finally found himself after going through his process of growth and exploration.

After witnessing the development of the French New Wave, one question that seems to remain is why the style and identity of the French New Wave did not continue on for longer. After the end of the 1960s, French New Wave seemingly lost its popularity and yielded itself to larger, more stereotypical productions, similar to today's studio movies. If the New Wave was so groundbreaking and influential, there have to be reasons behind its dissolution in popularity.

The first and simplest explanation to the dissolution in popularity of the French New Wave is that it simply became the new norm. More and more movies were being produced with a similar mindset, utilizing original settings and natural lighting, but more importantly utilizing the techniques pioneered by Godard, Truffaut and other initial New Wave directors. Once it became the norm, the New Wave was not viewed with such overwhelming interest with each film, but rather, it was expected by the masses.

The second explanation is that it became harder and harder to innovate and keep the energy of the New Wave going. The historical context of post-WWII France that led cinephiles to pioneer the New Wave was being left in the past, with directors like Truffaut and Godard making the movies they wanted to make during the initial years. After a while, with New Wave becoming the norm and the audiences having certain expectations from a New Wave film, it was not as easy to create something just as groundbreaking and unexpected, which led to the New Wave being pushed to the background, with audiences searching for something new and fresh.

For clarification, French New Wave directors kept making films, even though they were not deemed to be French New Wave, but they were rather characterized to be more matured and attentive. After experimenting with various techniques, breaking new ground within filmmaking, directors like Truffaut and Varda figured out their own style of filmmaking, and more importantly, the audience who watched their movies. This personal development and maturing implies that you can only keep the experimental soul of the French New Wave for so long, as after a point, audiences will have a set of expectations from the director and their movie.

The third explanation of the dissolution in popularity of the New Wave could also be attributed to the Hollywood Renaissance that started taking place in the mid-1960s. Inspired by what Truffaut, Godard and other New Wave directors had achieved, American directors such as Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola and Steven Spielberg started making movies that were inspired by French works, with the exception that these directors had the cinematic force that is Hollywood supporting them, which resulted in faster, more effective distribution, easily spreading their works to the rest of the world. The presentation of a new American cinema was one of the factors which caused the New Wave to take a step back and share the stage with its American counterpart. Despite the French film market has escaped the domination of Hollywood, the impact of Hollywood is still apparent, as “Until the beginning of the 1980s, French cinema held around 50% of its market. Subsequently, things stalled with a mean between 30 and 40%, and with a low point of 27% in 1986” (Marie, 2).

The fourth and final explanation as to the dissolution of popularity of the French New Wave is because of the very fact that movies at the time could only go so far and effect so much change. Despite being made within the context of post-WWII France, French society was still in the process of rediscovering and rebuilding itself. The youth still was not fully unleashed to grow and explore and create its own identity, as pre-WWII France still carried some weight into the present, as seen by the war with Algeria. Whether cultural or societal, France still had some obstacles to move through, which meant that films could only talk about so much without being ignored by the masses or censored by the government, as seen with Godard and *Le Petit Soldat*. It would not be until May 1968 that French youth would raise its voice against the government and ask for serious reforms for French society that would allow French cinema to keep developing and expressing ideas that are more complex and more critical. Until then, all French cinema and the New Wave could do was act within the restrictions that still persisted.

French New Wave cinema was born in an era where youth suddenly became crucial in moving past conflict and building a new world for the future. It was created to bring voice to a whole new generation of individuals, who were influenced by western culture that focused on consumption,

innovation and excitement. Its creation also allowed France to rebrand itself, moving away from its colonial structure that was performing poorly pre-WWII, to a European power that was open to being influenced by the United States, becoming one of its footholds within Europe. The development of the New Wave followed a similar path. It first broke free of its past norms through *400 Coups*, acknowledged its influences and built on them through *À bout de souffle*, and completed its integration into society and truly became a voice for its people through *Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Le Petit Soldat*.

Even though it did not continue for a long time, the brief decade where it did exist and persevere, it became one of the most influential movements within cinema of all time. Regardless of where cinema goes, the French New Wave will forever remain as an influence.

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